

Electricity safety buenos aires

A major power outage crippled several of Argentina's provinces on Wednesday, including large parts of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, plunging millions of people into darkness for at least two hours as summer temperatures soared.

The massive outage, which hit around around 4.30pm local time, affected large swathes of the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (AMBA), hitting several neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires City and large parts of the Conurbano, the populous region that encircles the capital.

The fire, on a high-tension line outside the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, triggered a safety system to kick in and turn off several power plants and lines, according to a government spokeswoman. Engineers rushed in to fix the line and reconnect millions nationwide, with most users gradually having their service restored.

The outages extended from the capital to other industrial and residential hubs in the centre of the country, as well as provinces in the northwest, along the Andes, and as far south as Santa Cruz in Patagonia. Plants out of service included major state-run nuclear facilities Atucha I and Embalse.

Energy Undersecretary Santiago Yanotti told the C5N news channel that power demand had soared due to the high temperatures. In Buenos Aires, it reached 36 degrees Celsius (97 degrees Fahrenheit) on Wednesday.

"The blackout is large, affecting several provinces. At a time of high temperature as it was today in much of the country, the electricity sector demanded 25,000 megawatts and there was a cut that removed about 9,000 megawatts. This caused the system to break down," said the official.

The plant, along with the Central Puertos power plant, was taken offline as a safety precaution, sparking widespread problems nationwide, the country's national nuclear power authority Nucleoel?ctrica said.

In a note sent Wednesday night to the Federal Court of Campana, which has jurisdiction in the region where the fire took place, Economy Minister Sergio Massa called on judges to "investigate, prosecute and, if necessary, arrest those responsible for the very serious acts that could fall under the crimes of arson and havoc," as he expressed his "certainty about the intentionality" of what happened.

There was no immediate official data on the numbers of households affected, but a government source told AFP that Cordoba, Santa Fe and Mendoza provinces along with Buenos Aires experienced outages.

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Web: <https://sumthingtasty.co.za/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

