

Eskom drops load shedding to stage 4 after diesel delivery

Eskom on Sunday reported a substantial increase in its power generation capacity. This improvement is attributed to the successful return of several generating units that had previously been out of service, as well as the replenishment of emergency reserves at the pumped storage and Open Cycle Gas Turbine (OCGT) power stations.



Eskom's Palmiet pumped storage hydro plant has an installed capacity of 400MW. Source: Eskom

As a result of these positive changes, Eskom has announced a reduction in load shedding from Stage 6 to Stage 4. This change took effect on Sunday, starting at 12pm and will continue until 5am on Monday.

"We have seen significant improvement from Friday when we implemented Stage 6 load shedding and on Saturday. We have made progress as a result of the intensification of load shedding. The [diesel] volumes at Ankerlig Power Station... are sitting at 55%, Acacia Power Station at 50% and Port Rex Power Station at about 55%," said Minister in the Presidency responsible for Electricity, Dr Kgosisentsho Ramokgopa in a media briefing on Sunday.



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20 Nov 2023



"Once they are above these levels we should be able to manage them. In relation to our pump storage at Drakensberg [we have] additional generation hours, it is about 90 hours of generation, Ingula we have 58 hours of generation and at Palmiet 33 hours of generation."

He made these remarks while providing an update on electricity generation performance following the implementation of Stage 6 load shedding by Eskom.

Stage 3 and 4 for the rest of the week

The power utility said Stage 3 load shedding will be implemented from 5am until 4pm on Monday, followed by Stage 4 load shedding from 4pm until 5am on Tuesday.

This pattern of implementing Stage 3 load shedding in the morning and Stage 4 load shedding in the evening will be repeated daily until Thursday.

Ramokgopa noted that Matla unit 2 has come back, Arnot unit 3 has come back and Tutuka has come back.

"Two things have happened that we promised. We have replenished our emergency reserves and some units have come back... Kriel unit 3 has come back. There's an expectation that on Sunday... Medupi 5 [will come back] and [on Monday], we are planning to receive two units, Majuba and Lethabi," Ramokgopa said.

He explained that on Friday there was a spike in the demand of above by 1,500MW.

"We had to do one of two things - either continue to deploy the emergency reserves, which we were depleting faster than anticipated, so that was not an option."

He explained the second option as a plan to intensify load shedding. "That is the option that we followed because it is the most judicious option, with the challenges that were confronting us. The major problem started the week preceding the last one where we had significant number of losses and this meant that we had to engage our emergency reserves."

Relief was anticipated

Eskom took a decision to engage the emergency reserves because we they were anticipating generating units to come back on time to provide relief.

"Indeed, those units that were scheduled to come back were able to come back on time but then we had a significant number of units that were failing. When we opened the week of 13 November, the emergency reserves were at levels below 70%."

"This includes our pump storage and the OCGT. As we continued to deploy them, there was significant reduction in those reserves, which is the dam levels and OCGT," he continued. "There was a significant dip on 21 November and that significant dip in relation to the emergency reserves coincided with us losing units because we must compensate the megawatts that are lost as a result of the dip."



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"Once it [the dip] reached critical levels, our primary preoccupation was to protect the grid and we pulled the emergency reserves back and as we pulled them back, it means that there were less megawatts available."

He reiterated that if Eskom builds an additional buffer, it means that the country will be less prone to major fluctuations in the intensity of load shedding.

“...That’s why unit 2 and 5 at Kusile Power Station are important. We are targeting those to come back by the third week of December. Once you build that buffer, even if you had to have extraordinary events, there is some degree of buffer and therefore the rate at which we intensify load shedding might not be as severe as we have experienced over the last 30 hours or so,” he concluded.

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