

Cuba sinks into darkness: power shortage reaches critical levels



Lighthouse of the Morro fortress in Havana: The energy crisis has worsened again in recent days (source: [Ricardo IV Tamayo/Unsplash](#))

Cuba's energy crisis continues to worsen. According to [information provided](#) by the state-owned electricity supplier Unión Eléctrica (UNE), the country is expecting widespread power outages today, Wednesday, which could affect more than half of the population at peak times in the evening.

UNE reported that a new record deficit of 1,882 megawatts was reached on Monday. Today, the shortfall is expected to reach 1,835 megawatts at peak times, which corresponds to 51 percent of expected electricity demand. Deficits of this magnitude increase the likelihood of a grid collapse, as was last [seen in March](#).

There are many reasons for the acute increase in the deficit: On the one hand, six of the country's 20 most important power plant units are currently out of operation due to technical problems or maintenance work. In addition, 97 decentralized generators cannot be connected to the grid due to fuel shortages.

While the capital Havana currently has to cope with “only” four to six hours of power cuts per day, other parts of the country are much more severely affected. In the major cities of Santiago de Cuba and Holguín, there are blackouts lasting up to 20 hours a day, according to local media reports.

The energy crisis in Cuba has worsened dramatically since last August. The main reasons are the dilapidated state of the thermoelectric power plants, most of which date back to the Soviet era, and the chronic shortage of foreign currency, which makes it difficult to purchase spare parts and fuel.

Experts see the causes in decades of underfunding of the energy infrastructure, which is completely state-owned.

The cost of renovating the power grid is estimated at several billion US dollars. Cuba's government also points to the US economic blockade, which was tightened again under Donald Trump and is also affecting important sources of foreign currency such as tourism and making it difficult to purchase fuel on the world market.

The situation is likely to worsen in the coming weeks. In July and August, electricity consumption in Cuba usually rises sharply due to school vacations and high temperatures, which mean that air conditioners run harder and longer. As in previous years, the government has announced a plan to limit power outages during this period. However, with just a few days to go before the start of the hot season, there is no sign of this yet. Observers therefore expect another “dark summer.”

The government is under pressure to bring about improvements in the short term. In the long term, modernizing the infrastructure with renewable energies could provide a remedy. However, the country is still a long way from being able to meet its electricity needs on its own. Although 17 of the 55 solar parks planned for this year are now connected to the grid, expansion is currently lagging behind rising demand. ([Cubaheute](#))