

Repeated Inner-City Blackouts Leave Households Without Basic Services

Press Release: JPOMA Calls for Emergency Action – 1 October 2026.

Johannesburg inner-city households have endured prolonged electricity outages, disrupted water supplies and another failed restoration after Central Substation caught fire for the third time in recent weeks. The Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association (JPOMA) is calling for emergency intervention to restore reliable basic services and prevent further failures.

JPOMA members report that some residents spent approximately 17 days without electricity before supply returned on 25 September, only to be lost again within hours following the fire on 26 September. City Power said approximately 98% of the network affected by the previous fire had been restored before the latest incident.

For affected households, this means prolonged periods without normal lighting, hot water, cooking facilities or refrigeration. Children cannot study normally, residents working from home lose working time, and everyday tasks become costly and difficult.

Electricity failures also become water failures. In buildings where municipal pressure is insufficient, electric pumps are needed to move water to upper floors. Once stored supplies are depleted, residents can be left without water for drinking, washing and sanitation.

Generators do not necessarily restore electricity to apartments. Members report using them to keep essential common-area lighting, lifts and water pumps operating while residents remain without normal power inside their homes. Examples supplied to JPOMA cover over 6000 residential units affected by the outages; these are examples of the impact, not a count of the entire affected area.

Maintaining even these limited services carries substantial costs. Separate members have reported:

- R1.115 million in diesel over two months, keeping common-area services operating across three residential buildings.
- An estimated R2.5 million in diesel, based on approximately 14 days of generator operation across another portfolio.
- A further R200,000 in diesel expenditure, over a two month period.
- Another member reported water costs of R10,000 every two days, with diesel adding R15,000 every two days if its generator operated continuously. Costs forced restricted operating hours and occasional shutdowns, affecting tenants, including dressmakers dependent on electricity for their livelihoods. Increased generator use also brought forward a service costing approximately R12,000.

These emergency arrangements cannot replace a reliable municipal supply. Members report tenants moving out, rental boycotts and requests to end leases as disruption continues.

The failures extend beyond September. Records of the 28 August engagement with City Power describe ageing infrastructure, previous fire damage, temporary supply arrangements, reduced backup capacity and continuing theft and security challenges.

Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association (JPOMA) NPC

(Reg. no.2011/110042/08)

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The question is therefore not simply when repairs will be completed. It is why repeated failures continue and what will change before residents face another prolonged blackout.

JPOMA calls on the City and City Power to:

- Implement effective protection of Central Substation and the underground electricity network, and explain how its effectiveness will be monitored.
- Publish findings on the repeated fires and address identified engineering and security failures.
- Provide a funded repair and prevention plan with named responsibility, deadlines and public progress reports.
- Give residents reliable, area-specific restoration updates and coordinate emergency water support where outages interrupt supply.
- Engage directly with affected communities, businesses and property owners.

Continued disruption threatens residents' livelihoods and confidence in living in the inner city, putting years of regeneration at risk.

Residents need more than another restoration announcement. They need electricity that stays on, access to water and a credible explanation of how the next failure will be prevented.

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