



Energy crisis

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As the temperature climbs this afternoon, many area residents will hit the button for air conditioning. But what if the button is pushed and nothing happens?

That scenario could play out frequently as early as 2011 because of power brownouts in Maryland and other states. Unfortunately, not many people, or governmental officials, seemed focused on the problem. That is the assessment from Marylanders for Reliable Power.

The group, led by Russell Frisby, visited Cumberland recently as part of a campaign to make the public aware of the pending energy crisis.

"Some people are paying attention, but the general public is not aware. The first step is to raise public awareness. We've got to act now," Frisby said.

Two local entities that are paying attention are the Western Maryland Health System and Mel's Business System of Cumberland. Both are members of the reliable power coalition.

The health system is especially concerned about the effect a brownout may have on hospital patients. "We're concerned about patients. We've taken huge measures to ensure we have backups to our backups. We're doing everything we can to make sure ... (patients) won't be affected," Jo Wright of the health system said.

The immediate goal of the coalition is to see improved power transmission capabilities. Long-term, the group would like to see a concerted conservation effort along with an investment in renewable energies.

To become involved, the public may visit www.forreliablepower.com/maryland.php for more information.

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