



A plan has been drawn up between City Power and Eskom to give the public a heads up about when to expect load-shedding cuts.

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UNPLANNED power blackouts are on the way out, after the City and Eskom agreed on a proposed load shedding plan. The City; its power utility, City Power; and Eskom have tabled the ambitious plan, which envisages eradicating, or reducing, the effects of load shedding on the metro.

Load shedding plans

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This would minimise traffic disruptions and improve customer understanding and communication, as well as conserve electricity.

In terms of the plan, load shedding black outs would last for four hours, twice as long as the initial outages, said Vally Padayachee, the director of engineering operations at City Power. Ultimately, this would lead to less frequent power outages and a high degree of certainty for

customers, as well as cut traffic problems.

City Power distributes electricity across most of Johannesburg; Eskom is the national power supplier, and it supplies power to parts of the city. City Power falls under Eskom's central region. "The load shedding plan put forward will cater for the situation at hand, and we hope to minimise it," Padayachee said.

Eskom was previously forced to shed over 200 megawatts a day, much to the chagrin of the public, he noted. "The new plan envisages treating all customers equally. This means informing them of all our plans to load shed beforehand, so that they can prepare themselves."

He said the previous load shedding plans of Eskom and City Power were unpredictable, and posed a huge risk of loss of revenue for business, and inconvenience for motorists and households. "Our customers asked for a more efficient communication system, and some degree of certainty as to when the load shedding will take place, so that they can be prepared and avoided negative impacts."

Certainty

The City's plan could be used as a precursor for other metros or the country as a whole, Padayachee noted. "[It] is designed to give some element of substance in certainty as to when load shedding will take place."

It would be reviewed at the end of March; if successful it would be carried forward.

Johannesburg's plan is aligned with Eskom's national plan, to upgrade and expand the country's electricity infrastructure. "This is not a conflict plan. It is designed to complement the national plan, but focuses only on Joburg," Padayachee said.

Eskom plans to spend about R343-billion over the next five years to set up new power stations, with the first one expected to be functional by 2013. Work on two new coal-fired power stations has already begun, and the parastatal is considering bids to build a new conventional

nuclear power station.

The parastatal also seeks to cut electricity demand by about 3 000 megawatts before 2012 and a further 5 000 megawatts by 2025 through the promotion of solar-powered geysers and liquid petroleum gas for cooking, along with other energy efficiency measures.

Although load shedding still posed a huge risk for the country's economy this winter, given the traditional increased demand in the cold months, Eskom had already built extra or enough capacity to cater for it, confirmed Klass Gouws, its regional engineering manager.

"We are in the process of building extra capacity to deal with unforeseen load shedding."

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