

Cuba's Power Grid Collapses Again: Key Power Plant Damaged



The Antonio Guiteras power plant was damaged during the outage (Source: [lezumbalaberenjena/Flickr/CC-BY-SA 4.0](#))

It is already the third nationwide blackout this month: On Tuesday, the Cuban power grid completely collapsed again at 11:05 a.m. local time. According to the state-run power utility Unión Eléctrica (UNE), the outage was triggered by a problem with a generator unit in the eastern province of Holguín, which caused sudden frequency changes in the grid.

Restoration work began immediately. By Wednesday morning, the grid had been reconnected from the westernmost province of Pinar del Río all the way to Holguín. In Havana, 132,728 customers—about 15 percent of the capital—had their power restored by that time. The system was [restored](#) in record time in less than 20 hours by Wednesday 7 a.m.

Restoration Step by Step

As the first step in the restoration, so-called “micro-islands”—separate, local power circuits—were gradually established and interconnected, as is customary, to initially supply hospitals and food processing facilities. By Tuesday afternoon, the provinces of Guantánamo and Cienfuegos reported that their hospitals were once again receiving power. Matanzas announced around 4:00 p.m. that the historic city center was already back online.

Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy [explained](#) the process: The starting point for restoring the grid is the Energás plant in Boca de Jaruco, from where the power plant in Santa Cruz del Norte was brought online. The process then proceeded via Varadero to the power plants in Cienfuegos, before the facilities in Nuevitas and Felton followed.

Guiteras damaged; battery storage takes over frequency regulation



O Levy mentioned a critical technical detail regarding the Antonio Guiteras power plant in Matanzas, the country's most important and highest-capacity facility, which is, however, in very poor technical condition.

The blackout apparently caused a leak in the Guiteras boiler. "We have to wait until it has cooled down before we can make a decision," the minister said. Only then can

the public be informed whether the repair will take two, three, four days, or longer.

O Levy cited the [new battery storage system](#), which was recently installed in Havana, as a stabilizing factor in the restoration process. He said it had taken over the regulation of the grid frequency, thereby enabling further progress in the restoration efforts.

Havana: Overloaded Transformers, New Circuit Structure

The minister took the opportunity to highlight structural problems in the capital's distribution grid. In a random sample of 1,500 transformers in Havana, 755—or about half—were overloaded by more than seven percent. According to O Levy, a transformer must be operated at a maximum of 85 percent of its capacity. Extrapolated to the city's approximately 33,000 transformers, this means that an estimated 13,000 units are overloaded.

To address this, 15 additional crews from other provinces will be dispatched to the capital starting Wednesday to redistribute power circuits, expand capacity, and replace overloaded transformers with more powerful ones. At the same time, transformer production in the city is set to double.

In addition, in cooperation with the Ministry of Water Resources, the power supply to Havana's most important water pumps has been restructured: The pumps were moved to separate circuits with priority power supply, allowing the load previously associated with them to be distributed to other circuits.

Furthermore, the number of so-called DAF circuits (circuits with scheduled, rotating outages) in the capital has been increased from 12 to a higher number, so that each affected circuit now experiences an outage only once every seven days, rather than being affected continuously. O Levy acknowledged that the hoped-for improvements have not yet been noticeable, but attributed this to the instability of the Guiteras in recent days.

Provinces to Become More Self-Sufficient

In parallel with the work in the capital, O Levy referred to an ongoing program to strengthen regional energy independence.

In Pinar del Río, Ciego de Ávila, Guantánamo, and most recently Villa Clara, solar farms have already helped improve the rotation of the districts subject to power cuts and reduce average outage times. “A modest improvement is already visible,” the minister said. The goal is to become more efficient without additional power plant capacity or fuel.

Third Blackout in Two Weeks

Tuesday’s blackout was the third nationwide outage in less than two weeks. The grid had already completely collapsed on Monday and Friday of the previous week, leaving more than nine million Cubans without power. In addition, there were two other nationwide outages in March, as well as several regional blackouts.

O Levy emphasized that the outages were not the result of operational errors. “The Unión Eléctrica has technical expertise, knowledge, dedication, and a strong sense of belonging,” he said. The real cause, he explained, is the condition of the power grid: “A power system that has been severely damaged by the blockade and, in particular, by the recent U.S. sanctions.” There is a complete lack of fuel, and access to spare parts for the power plants is unavailable, the minister said. ([Cubaheute](#))