

# Editorial

## Blackout Put Dent In Area's Economy

Sometimes we who live in Queens feel as if the rest of New York City exists on another planet. This was never more true than during the 10 days of the blackout that started Monday, July 17 and, for some of us, lasted until the following Tuesday, July 25. Other boroughs functioned in 2006, but life in Northwestern Queens existed on a level closer to 1750, if not earlier.

Especially hard hit by this involuntary experiment in time travel were the businesses that are the lifeblood of the area's economy. The long-term economic impact of the power outage has yet to be fully understood, but its effects are being felt even now—and will be for some time to come. Food stores and restaurants will never get back what they lost, in inventory or in trade. Nor will the effects be felt only by business proprietors alone. Businesses fearing another sudden outage will not keep as much inventory on hand, especially if that inventory consists wholly or in part of perishable goods. Smaller inventories mean higher prices. Area con-

sumers will find themselves paying more for everything, from cold cuts to shoes. Higher prices will lead to a further drop in business. During the week that some businesses were closed, their employees, many of whom are paid by the hour, had no income at all. No income means no spending, either for necessities or on recreation. The city will face a concomitant loss in taxes collected on goods and services.

The blackout's impact will ultimately be felt across the city—most severely in Northwest Queens, of course, but sooner or later, everywhere. Business owners cannot be compelled to invest in Queens. A climate must be created to encourage investment and development, and given the events of the past two weeks, we salute our local chambers of commerce, business and economic development organizations and business improvement districts for their valiant efforts in doing just that. We call on all our readers to try to assist them however they can. We applaud those entities that are trying to help us all get out from under, such as the Commerce Bank

branch on Ditmars Boulevard, which volunteered its facilities for use as a claim center. We also salute our local elected officials, both city and state, for standing up for us. They have shown where their loyalties lie and it behooves us to reciprocate; we trust that our readers, like us, will express their thanks and support, however they can.

Meanwhile, we call on Consolidated Edison to review its infrastructure maintenance practices to ensure to the best of the utility's ability that this does not happen again. We accept that anything mechanical can wear out and fail, but last year, the Northwestern Queens power grid experienced more than 70 failure incidents—the highest in New York City. There is no way this could be considered even remotely acceptable. Queens must and will rise above the calamity of the blackout of 2006, but immediate measures must be instituted to make sure that we remain with the rest of the city firmly grounded in the 21st century.



Letters  
to the  
Editor

### 3rd World Power Grid

To The Editor:

In reference to the recent blackout crisis in Queens, Con Ed CEO Kevin Burke seems at a loss for words to properly explain things. Maybe he should have listened to Jon Toigo, author of *Disaster Recovery: Preparing for the Unthinkable*.

I thought you might also want to hear from Jon what KeySpan, the energy company on Long Island, is doing that might prevent a Queens-like disaster.

Back in March of this year, at a disaster recovery event in Times Square where Jon spoke, he pointedly predicted that a blackout, much worse than 2003, was bound to happen if proper precautions weren't taken.

To get the point across, reporter James Rogers of the New York City-based technical publication *Byte & Switch* wrote a full article on Jon's discourse:

[http://www.byteandswitch.com/document.asp?doc\\_id=90962](http://www.byteandswitch.com/document.asp?doc_id=90962)

"You're looking at a major possibility for disaster this summer," said Jon at the time. "I have talked to a lot of energy firms and they are concerned about this."

Concerned, but apparently not enough so to take the necessary precautions to avert what just happened in Queens.

In Jon's estimation, the United States is a superpower with a Third World power grid, unprepared to meet the rising energy demands that come with drastic climactic changes. With summers getting hotter, and a particularly hot one predicted for New York as far back as March of this year, Jon correctly predicted that such power grid inadequacies were a setup for disaster.

"If they have separate [backup] facilities, make sure that they are on a separate grid," said Jon back in March. "Putting them over the river in New Jersey may not help."

Almost five years after 9/11 and almost three years after the NYC Blackout of 2003, the question remains, why has more not been done to improve and protect our power grid?

Jon can discuss some of the politics, economics, and technology of power grids and what needs to be done to have a 21st century power grid for all of New York and surrounding areas.

Sincerely,  
Emilio Dabul  
FastLane Communications  
South Plainfield, New Jersey

### Query For Con Ed

To The Editor:

Con Edison is hiding a secret. Eighteen years ago, when we had the last power outage, Con Ed increased our electric rates, stating that they would purchase

new equipment so that a power outage wouldn't occur again.

There is one question that Con Edison should answer—did they acquire new equipment?

The major portion of their equipment should be 18 years old, or newer; if not, what happened to the money from the increased rates?

Sincerely,  
Athan John Christodoulou  
Elmhurst

### What She'd Like To Say:

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

Thank you for going to Astoria Park to hold your "photo-op" yesterday evening [July 20]. My fellow Astorians are quite upset with Con Edison and our elected officials, with good reason. As you know, our electric power went out on Monday evening, July 17. We are currently [July 21] without power, despite paying a big rate increase since December 2005. That being said, a new power plant has just been completed in our neighborhood, that we do not benefit from.

Con Edison is to present you with a report in two weeks regarding this problem. I hope you and our elected officials also accept your part in this growing crisis. Many of our one- and two-family homes are being torn down and replaced with bigger luxury apartment complexes, condos and co-ops. You are allowing this expansion by granting Building Permits, hence "your part". How is it just, to expect us citizens to save every food receipt, so we can claim our losses? Some stores do not offer receipts. I am told to "get use[d] to" the "paperless era we are now in." Con Edison knows the problem was caused by their trying to supply power to all the new multidwellings and electric-run business-

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