

CASE STUDY

Rapid Recovery: Getting Power Back Online After Back Bay Blackout



Thanks to a coordinated deployment and the availability of emergency standby generators, Sunbelt Rentals restored power in record time to tens of thousands in Boston. A transformer failure at a Massachusetts-based utility company sparked an electrical fire in March 2012, leaving more than 20,000 residents in the dark in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood. Faced with one of the largest power outages in decades, the utility provider turned to Sunbelt Rentals to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

In emergency power situations, time is valuable and we don't want to waste it. That's why the team arrived on site within an hour of the first call. We immediately sprang into action by mobilizing our fleet and supplying generators within hours of the power outage. As crews worked around the clock to restore power, we discovered an overloaded back-up transformer caused by the additional stress from the failed primary transformer. Unseasonably warm weather caused the secondary transformer to overheat under heavy load conditions.

Crews found the transformer in a confined space discharging 11 million BTU worth of heat. The small room that housed the electrical device and the limited space of the city's narrow street made standard cooling methods difficult to achieve. To accommodate the unique scenario, the team devised a plan to cool the fins of the transformer by supplying 100 tons of air

conditioning, creating 64,000 CFM of cold air across the fins to simulate winter-like conditions that allowed the transformer to cool properly. Because of the team's prompt action, the transformer was effectively cooled and remains in operation.

More than 100 technicians contributed to the power restoration effort, dispatching more than 50,000 kW of temporary power using approximately 50 generators. By late the next day, crews had restored power to the entire Back Bay area. During the outage, the team handled all logistical support. From manpower to transportation and refueling, Sunbelt Rentals organized and executed every aspect of the power relief effort.

PROJECT RECAP

- Successful installation of 50 diesel-powered generators
- Pumped 64,000 CFM of cold air using 100 tons of AC
- Safe and swift power restoration

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