



NW Queens Blackout of 2006

Posted by [Glenn](#) on July 22, 2006 - 11:48am in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Demand/Consumption](#)

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Originally reported by Con Edison as a small isolated power outage affected at most 2,000 people, it was determined yesterday that the outage really affected something like 100,000 in Astoria, Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside and Hunter's Point sections of Queens. The power outage was caused by a mixture of aging infrastructure, high temperatures, high electrical demand and thunderstorms that flooded certain areas since last Sunday. And there is currently [no end in sight](#), despite original promises of 1-2 days.

Here's today's coverage: [NY Post](#), [NY Times](#) and [more NY Times](#), [NY Newsday](#) and [NY Daily News](#).

It probably will become clear over the next few days, but currently I'm proud that once again New York has shown that it can handle disruptions like this without going crazy. See an [old classic PO-NYC post](#) comparing the peaceful 2003 city-wide blackout to the more violent and destructive 1977 blackout and my [review of James Goodman's book "Blackout"](#)

I used to live in [Astoria](#) and am not surprised that the residents have not only remained peaceful but also amazingly patient. Many in the area are immigrants from Greece, Cyprus, Eastern Europe and South Asia. I'm not sure why the immigrant factor comes to mind. Perhaps immigrants are more accepting of minor disruptions and used to making sacrifices. Perhaps its because they have higher levels of [social capital](#). Many families live with 3 generations in the household and there are many active churches, ethnic-based community groups, retirement clubs and small business owners. Even on the hottest summer days, you will see large families gathered together in their yards talking to each other until the late hours of the evening. It's one of New York's real lively ethnic immigrant neighborhoods - in fact when they want to film period pieces about New York from the 1950s, they often film in Astoria since it still has that wonderful timeless feeling. For me, this is another small piece of evidence that social capital may be an important driver in how communities respond to energy shortages that may start to occur in the future.

What's most ironic about the power outage is that it sits right next to a power plant that generates more than half of NYC electrical power. But the low voltage cables got hit hard by the temperature and storms and perhaps demand was a factor. We will know soon more about what happened.



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