

# Power still out for 1.5 million Texans amid deadly heat wave in aftermath of Hurricane Beryl

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10 July 2024

Nearly 1.5 million electricity customers were still without power Wednesday night in Texas two and half days after Hurricane Beryl made landfall southwest of Houston early Monday morning.

According to statistics published by PowerOutage.us, homeowners and businesses have no electricity in approximately three dozen counties from the Texas Gulf Coast region through the Houston metropolitan area and north along the border with Louisiana.

The National Weather Service office in Houston said on Wednesday, “With power outages continuing across southeast Texas, the lack of air-conditioning will aggravate the risk for heat-related illnesses as high temperatures warm into the lower and mid-90s.”

Matagorda County was the hardest hit area of the state. County Judge Bobby Seiferman said Wednesday during a press briefing about the hurricane’s aftermath that 2,500 households in the unincorporated coastal community of Sargent may not have power for another two weeks.

With hotel rooms booked up for miles around Houston, *USA Today* reported that some residents in the impacted areas have been sleeping in their cars due to the unbearable heat that immediately followed the hurricane.

Crystal Krest, who is from Tomball, Texas, about 30 miles northwest of Houston, told *USA Today* she and her two children slept in their car on Tuesday night because it was the only place where they could get some cool air. She said, “Pretty much everybody in my neighborhood is sleeping in their cars right now because it’s just unbearable. We can’t sleep in our houses.”

Krest also said that over the last two days the family

has spent hours in line for gas and meals at fast food chains like Chicken Express and Jack in the Box. She said no timeline has been provided as to when power will be restored.

Hurricane Beryl, fueled by the effects of capitalist-induced climate change to become the earliest Category 5 hurricane on record, intensified quickly and passed through Jamaica, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines last week with enormous destructive power. Buildings and power lines were knocked down and 11 people were killed.

After passing over Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula and weakening to a tropical storm, Beryl regained strength as it passed over the Gulf of Mexico, hitting Texas as a Category 1 hurricane, prompting the shutdown of the port of Corpus Christi. At least 12 people have died in Texas and Louisiana in storm-related incidents, including drownings, falling trees, carbon monoxide poisoning and heat-related illnesses.

On Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, the storm moved away from the Gulf through the Midwest and into the Northeast, with heavy rains, flash flooding, thunderstorms and tornadoes. PowerOutage.us reported tens of thousands of customers without electricity in Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York amid continuing high winds and rain from the massive weather system.

Tornadoes were reported in upstate New York south of Buffalo and in Posey County, Indiana near Evansville. Thirty-four counties in Michigan were under a flood watch and eight under flood advisory as of midday Wednesday, with 2-4 inches of rain expected from the remnants of Beryl.

The strength of the hurricane was greater than

anticipated as it went from a tropical storm to a Category 1 hurricane, picking up energy from the warm water in the Gulf of Mexico. The unpreparedness of the ruling establishment was revealed in a report by ABC 13 in Houston that said, “the storm caught many off guard, potentially from the storm’s timing after a long holiday weekend to believing the impacts would be minimal.

“... That being said, Beryl will be a lesson for many that even though Houston and southeast Texas are no strangers to tropical systems, we still have to adequately prepare for each if one were to come our way. This includes making sure you have a hurricane preparedness kit and plans in place for you and your family for before, during, and after the storm.”

Although the media wishes to place responsibility for unpreparedness on the actions of individuals, the fact is that the federal government and the Texas state government have once again shown a staggering level of negligence and disregard for the impact of increasingly severe weather events upon the public.

Greg Abbott, the governor of Texas, has not even been in the state, as he left for a nine-day business trip to Korea, Taiwan and Japan on Friday. The fascist Republican governor did not see fit to delay his travels or even come back after it was clear as of Sunday that Beryl’s impact would be devastating.

For its part, the Biden administration has sought to deflect responsibility for the deadly impact of the hurricane by arguing that Texas was receiving federal aid later than needed because state leaders were slow to request an official disaster declaration from the White House.

When Acting Governor Dan Patrick did not make the request for aid, the White House claimed administration officials tried multiple times to reach Abbott and Patrick, and only made contact with Patrick on Tuesday, at which point the disaster declaration was requested.

While both Abbott and Patrick denounced Biden for “turning Hurricane Beryl into a political issue,” they did not dispute the fact that no one from the Texas government reached out for federal aid in the first place. Patrick made the absurd argument that his office “needed to determine what our outstanding needs were before they could make an official request.”

Rafael Lemaitre, a former national director of public affairs for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), told the *Texas Tribune* that Texas officials should have made the disaster appeal sooner. There were widespread reports of power outages, deaths and property damage that were “more than sufficient” to prompt the request.

Lemaitre added, “The golden rule for disaster response is to go fast, go early, go big, and be smart about it.”

The White House reported that it was providing a paltry 500,000 meals and 800,000 liters of water that are “ready to distribute at the state’s request.” FEMA also deployed 60 generators “to provide power to critical infrastructure, if needed.”

Even with a disaster declaration by Texas, the support provided by FEMA is itself an expression of the callous lack of concern from the ruling class about what is needed under conditions of a massive power outage and a deadly heatwave.



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