

Dealing with Large Scale Power Emergencies: Applying the lessons learnt from global case studies in the South African context

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Abstract

Background and Context

Energy security of supply is probably one of the most topical subjects on a global basis, and one of the most talked about crises in the business world. As we see more constraints being introduced into global supply chains, impact of natural weather and the onset of climate change effects – keeping the lights on today is harder than it ever was.

There are more large events that disrupt supply globally than ever before. When such events do occur, they strategically affect utilities, customers and have far reaching socio-economic impacts in their regions.

South Africa is no different to having to deal with large events such as the Koeberg outage in 2006 and the national load shedding events of the 18th January 2007. This paper focuses on some of the lessons learnt from other outages across the world; and how those utilities dealt with crises.

Lessons learnt from the Global Case Studies

Globally, there have been several large incidents from which lessons were learnt in terms of management of emergencies. These would differ from the usual approach to management of outages.

In such conditions, there is usually a broader business mobilisation to manage such a crisis. Typically these will include:-

- Strong stakeholder management
- Strategic control of the situation through operations
- Clear governance, decision making and accountability during the incident
- Integration with the broader business community to keep them abreast of developments

Examples from the outage in the Eastern US in 2003, Italy, London and Australia highlight learnings that are applicable in SA.

Finally, how these lessons have been applied in the South African context can have a profound impact on how to manage an emergency in the electricity industry – to the extent that you can anticipate and become better prepared to ensure business continuity.