Power Still Out For Many in New York City

From VOA Learning English, this is the TECHNOLOGY REPORT in Special English.

Hundreds of thousands of people were without electricity last week in the northeastern United States. They lost power when Superstorm Sandy hit the area in late October. Last week, another storm brought more high winds and dropped snow on the already troubled New York City area.

Officials are blaming Sandy for more than one hundred deaths and more than fifty billion dollars in property damage. The storm left about eight million people without power for days. This included nearly five million people in New York State and New Jersey.

Sandy flooded parts of New York City's subway system and affected other transportation. It delayed movement of trucks carrying fuel to gasoline stations, resulting in long lines at gas pumps.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo spoke about the problems at a press conference last week.

"Many of the gas stations, especially in Nassau, there's gasoline in the tank in the ground but there's no power to run the pump. And that's been the problem."

Governor Cuomo said Superstorm Sandy has exposed problems with New York's infrastructure.

"These systems are the circulatory systems of the region. And you stop the circulatory system, and you paralyze the region."

He said the failure of the city's public utility system is of real concern.

"The utility system we have was designed at a different time for a different place. I believe the system is archaic and is obsolete in many ways."

The storm has led to calls for power companies to bury more electrical lines underground. But, at least one expert says similar efforts did not help New York. Otto Lynch is vice president of Power Line Systems in Wisconsin.

"The reason many people in New York are out of power is because it was underground and when the water came onshore, water and electricity don't mix. And they've got problems and it takes forever to find the problems. And when you do find the problems, it's not just a quick fix. You have to dig. You have to work. Out of sight, out of mind is great until there's a problem."

Otto Lynch says a bigger national problem has to do with electrical distribution poles. He says the current poles do not have to meet industry weather requirements. And he says the ones in New York did not.

"The structures aren't designed for the ninety-mile per hour winds that occurred and there were a lot of distribution failures."

Mr. Lynch is a member of the America's Infrastructure Committee at the American Society of Civil Engineers. The group produced its last report on the nation's infrastructure in two thousand nine.

"The two thousand nine grade for energy was a D+. That's actually better than most of the rest of the infrastructure. The average grade for all of America's infrastructure was a D."