



PRESS RELEASE

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SUNDAY'S POWER OUTAGE

At approximately 7:10am on Sunday morning the high voltage cable that connects Waterport Terrace substation to Europort substation suffered a sudden and unexpected failure within the electrical distribution network, registering a system earth fault that was identified by the Spark generators in operation at the time.

The generators inbuilt earth fault protection relays are set to trip instantaneously in order to avoid damaging the generating plant. Unfortunately, in an island-type electrical configuration such as the one in Gibraltar, this can cause a domino effect that leads to the remaining generators tripping on overload. This was essentially what happened on Sunday morning causing a total power failure.

This type of earth fault was the result of a damaged high voltage cable, damage which is likely to have been caused by the essential excavation works currently underway in preparation for the infrastructure works for the new power station. Although contractors take safety measures using site clearance procedures to identify existing services, the risk of damaging services, the risk of damaging services, including underground cables is always present.

The Gibraltar Electricity Authority are continuously working, as part of the improvements to the Electrical Distribution Network, to reduce restoration times by improving how the network is monitored and introducing automation to certain restoration features. However, it is only in recent years that the GEA has been able to use more modern technology on a network that had been neglected for many years.

Sunday morning's power accident was the unfortunate result of accidental damage caused to an underground cable, and not a failure of generating capacity. The ongoing infrastructure works are essential to the development of the new Electrical Distribution Network and the building of the new power station, which when finished will ensure a safe and reliable electricity supply to the whole of Gibraltar. In the meantime, the modern plant rented by the government brought an immediate end to power cuts that were the result of a shortage of generating power at an ageing and unreliable plant.



Sunday's was the first major power cut that Gibraltar has experienced since November 2014. As long as these essential infrastructural works are being conducted there will always be a risk of accidental damage to existing services, which may temporarily affect power supply. However, these works are necessary to ensure a reliable and safe electricity supply for the future. This Government will not neglect such vital improvement to Gibraltar's Electrical Distribution Network, and takes every possible precaution to ensure that power outages such as the one experienced on Sunday morning do not happen, and that if a fault does occur, that it is fixed and power is returned as soon as possible.

The GEA takes this opportunity to apologise for the loss of power supply, and thanks the public for their patience and understanding whilst these improvements to the Electrical Distribution Network are carried out.