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AMERICAN BLACKOUT: FACTS

ARE U.S. BLACKOUTS BECOMING MORE COMMON?
Get the Facts and Learn from the Past

THE FACTS

- Blackouts can happen anywhere, and to anyone.
- Blackouts on the United States electrical grid have become more severe in the past 20 years.
- In the past decade alone, an estimated 679 widespread power outages occurred due to severe weather, costing the United States an annual average of between \$18 billion and \$33 billion USD.
- Seven of the 10 costliest storm outages in United States history occurred between 2004 and 2012.
- Blackouts cost the economy \$112 USD per person per day, before accounting for injury, death, crime and delay, according to one analysis.

A POWER GRID SNAPSHOT

- Often called the largest machine in the world, the United States electrical grid connects Americans to 5,800 major power plants and includes more than 724,050 kilometres of high voltage transmission lines.
- America's electricity is supplied by the East, West and Texas power grids.
- There are more than 140 million electric customers, spanning homes, businesses and industries.
- Seventy per cent of key power grid components are more than 25 years old and the average age of power plants tops 30 years.
- Many experts refer to the electrical grid as America's "glass jaw" and worry about a well-placed attack's ability to cripple our infrastructure.
- In November 2013, more than 200 utility companies and government agencies across the United States, Canada and Mexico will participate in GridEx II, a large-scale grid security exercise that will test the electricity infrastructure's ability and readiness in the face of a cyber-attack.

REAL BLACKOUTS; STARTLING CONSEQUENCES

- February 2013: The Super Bowl was interrupted for more than 30 minutes due to the failure of a "relay" device, which had just been installed to prevent such incidents.
- October 2012: The largest Atlantic hurricane on record, Hurricane Sandy, left an estimated 8.5 million customers without power across the eastern United States, some for more than two weeks. It was responsible for at least \$65 billion USD in damages and 159 deaths, 50 of which were attributed to the power outages.
- June 2012: The derecho left 4 million people in darkness for up to a week in 10 states. Having coincided with a heat wave, there were 34 extreme heat-related deaths in the storm's aftermath, in addition to the 13 people killed during the derecho.
- September 2011: Loss of a single transmission line in Arizona cascaded into a blackout affecting more than 2.7 million people across Southern California, Arizona and Mexico. The outage lasted less than 24 hours but shut down two nuclear reactors and dumped nearly 12 litres of sewage into local waterways, closing San Diego beaches.
- August 2005: The "costliest hurricane in U.S. history" according to Federal Emergency Management Agency

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(FEMA), Hurricane Katrina battered the Gulf Region and ravaged the city of New Orleans. Post-storm conditions left some without power for more than three weeks, as more than 270,000 sought refuge in shelters with reports of looting and crime. In the end there were more than 1,800 fatalities, many sustained in the horrific post-storm conditions.

- August 2003: Tree branches brushing up against power lines brought down power in eight states and Canada in the biggest blackout in North American history. Fifty million people lost power for up to two days, leading to at least 11 deaths and billions of USD in damages.



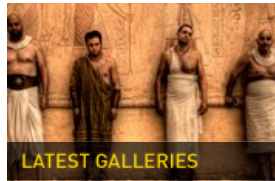
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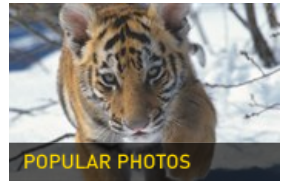
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