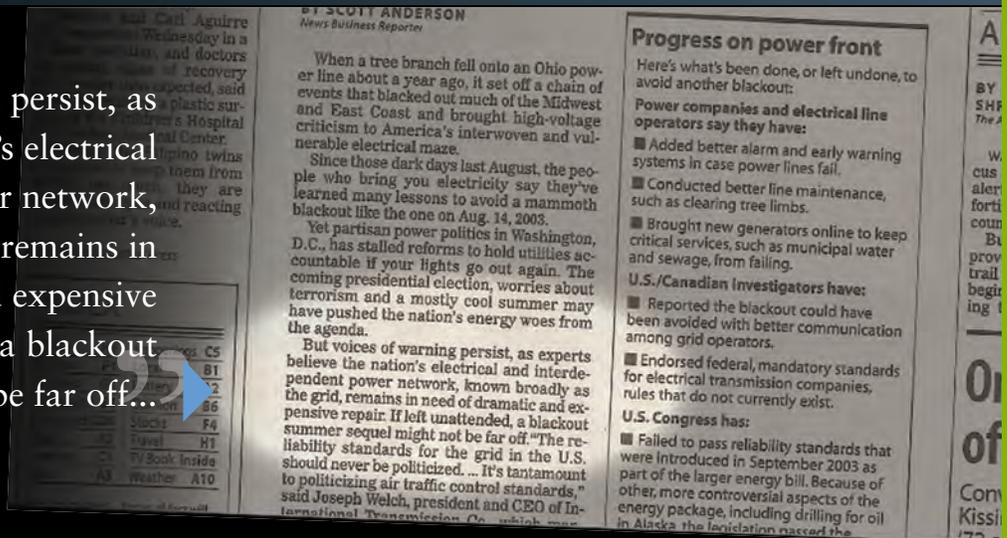


“Nationwide, 50 million people were affected at an estimated cost of more than \$6 billion, and memories of the blackout have remained, as have questions about the grid’s resiliency..”

## Trees Touched Off August Blackout

“The blackout began when three high-voltage transmission lines (in Ohio) ... short circuited and went out of service when they came into contact with trees that were too close to the lines, the task force found.”

“But voices of warning persist, as experts believe the nation’s electrical and interdependent power network, known broadly as the grid, remains in need of dramatic and expensive repair. If left unattended, a blackout summer sequel might not be far off...”



**AUG. 14, 2003:** 50 million people lost power in one of the nation's largest blackouts

# Could we go dark again?

**TODAY:** Utility companies say they've taken steps to prevent another outage of that scale

By ALEJANDRO BODIPO MEMBA  
1444 PRESS BUSINESS SQUARE

At 4:15 p.m. on Aug. 14, 2003, the machines at PaperPlas Inc. stopped churning out the specialty paper DaimlerChrysler uses to package auto glass.

Donald Snider, chief executive of the Detroit-based company, thought a downed wire somewhere in the neighborhood caused the

Plas was just one of thousands of Michigan businesses that lost an estimated total of \$220 million in the blackout.

Michigan's summer blackout season is upon us, as frequent thunderstorms and 90-degree-plus temperatures stress the Midwest electric grid to its limits. Last week, several communities experienced power outages as a heat wave rippled through the region.

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“6 million Michiganders and 50 million people in the United States and Canada lost power for several days three years ago.

Michigan businesses lost an estimated total of \$220 million in the blackout.”

**Industry Week • May 01, 2006 • Jusko, Jill**

*THE NOW INFAMOUS BLACKOUT OF AUGUST 2003 illustrated in spectacular fashion how dependent the economy is on the smooth, reliable operation of traditional grid-supplied power. The economic cost of the outage, which shut down power across parts of eight states in the Midwest and Northeast, and parts of Canada, was estimated at \$4.5 billion to \$10 billion.*

*For manufacturers, the costs were dear. Automotive plants and auto suppliers were shut down in Michigan, Ohio and Ontario. Steel plants were knocked offline for days, and disruptions to production were announced throughout the affected areas. A post-outage survey conducted by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) found that some 12,300 Ohio manufacturing companies were impacted by the blackout. The average direct cost of the blackout was nearly \$88,000 per impacted plant, the survey showed.*

**Detroit Free Press • Sunday, Aug. 6, 2006**

“...How it happened: A joint United States/Canada report said the blackout of 2003 was caused by a combination of poor system maintenance and human error.

Here's what happened: An Ohio utility company **failed to trim trees that fell onto transmission lines near Cleveland**. Later, workers in the control room of the Ohio utility failed to warn utilities in neighboring states of the problem, and they did not disconnect from the grid after the power was cut off. The grid then became overloaded and started a chain reaction that forced the shutdown of more than 250 utilities across the Midwest, the Northeast and much of Ontario...”