

Cuba's power grid collapses again: Laborious restoration after power plant failure



The Antonio Guiteras power plant in Matanzas, built in 1988 (KI-scaled) (Source: [Cubadebate](#))

Boiler damage at the island's most important power plant plunged large parts of Cuba [into darkness](#) again on Wednesday. It took more than 16 hours to reconnect the power grid, but supply remains extremely limited.

The Cuban Ministry of Energy (Minem) [confirmed](#) that the power grid (SEN) was fully reconnected at 5:01 a.m. on Thursday morning. Previously, it had been interrupted from Camagüey in the center of the country to Pinar del Río in the west as a result of the outage. Nevertheless, a large part of the island remains without power, as the available generation capacity is far from sufficient to meet demand.

Boiler damage at Guiteras triggered the outage

The collapse was triggered by the unexpected failure of the Antonio Guiteras thermal power plant on Wednesday afternoon. A leak in the boiler system forced the island's largest single power plant to shut down. At the time of the outage, the plant was generating around 200 megawatts, making it a mainstay of the already severely damaged power grid.

Román Pérez Castañeda, technical director of the power plant, [told](#) the Cuban news agency ACN that the plant was initially undergoing a cooling process that could take around 36 hours. Only then would it be possible to determine the extent of the damage. In the worst case, a section of the boiler would have to be removed, rewelded, and tested before the power plant could be restarted. He did not specify how long this work would take.

Guiteras occupies a special strategic position within the Cuban energy system, as it is designed to run on heavy Cuban crude oil and is logistically well connected to its supply.

Only a fraction of demand covered

Lázaro Guerra Hernández, Director General of Electricity at the Ministry of Energy, explained the current situation on Cuban television on Thursday morning. According to him, although the grid has been reconnected nationwide from Pinar del Río to Guantánamo via the 110-kilovolt lines, the more powerful 220-kilovolt level cannot yet be connected due to low generation capacity.

At the time of his statement, only around 590 megawatts were being generated nationwide – a fraction of normal demand. Among others, the Energás gas plants in Varadero and Boca de Jaruco were in operation, as well as individual units at the Santa Cruz, Felton, and Renté power plants.

Guerra Hernández explained that further generation units were to be brought online during the course of Thursday morning, including two units in Santa Cruz del Norte, one unit at the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes power plant, whose boiler had already been fired up, and unit six at the Nuevitás power plant.

Havana: One-third of the city back on the grid

In the capital, Havana, the municipal electricity company (EELH) painted a sobering picture. According to a status report at 7:43 a.m., 27 substations and 95 distribution circuits were back in operation, supplying around 287,400 customers with approximately 145 megawatts – equivalent to around one-third of customers.

Some lines that had already been restored had to be shut down again because the available generation capacity was insufficient.

According to the authority, priority is being given to supplying vital facilities. Thirty-nine hospitals and six water supply facilities with their pumping stations are connected to the grid in order to maintain medical care and drinking water supplies in parts of the city.

Based on experience from previous outages, the situation is expected to largely normalize in the coming days and hours.

First outage since Trump's energy blockade

The technical director of Guiteras suggested that Wednesday's partial grid failure could be related to the overall low available generation capacity. The low load distribution meant that after the Guiteras outage, the remaining generation units also had to be taken off the grid.

Cuba has been suffering from a severe energy crisis for several years, caused by fuel shortages, outdated power plant infrastructure, and a lack of spare parts. As a result, the island's power grid has collapsed partially or completely several times in recent years, most recently in [March last year](#). The situation has become even more tense since the start of the [US energy blockade](#), which has meant that the island has received hardly any vital fuel

supplies since December. Since the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3, the US has been intercepting tankers bound for Cuba and threatening energy suppliers with punitive tariffs.

Although Cuba can cover around 55 percent of its electricity needs with domestic heavy oil, decentralized power generation via diesel generators, which served as a buffer in previous crises, is currently largely out of operation. The partial collapse of the grid was the first such incident since the tightening of the energy blockade. ([Cubaheute](#))