

Pyongyang electricity safety

Access to electricity in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, remains spotty. Even in the center of the city, home to the country's elite, power is available for only a few hours, and authorities are quick to spread the blame for the electricity shortages.

Central District and Pyongchon District in the center of Pyongyang had electricity for an average of three hours a day last month and an average of five hours a day this month because of several holidays; a source in Pyongyang told Daily NK on Feb. 28, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Kangdong County, a suburb of Pyongyang, had electricity for an average of just over an hour a day in January and February, while families in Ryongsong and Sadong districts were able to use electricity for an average of two or three hours a day; the source added.

In March 2023, Daily NK quoted a source in Pyongyang as saying that central districts had an average of four hours of electricity a day, while districts in the outskirts had about one or two hours. In 2019, Daily NK reported that the central districts of the capital received an average of five hours of electricity per day.

In sum, the electricity supply in the central districts of Pyongyang, which the regime's propaganda calls the 'capital of the revolution'; has not improved at all in recent years. If anything, it has gotten worse.

Residents of the central districts may grumble to themselves [about the lack of electricity], but they would never do so openly out of their awareness [of their privileged status] as citizens of the capital, and elite citizens at that. Perhaps because of endless indoctrination about the need to cooperate with the Marshal's [Kim Jong Un's] efforts to strengthen the country's defense, they think that electricity should be diverted to the military and arms industry to support this cause; the source said.

In the winter, families wait until everyone is home and then eat dinner by the light of their flashlights. Without power to light them, all their chandeliers and LED lights are just useless trappings. There is power in the morning and evening rush hours, but the voltage is too low for the elevators to do much. In the winter, the elevators don't even serve the lower floors. So everything has to be carried up by porters or lifted by pulleys on the balcony. This means that everyone knows what people are bringing into their apartments.

When people go to work in the morning, the family's batteries are distributed and charged at the workplace, which is supplied with electricity during the week, and then used at night when they come home. Families that have solar panels can use them to charge their batteries.

The government says the low voltage is the result of the American and South Korean plots to isolate

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and destroy us. The government keeps criticizing the Americans as our sworn enemies and claims that our power generators can't work at full capacity because [sanctions] make it impossible to improve materials or new parts," the source said.

"Given the lack of electricity, people aren't too excited about being given a high-rise apartment to live in. But there's little they can do because complaining would be tantamount to siding with the Americans."

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Until last month, electricity use for threshing crops on local farms was prioritized, and Pyongyang citizens' electricity use was limited to 5 to 8 hours a day. However, to welcome the new year, electricity supply to Pyongyang has gradually expanded since the beginning of this month, and it is said that electricity has been coverage 24 hours a day since mid-month.

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