

Hurricane Rafael hits Cuba: power grid collapses again



Flooding on the Ciénaga de Zapata peninsula on the southern coast of Matanzas province (source: [Lázaro Ramón Sosa/FB](#))

At 2:48 p.m. today, Wednesday, the Cuban power grid collapsed after Hurricane Rafael made landfall as a category 3 storm, with a wind force of 5 on the Saffire-Simpson scale. This was announced [on X](#) by the electricity supplier UNE. The hurricane was raging with wind speeds of up to 185 kilometers per hour over the western part of the island, where it hit land at 4:20 p.m. local time in the western province of Artemisa. Extensive evacuation measures were carried out in the past few days.

Public transportation was shut down throughout western Cuba starting Tuesday, and the international airports in Havana, Varadero, Gerona, and Cayo Largo del Sur will be closed until at least noon on Thursday, the authorities announced. At six o'clock on Wednesday morning, the highest state of alert was finally declared in the provinces of Villa Clara, Sancti Spíritus, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Mayabeque, Havana, Artemisa, Pinar del Río, and on the Isle of Youth.

As Havana's first party secretary, Liván Izquierdo, explained, 50,000 people were evacuated in the capital. In the province of Villa Clara, 13,000 people were evacuated in advance, and in Sancti Spíritus, 11,000 people were brought to safety. Evacuations also took place on the Isle of Youth and in other provinces.

[Reports of](#) flooding, high winds and heavy precipitation have been received from several locations in the west of the country, and these have now also reached Havana. Some mountain villages in the province of Villa Clara have been cut off as a result of the flooding. The Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) are preparing rescue brigades to be sent to the most severely affected areas.

The power company announced that the emergency protocols are now being put into effect after the blackout. The last time [a nationwide power outage occurred](#) was on October 18, due to the high generation deficit and an unplanned power plant outage. In the past few days, several accidents have occurred, as a result of which the grid was severely damaged.

Hurricane Rafael left the island on Wednesday evening, heading towards the Gulf of Mexico. As the electricity supplier UNE announced, there was no major damage to the power plants. In central and eastern Cuba, work is already underway to create a microgrid to restore the national power grid, as the Ministry of Energy and Mining [announced](#) at 2 a.m. local time on Thursday. In the west, this process will be delayed due to the damage and the continuing heavy rain. The generation islands in the east of the country will later supply energy to power plants such as Energas Varadero and the 10 de Octubre thermal power plant in Cienfuegos, so that they can be restarted.

After Rafael left the island, the reconstruction phase for the provinces of Pinar del Río, Artemisa, Mayabeque, Havana, and the Isle of Youth was officially [decreed](#) at 10 a.m. local time.

Meanwhile, Cuba is still in the dark. There are 10 small energy islands (mainly thanks to the supply from the east of the country), with which the Energas gas-to-electricity plant in Varadero could be started up. This plant is now feeding energy into the western microgrid to start up the Antonio Guiteras power plant. Rafael has damaged at least one large transmission tower along the highway between Havana and Artemisa, which is making it difficult to restore the power grid. ([Cubaheute](#))