

Massachusetts Discos Mulling Moratorium on Interconnecting Certain Renewables

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At a meeting held yesterday by the Massachusetts Wind Working Group, representatives of National Grid (NGrid) and NSTAR indicated that their companies, as well as Western Massachusetts Electric Company and Fitchburg Gas and Electric, are considering a moratorium on interconnecting certain renewable generating facilities. The moratorium would limit the facilities eligible to interconnect at 13 kV feeders to 2 megawatts (MW). In order for facilities greater than 2 MW to interconnect, NGrid and NSTAR indicated, in essence, that developers would need to interconnect at higher voltage feeders, install some form of on-site storage capacity or suspend projects until a project-specific power quality study could be conducted. The duration of such power quality studies has not yet been determined. The NGrid and NSTAR representatives indicated that the potential moratorium was being considered due to what they termed “an unexpectedly high volume” of requests to interconnect facilities greater than 2 MW at 13 kV feeders. They indicated that that high volume may be due in part to lower interconnection transaction and capital costs associated with interconnecting at nearby 13 kV feeders compared to interconnecting at more distant, higher voltage feeders.

While the current uniform interconnection tariffs under which the Massachusetts discos operate provide the utilities with discretion to review individual interconnection applications with respect to any reliability issues they pose, the tariffs do not include express authority to impose generic moratoria. In announcing this potential moratorium, the utility representatives did not indicate whether they intended to seek the approval of the Department of Public Utilities.