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## Puerto Rico Left in the Dark, Again

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### Puerto Rico Left in the Dark, Again

Puerto Rico, the United States third largest island, often gets overlooked when hurricane season comes and goes. Where most of the attention goes to the Florida peninsula or East coast, Puerto Rico is still one of America's closest territories. As part of America's extended family, Puerto Rico should not be overlooked when natural disasters occur. When these disasters happen, they can have a tremendous impact on the island itself and the people in it. One major concern that has not been truly fixed yet is the energy crisis in Puerto Rico. Whenever storms hit, there is always a possibility of blackouts occurring, where the power is out for several days.

In 2017, when hurricane Maria made landfall it ruined part of *Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority's (PREPA)* grid, the island's then energy distributor. Resulting in many Puerto Ricans using gas generators for over half of that following year. With poor infrastructure to support the new grid, it was only a matter of time before another blackout would occur. That was five whole years ago and even now in 2022, they are still trying to rebuild some damage left over from hurricane Maria, one of the deadliest natural disasters within this century.

In 2020, LUMA, a private power company owned by Quanta Services Inc. in Houston, Texas and ATCO in Alberta, Canada was founded for the sole purpose of managing Puerto Rico's power grid issue. The following year they began operating on the island's fragile grid. After about a year now, there has been many complains from the locals there. Many have stated

that the wait time to get the power back up has been longer than it was before. Not at the level of when a hurricane would come by, but longer than usual. It also does not help that even the prices per kilowatt hour have gone up. As well as complains about poor customer service and damages to some home appliances have occurred due to voltage fluctuations.

With the island not having any reliable power at times, it makes it difficult to get things done like getting clean water or storing food in the fridge. Even storing medicine in there at times. Public services like hospitals rely heavily on alternative methods now than what they did before since they are aware of how unstable their power grid can be. The hospital is not a place where you would want to be left in the dark, since it is where many people go when disasters strike. Having a faulty grid also makes it difficult for people to communicate with each other, especially if they have family outside of the island. It is as if they were cut off from the outside world, all due to a poorly constructed grid and during these times it can be difficult for anyone to have a normal life since at any moment, the power could go out.



Fig.1 San Jose Light Map from NASA.

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