



County of Los Angeles
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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DAVID E. JANSSEN
Chief Administrative Officer

April 16, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen 
Chief Administrative Officer

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**LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S RESPONSE TO LARGE-SCALE POWER OUTAGES -
FINAL REPORT**

On August 19, 2003, on a motion by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, your Board directed the Chief Administrative Office, assisted by Internal Services, Health Services, Public Works, Fire, and Sheriff to develop a report on the County's ability to respond to a large-scale power outage of the type that had recently occurred on the East Coast. On September 19, 2003, I sent you a report on County departments' ability to respond to a large-scale power outage, followed by additional interim reports on December 1, 2003 and April 1, 2004 concerning the preparedness levels of area utility companies. This memo will serve as a final report on this subject.

OPERATIONAL AREA POWER OUTAGE TASKFORCE

In February and March, the Chief Administrative Office, Office of Emergency Management (OEM) held a series of meetings and interviews with the Operational Area Power Outage Taskforce (taskforce), consisting of Internal Services Department (ISD), City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP), Southern California Edison (SCE), the Gas Company, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), to ascertain their preparedness levels. In addition, the utilities completed a Power Outage questionnaire. What follows is the information they provided:

1) **Energy Distribution Network** - Both electrical and gas distribution networks have redundant means of bringing energy into Southern California. Electrical and natural gas supplies can be rerouted around potential supply disruptions. These back-up and redundant energy pathways reduce the potential of a catastrophic failure of the type experienced by the East Coast power distribution network. In a "worst case scenario", in which all redundant power sources and back-up networks fail, power could still be restored within eight to twelve hours.

2) **Facilities/Infrastructure Support (emergency back-up power)** - Utilities indicated that they do have emergency back-up power for basic evacuation and fire safety systems, such as emergency lighting, fire alarms, and sprinkler systems, to continue operation of key energy monitoring, distribution, and producing facilities. These facilities would direct the rerouting and repair work required after a catastrophic failure of the type experienced on the East Coast.

3) **Communications Systems** -The utilities have telephone systems that *will* function during a power outage. In addition to conventional telephones, the utilities have added radio and e-mail communication systems that will operate during one-hour "rolling blackouts" or longer duration large-scale power outages. The utilities have established emergency communication protocols for their administrative and operational facilities to assure efficient coordination of power restoration.

Emergency and Business Continuity Planning – Utilities have emergency plans to continue services during short term "rolling blackouts." Utilities are working with local and state government through the California Utilities Emergency Association (CUEA), a state agency that operates in conjunction with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), to coordinate the utilities in time of large-scale power outage emergencies. Additionally, DWP, SCE, MTA, and the Gas Company all have agency representatives that respond to the County's Emergency Operations Center during emergencies that impact or involve utilities. Local utilities have incorporated plans for long-term power outages into current efforts underway for their business continuity plans.

Transportation Systems (light rail and subway) - Currently MTA systems *cannot* provide continuous operation of their light rail and subway systems during a large-scale power outage. Back-up power and plans are in place for the safe evacuation of passengers and MTA staff from trains during large-scale power outages.

Community preparedness for power outages is also important. Using funds from the FY2002 Homeland Security supplemental planning grant, OEM contracted for the development of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) template to assist cities to develop

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business continuity plans for a variety of hazards, including power failures. The contractor has completed the template, which is now available to jurisdictions to use. OEM is managing the distribution of these materials, which will help our local communities be better prepared in the event of a widespread power outage. In addition, the County is aggressively pursuing completion of crisis communication and business continuity plans for all departments. Departments will receive training on our BCP software the week of April 19.

FINDINGS

In a "worst case" scenario, in which all redundant power sources and back-up networks fail, power could still be restored within eight to twelve hours. The MTA light rail and subway systems *do not* have the ability to operate without a functional power grid. However, back-up power is available for the safe evacuation of passengers and staff from the MTA trains following a power outage.

RECOMMENDATION

The County needs to continue collaborative planning with our utility and transit partners, and we must continue to encourage energy conservation in order to maximize the use of limited energy resources and help in the prevention of large-scale power outages.

The Operational Area Power Outage Taskforce has been formalized into an ongoing work group and will expand to include representatives from Federal, State, and additional Operational area local governments, as well as infrastructure-related agencies in the transportation, communications, and energy fields in order to address the challenges posed by large-scale power outages.

DEJ:CP
JT:cm

Attachments

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Emergency Management Council