

Evaluating Utility Costs Savings and Resilience: A Case Study in Port Arthur, Texas

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- ⎯ This analysis was conducted as a part of the Solar Energy Innovation Network (SEIN) and relies on site information provided to NREL by GTEC/HARC that has not been independently validated by NREL. See [https://www.nrel.gov/solar/market-research](https://www.nrel.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-energy-innovation-network.html)[analysis/solar-energy-innovation-network.html](https://www.nrel.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-energy-innovation-network.html) for more information about SEIN.
- The analysis results are not intended to be the sole basis of investment, policy, or regulatory decisions. Since the original study was conducted in June 2023, the results have changed slightly due to evolving technology economics and updates in rate tariffs.
- This analysis was conducted using the NREL REopt Model (http://www.reopt.nrel.gov). REopt is a techno-economic decision support model that identifies the cost-optimal set of energy technologies and dispatch strategy to meet site energy requirements at minimum lifecycle cost, based on physical characteristics of the site and assumptions about energy technology costs and electricity and fuel prices.
- The data, results, conclusions, and interpretations presented in this document have not been reviewed by technical experts outside NREL.

Analysis Overview

- Engineers from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) used the REopt¹ platform to support the Solar for Safety and Success (3S) project in Port Arthur, Texas, through the [Solar Energy](https://www.nrel.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-energy-innovation-network.html) [Innovation Network](https://www.nrel.gov/solar/market-research-analysis/solar-energy-innovation-network.html) (SEIN)2.
- Led by the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC), the 3S project developed pathways for commercial-scale resilient clean energy projects benefiting underserved communities in Port Arthur.
- $-$ The analysis focused on specific Port Arthur community facilities (Golden Triangle Empowerment Center (GTEC), Port Arthur Independent Schools District (PAISD), Lamar State College (LSC), and Port Arthur Transit (PAT)). It evaluated the techno-economic potential of **solar photovoltaics (PV) + battery energy storage system (BESS) + generators** at these sites.
- ⎯ The analysis includes **cost-optimal technology sizing** to minimize lifecycle energy costs and a **resilience** evaluation to quantify how solar, storage, and generators can increase the probability of surviving a simulated grid outage.
- ⎯ The analysis incorporates the **Value of Lost Load (VoLL) and Microgrid Upgrade Cost** to estimate the value and costs of sustaining operations during outages at these critical facilities. Two VoLL values were considered based on the facility need: 1) general resilience VoLL to support continued operations, and 2) specific VoLL for sites serving as emergency shelters.

¹ <https://reopt.nrel.gov/>

² <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-energy-innovation-network>

- Golden Triangle Empowerment Center (GTEC)
- Lamar State College (LSC)
- Port Arthur Independent School Distric (PAISD)

C

• Port Arthur Transit (PAT)

Sites Analyzed

Port Arthur, Texas

Nederland Avenue **B** $TX87$ **A**^{*A*}
A^{*A*}
A^{*A*} **Dowling R D** Note: Each site location marker represents a specific site (e.g., PAT, GTEC, LSC, or PAISD), and the size of the marker corresponds to the number of buildings or facilities within that site. The marker may not be placed ex is located.

Analysis Scenarios

NREL evaluated the following scenarios for each Port Arthur site, assuming direct purchase of the system in all cases.

REopt Energy Planning Platform

Formulated as a mixed integer linear program, REopt provides an integrated, cost-optimal energy solution.

Electric Loads

Objective: Assess the integration of PV, Storage, and Executive Summary (1/2)

Objective: Assess the integration of PV, Storage, and Emergency Generators to enhance energy resilience and economic efficiency for Port Arthur's community facilities.

Key Takeaways

PV + BESS Cost-Effectiveness

• For most sites PV combined with BESS was found to have economic benefits .

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

for Port Arthur's community facilities.

• Although a small BESS is included in the configuration of GTEC and PAT-Fuel Station, inclusion is impractical at these sizes. It is recommended that BESS not be included at these facilities. However, as prices continue to fall for energy storage, it can be reevaluated in the next couple of years.

Value of Lost Load (VoLL)

- VoLL is a highly subjective estimate that significantly influences economic outcomes of scenarios B2. The results highlight the high economic value of resilience in preventing costly power outages.
- Assumed a 3-day outage occurring annually over 25 years, collaboratively determined with HARC and facility stakeholders.

High-Level Implications for Port Arthur

- Integration of PV and BESS supports sustainability goals with reductions in $CO₂$ emissions and utility costs.
- Incorporating VoLL and microgrid costs leads to substantial financial savings and improved operational reliability.

Executive Summary (2/2)

Objective: Assess the integration of PV, Storage, and Emergency Generators to enhance energy resilience and economic efficiency for Port Arthur's community facilities.

VoLL Estimation

- VoLL values were established in collaboration with HARC and the through scoping conversations with community stakeholders.
- Although derived from real operational financial data, VoLL estimates are highly subjective due to the assumption of annual outages duration and energy consumption during the outage.
- The methodology that was used to derive VoLL is outlined for transparency; however, these estimates remain imperfect and should be interpreted with caution.

System Integration

- References to generators specifically pertain to emergency generators.
- BESS sizes below 1 kW may add unnecessary complexity for large facilities and are not recommended for practical implementation.

Optimization Constraints

• Technology sizes for scenario B2 were fixed to the sizes found in Scenario B1 to ensure consistent comparisons

Caveats & Assumptions Conclusion & Strategic Implications

Balanced Investment Approach

• While PV and BESS provide economic and environmental advantages, incorporating VoLL and microgrid costs results in noticeable increases in financial and operational benefits.

Strategic Focus Areas:

- Track advancements and cost reductions in battery technology to reassess feasibility for system sizes below 1 kW.
- Engage with stakeholders to validate and adjust VoLL assumptions, ensuring accurate economic assessments.
- Address practical challenges of integrating emergency generators with BESS to streamline implementation and maximize benefits.

The Golden Triangle Empowerment Center (GTEC)

Exploring Resilience for a Site Serving Critical Community Services

Site Overview GTEC

Location: [Golden Triangle Empowerment Center](https://gtec-triangle.org/) (GTEC) 617 Procter St, Port Arthur, TX 77642

GTEC provides free job training and certifications to underserved communities, focusing on industrial, electrical, and digital sectors. The center also serves a crucial role in workforce reintegration for justiceimpacted individuals. Due to its significant impact on local economic stability and community support, GTEC was selected as a critical site for resilience analysis.

Scenarios A1-A2: PV and PV with storage yield moderate benefits, with a 15% renewable energy penetration, 11% CO₂ reduction, and 10% utility savings, resulting in a small positive NPV of \$1.2k. Scenario B1: Introducing resilience through additional storage and a generator increases costs, leading to a negative NPV . **Scenario B2:** However, when considering microgrid costs and the VoLL, the system achieves a 34% savings compared to business as usual, with a significant positive NPV of **\$152.4k**, despite higher total lifecycle costs. Although shown here for Scenario A2, BESS is found to not be cost effective due to its small size (0.13/0.17 kW/kWh).

GTEC Summary – Key Takeaways

¹B1 includes outage costs (e.g., fuel) in the NPV and LCC calculations but excludes the VoLL and microgrid upgrade costs. B2 includes outage costs along with VoLL and microgrid upgrades in the NPV and LCC calculations.

 2 Assumes a microgrid upgrade cost equivalent to 20% of the total capital cost of the system

Lamar State College (LSC)

Evaluating Energy Resilience for College Campus Infrastructure

Site Overview LSC

[Lamar State College](http://www.lamarpa.edu/) (LSC) in Port Arthur, Texas, consists of thirty buildings with diverse energy consumption profiles. For this analysis, these buildings were categorized into three groups—low, medium, and high energy consumption—with one representative building selected from each category based on the average annual energy consumption. These selected buildings serve as models for similar structures with comparable energy usage. The Physical Plant Building, Cosmetology Center, and Madison Monroe Educational Building were chosen for this purpose. Additionally, the Carl A. Parker Multipurpose Center was identified as an emergency shelter during outages. Due to its significance, a higher VoLL and microgrid upgrade costs were evaluated to ensure a more comprehensive resilience analysis.

¹These buildings were used to be representative of the other buildings in the categories outlined above. See appendix for mode detail.

LSC Summary – Key
Takeaways

This slide summarizes system sizing, annual % RE, and NPV for all nine sites. Additional details about project economics (specific costs and savings) for each of these sites and scenarios are provided in the appendix.

¹B1 includes outage costs (e.g., fuel) in the NPV and LCC calculations but excludes the VoLL and microgrid upgrade costs. B2 includes outage costs along with VoLL and microgrid upgrades in the NPV and LCC calculations.^N ² Assumes a microgrid upgrade cost equivalent to 20% of the total capital cost of the system; For scenarios with existing back up generator, we exclude the 20% microgrid costs Clear up the microgrid costs clear up the mi

Key Takeaways: LSC Shelter

Standalone PV and PV with storage offer modest reductions in a slight utility cost savings (1%). Adding resilience with storage and a generator increases costs significantly and results in a negative NPV, but integrating microgrid costs and VoLL improves financial outcomes, 11% savings compared to business as usual, and a significant positive NPV of **\$266.9k**

Port Arthur Independent School District (PAISD)

Assessing Energy Needs in Educational **Facilities**

Site Overview PAISD

Using a similar approach for LSC, **PAISD** buildings in Port Arthur, Texas were analyzed by categorizing them into three groups based on energy consumption—low, medium, and high. From each category, a representative school was selected according to its average energy usage, serving as a model for other schools with similar energy profiles. The selected schools—Wheatley School of Early Childhood Programs, Booker T. Washington Elementary School, and Thomas Jefferson Middle School—illustrate the district's diverse energy demands. Additionally, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, recognized for its critical role as a shelter, has the highest energy consumption. To ensure a comprehensive resilience analysis, the Value of Lost Load (VoLL) for this facility was adjusted.

PAISD Summary – Key

This slide summarizes system sizing, annual % RE, and NPV for all three sites. Additional details about project economics (specific costs and savings) for each of these sites and scenarios are provided in the appendix.

NREL | 19 ²B1 includes outage costs (e.g., fuel) in the NPV and LCC calculations but excludes the VoLL and microgrid upgrade costs. B2 includes outage costs along with VoLL and microgrid upgrades in the NPV and LCC calculations.

Note: These technology sizes are small because scaling them up increases costs without increasing the energy savings benefit, this making the systems less cost-effective within these scenarios.

Key Takeaways: PÁISD Sheltér

Thomas Jefferson Middle School, PAISD's highest energy consumer and a potential emergency community shelter, sees modest benefits from standalone PV and PV with storage, achieving 11% CO2 reductions and 1% utility savings with a 12-year payback and slightly positive NPVs. Adding resilience with more storage and a generator increases costs and results in a negative NPV. However, when factoring in microgrid costs and the value of lost load (VLL), the system becomes highly advantageous, 20% utility savings, and 40% overall savings compared to business as usual and the largest NPV of **\$4.7M**

Port Arthur Transit (PAT)

Analyzing Energy Stability for Public Transit Operations

Site Overview – Port Arthur Transit

Building: Fuel Station Terminal Administration Maintenance H.O Mills Facilities

[Port Arthur Transit \(](https://www.portarthurtx.gov/201/Transit-Department)PAT) in Port Arthur, Texas, consists of several buildings, each analyzed individually for its specific energy usage. This approach provided a detailed understanding of the energy demands across the transit authority's operations, reflecting the diversity in energy consumption and service needs among PAT facilities. None of these buildings were designated as emergency shelters.

Note: Port Arthur Transit used a 5-day outage duration threshold for their site analysis, which is higher than the other sites analyzed.

Cost-Optimal Results Summary, by Category

This slide summarizes system sizing, annual % RE, and NPV for all five sites. Additional details about project economics (specific costs and savings) for each of these sites and scenarios are provided in the following slides.

Note: PAT used a 5-day outage duration threshold for their site analysis, which is higher than the other sites analyzed.

Key Takeaways: PAT Ádmin Building

Standalone PV and PV with storage offer a reduction in utility savings, with similar payback periods of about 12 years and a slight positive NPV. Introducing resilience through added storage and a generator increases initial costs and leads to a negative NPV. However, when including microgrid costs and the value of lost load (VLL), the scenario shows a significant improvement with a 12% utility savings, and a 26% overall savings compared to business as usual, resulting in a strong positive NPV of **\$67.6k.**

1Assumed VoLL: \$3.0/kWh; Microgrid upgrade costs: 20% of Capital Cost; PAT used a 5-day outage duration threshold for their site analysis, which is higher than usual.

Inputs and Assumptions

Note: The following slides present assumptions specific to GTEC, but many assumptions remain consistent across all sites. The utility rate, for instance, is uniform across sites, with variations only in energy consumption. The key site-specific variables are energy consumption, existing generation capacity, and the timing of outages. Aside from these factors, most other assumptions apply uniformly to all sites. For a comprehensive list of detailed site-specific assumptions, please refer to the appendix.

Load Data for GTEC

- Monthly **load** data was provided for the **2022** calendar year
- Load profile was based on a smallsized office and secondary school (based on DOE Commercial Reference Building database) scaled using the sites annual consumption and modified to ensure that the consumption matches operating hours
	- GTEC Operating Hours: Monday through Thursday: 10 AM to 2 PM, Friday-Sunday: Closed

Utility Rate

• Golden Triangle Empowerment Center (GTEC) is serviced by Entergy Texas, INC. These charges reflect a recently updated rate tariff effective 6-2-23.

• This rate is classified as General Service – Secondary $(TX-GS1)¹$.

For more information visit:

[https://cdn.entergy-](https://cdn.entergy-texas.com/userfiles/content/price/tariffs/eti_gs.pdf)

[texas.com/userfiles/content/price/tariffs/eti_gs.p](https://cdn.entergy-texas.com/userfiles/content/price/tariffs/eti_gs.pdf) [df](https://cdn.entergy-texas.com/userfiles/content/price/tariffs/eti_gs.pdf)

Estimating the Value of Lost Load (VoLL) for Emergency Shelter

This analysis provides a baseline VoLL from directly estimated impacts but does not attempt to describe a full and total quantification of VoLL. Estimating VoLL is complex and requires extensive analysis, as shown by K. Anderson et al. (2018).

Information to Potentially Consider in VoLL for GTEC

- ⎯ **Staff Affected by Power Outage**
- ⎯ **Daily Operational Costs**
- ⎯ **Childcare Needs:** Students acquire childcare but do not take off work to attend courses.
- ⎯ **Equipment Rental:** No rental equipment lost during outages.
- ⎯ **Food Storage:** No food stored onsite that might spoil.
- ⎯ **Additional Operational Costs:** Replacement of technology equipment during power surges.
- ⎯ **Manual Equipment Restart Needs:** Triple phase power causes delays up to 4 days post-outage. Phone lines, routers, servers, security systems, access control require service technicians.

Actual Metrics Used in This Analysis for GTEC1

Daily Operational Loss:

- ⎯ **Human Resources:** 3 Instructors, 1 Admin, 1 Program Director, 1 Job Developer left idle.
- ⎯ **Operational Cost:** \$5,000/day. Potential loss with extended outages.
- ⎯ **Operational Hours:** Daily (9 AM 5 PM) & Evening (6:30 PM - 9:30 PM).

Energy Consumption:

- ⎯ **Peak Month:** September 2021
- ⎯ **Daily Consumption:** Not publicly disclosed

¹Derived from GTEC Property Use Information

References: Anderson, K.; Laws, N.D.; Marr, S.; Lisell, L.; Jimenez, T.; Case, T.; Li, X.; Lohmann, D.; Cutler, D. Quantifying and Monetizing Renewable Energy Resiliency. Sustainability 2018, 10, 933. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10040933

Resilience Costs and Benefits

• The **Value of Lost Load (VoLL)1** is factored into the optimization. This is the value that the user places on the unmet site load during grid outages, or the losses that the site would experience if the load were not met.

Value of Lost Load (VoLL) - Emergency Shelter: \$9.67/kWh Value of Lost Load (VoLL) - General: \$3.00/kWh3

• The **Microgrid Upgrade Cost** is factored into the optimization. To gain resiliency, the PV/battery/generator must be installed as an island-able system. This requires additional equipment.

Microgrid Upgrade Costs: 20% of system capital cost

 $1_{VolL_{shelter}} = \frac{Operation\ Cost\ (\$) + Infrastructure\ Vuherabilities(\$) + Student\ Impact\ & Indirect\ Costs\ (\$) + Equipment\ Vuherabilities(\$) + Stakeholders\ After\ effect\ (\$)$ **Total Estimated Energy Consumption During Outage (kWh)**

$$
^{2}VolL_{baseline} = \frac{\$5,000\ per\ day}{517.2\ kWh\ per\ day} = \$\ 9.67\ per\ kWh
$$

¹This full VoLL includes difficult-to-quantify elements that are therefore excluded from the following analysis. They are enumerated here to show that the true experienced VoLL for GTEC is likely greater than the conservative baseline VoLL used in this analysis.

²The \$9.67/kWh baseline VoLL used in this analysis includes quantified metrics like operational cost and human resource idle time. Indirect costs such as student impact and equipment vulnerabilities are acknowledged but not quantified in this analysis (see above and see previous slide).

³ Assumed one-third of the VoLL from the emergency shelters. This is a conservative estimate based on U.S. studies, which report VoLL values ranging from \$3 to \$12/kWh.

References: Van der Welle, A.; van der Zwaan, B. An Overview of Selected Studies on the Value of Lost Load (VoLL); Energy Research Centre of the Netherlands (ECN), Policy Studies Department.

Economic Parameters and Cost Assumptions

Rey assumptions	
Analysis period	25 years
Ownership model	Direct Purchase
Technologies considered	PV, Battery storage, Generator
PV & Battery incentives	30% ITC (IRA ¹)
Discount rate	5.64% for site
Inflation	2.5% per $EIA2$
Electricity cost escalation rate	2%/year per EIA utility cost escalation rates ²
PV cost	\$1,592/kW per NREL Annual Technology Baseline (ATB3)
PV O&M cost	$$17/kW$ -year per NREL (ATB ³)
Battery cost	\$388/kWh + \$775/kW based on Wood Mackenzie US Energy Storage Monitor
Battery replacement costs (year 10)	\$220/kWh + \$440/kW based on Wood Mackenzie US Energy Storage Monitor

¹ IRA - <https://www.irs.gov/inflation-reduction-act-of-2022>

Key assumptions

² EIA - [https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/data/browser/#/?id=3-AEO2023®ion=1-0&cases=ref2023&start=2023&end=2048&f=A&linechart=ref2023-d020623a.3-3-AEO2023.1-0&map=ref2023](https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/data/browser/#/?id=3-AEO2023®ion=1-0&cases=ref2023&start=2023&end=2048&f=A&linechart=ref2023-d020623a.3-3-AEO2023.1-0&map=ref2023-d020623a.4-3-AEO2023.1-0&sourcekey=0) [d020623a.4-3-AEO2023.1-0&sourcekey=0](https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/data/browser/#/?id=3-AEO2023®ion=1-0&cases=ref2023&start=2023&end=2048&f=A&linechart=ref2023-d020623a.3-3-AEO2023.1-0&map=ref2023-d020623a.4-3-AEO2023.1-0&sourcekey=0)

Outage Modeling GTEC

¹ REopt modeled four distinct outages, one for each season of the year occurring at the peak demand periods. The 72-hour outage represents a severe disaster coinciding with peak demand for the year and is not based on local utility reliability data.

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Appendix

General Analysis Scenarios Evaluated Per Site

NREL evaluated the following scenarios for the site locations in this analysis. All scenarios assume that the system is purchased directly via appropriations.

- **A0. Base case:** The business-as-usual case, assuming the site purchases all energy from the utility.
- **A1. Economic size of standalone PV:** The minimum lifecycle cost case, assuming the site can purchase utility electricity and install **only** PV to lower the cost of utility purchases (no outage survivability requirements).
- **A2. Economic size of PV and battery storage:** The minimum lifecycle cost case, assuming the site can purchase utility electricity and install PV and/or battery storage to lower the cost of utility purchases (no outage survivability requirements).
- **B1. Resilience:** A cost-optimal system that provides both grid-connected value during normal operations and can continue operating at 100% of the typical critical load during a **72-hour (3-day)** outage for most sites, and a **120-hour (5-day)** outage for PAT. Expected outage costs (**excluding VoLL and microgrid upgrade costs**) are included in the net present value (NPV) and lifecycle cost (LCC) calculations.
- **B2. Resilience:** Beyond the considerations in B1, also accounts for additional expected outage costs, **including VoLL and microgrid upgrade costs**, to further refine the NPV and LCC analysis.

Definitions:

- **Lifecycle cost (LCC):** calculated as the present value of the sum of all capital costs (less any incentives considered), operations & maintenance (O&M) costs, battery replacement costs, and grid purchases throughout the 25-year analysis period.
- **Net present value (NPV):** calculated as the LCC savings for the investment case relative to the business-as-usual (BAU) case. A positive NPV indicates a costeffective project; a negative NPV indicates the investment case is more expensive than the BAU case.

Detailed Results: GTEC

Example Optimal Dispatch for GTEC

GTEC Resilience Metrics for Scenario B2

Note: See appendix for a complete summary of these and other metrics per site

Site Overview: LSC

PV, battery, and generator systems were evaluated at Lamar State College building sites, summarized below:

¹These buildings were used to be representative of the other buildings in the categories outlined above.

Category 1: Low Energy Consumption - **PHYSICAL PLANT BUILDING;** Category 2: Medium Energy Consumption - **ALLIED HEALTH BUILDING;** Category 3: High Energy Consumption - **MADISON MONROE EDUCATIONAL BUILDING;** Category 4: Shelter - **CARL A PARKER MULTIPURPOSE CENTER**

Loads: LSC

Detailed Results: Low Energy User

Detailed Results: Medium Energy User

Results: Detailed Results: High Energy User

Detailed Results: Shelter

Site Overview: PAISD

PV, battery, Generators were evaluated at Port Arthur Independent School District Buildings sites, summarized below:

These buildings were used to be representative of the other buildings in the categories outlined above.

Category 1: Low Energy Consumption - WHEATLEY SCHOOL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS **Category 2**: Medium Energy Consumption - BOOKER T. WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL **Category 3**: High Energy Consumption - THOMAS JEFFERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Loads: PAISD

Low Energy Consumption **Medium Energy Consumption**

High Energy Consumption

Detailed Results: Low Energy User

Detailed Results: Medium Energy User

Detailed Results: High Energy User

Site Overview: PAT

PV, battery, and generator systems were evaluated at Port Arthur Transit building sites, summarized below:

Detailed Results: Fuel Station

Detailed Results: Terminal

Detailed Results: Administration Building

Detailed Results: HO Mills

Detailed Results: Maintenance Building

Financial, Economic, & Grid Assumptions

Technology Assumptions

