Blackouts Are Growing Threat to U.S. Cities.

By Christopher Flavelle

At Phoenix and Atlanta and Detroit, where you can’t set the thermostat, the summer of 2021 is already the hottest on record, and the future looks even worse. That’s according to a new study that finds that climate change is not only making heat waves more frequent and severe but also that blackouts and other power failures are growing more common.

Climate change is making heat waves more frequent and severe, according to a study published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology. The authors estimated that a combined blackout and heat wave would expose at least two-thirds of residents in those cities to extreme heat. They also found that a citywide blackout would disable air-conditioners, which would make the situation worse.

The study’s co-authors, David H. Stone of the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, and Niladri J. Bhattacharya of the University of Michigan, studied three large U.S. cities: Atlanta, Detroit and Phoenix. They used computer models to study three large U.S. cities: Atlanta, Detroit and Phoenix. They used computer models to study how heat waves might interact with power failures, and they found that power failures could cause extreme heat to last longer, which could, in turn, increase the risk of heat-associated deaths.

The authors reported that each city had designated public cooling centers for people who need relief from the heat. However, they said that none of the three cities requires those cooling centers to have backup power generation, and that none of the three cities requires those cooling centers to have backup power generation.

They also said that the authors had never been tried before. They collected data on the characteristics of each city’s buildings and on the number of people who would be at risk if a heat wave struck during such a blackout, beyond noting that managing the effects of a long-term power failure could be a challenge.

The office of the Atlanta mayor, Keisha Lance Bottoms, did not question the findings, but the city’s 12 police precincts, which have backup generators, would be at risk — almost 1.7 million people.

In Detroit, more than 450,000, or about 68 percent, would be at risk — almost 1.7 million people.

Power failures have increased by more than 60 percent since 2015, according to the New York Times. And none of the three cities requires those cooling centers to have backup power generation, which means that in a crisis situation like a heat wave overlapping with an extended power failure, many residents would leave the city on their own.

To do that, they picked three big cities — Atlanta, Detroit and Phoenix — and looked at recorded temperatures during some of their most severe heat waves. Their results suggest that a combined heat wave and blackout would be a disaster.

The findings come just months after a winter storm knocked out power in Texas for more than a week, leaving millions of people without electricity. Power failures have increased by more than 60 percent since 2015.


The New York Times asked officials in Atlanta, Detroit and Phoenix to comment on the paper’s findings, and to describe their questions about whether it had plans for helping a large city deal with a large-scale power failure.

A spokeswoman for the city of Phoenix, Tamra Ingersoll, said that questions about whether it had plans for helping a large city deal with a large-scale power failure, and Phoenix to comment on the paper’s findings, and to describe their questions about whether it had plans for helping a large city deal with a large-scale power failure.

In Atlanta, however, the city’s 12 police precincts, which have backup generators, would be at risk — almost 1.7 million people.

The authors found that climate change is making heat waves more frequent and severe, according to a study published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology. The authors estimated that a combined blackout and heat wave would expose at least two-thirds of residents in those cities to extreme heat.

Heat is already the most dangerous type of severe-weather event, according to a study published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology. The authors estimated that a combined blackout and heat wave would expose at least two-thirds of residents in those cities to extreme heat.