

Shifting the load not good enough anymore

State-owned power utility Eskom has again urged South African consumers to reduce their electricity usage by 10%.

Speaking at the South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry's mid-year seminar, Eskom demand side manager Andrew Etzinger said that a 10% reduction was required across the board – not only during peak times.

“Shifting the load is not good enough anymore,” he said at the meeting in Johannesburg.

“The 10% consumer reduction must be sustainable in order to advance growth of gross domestic product of 6% by 2010,” he added.

Etzinger said that although there had not been any load shedding during the past few weeks, he noted that this was as a result of large use customers reducing their consumption by 10%, which was restraining the economy. “The system is, however, still tight and vulnerable,” he said.

He also noted that, as of June 10, 2008, coal stockpiles at power stations was at an average of 19,8 days, with no station under a stockpile of 15 days. “We are currently moving this towards the goal of a 20-day stockpile,” Etzinger assured.

A short-term measure to deal with the energy crisis, was to increase the current energy efficiency drive as well as to implement the quota-based system of use, where high energy users were penalised for wasteful consumption, he said.

Government would be wholly responsible for this system, as Eskom had no jurisdiction to penalise high-energy consumers.

Energy conservation measures include the free exchange programme for incandescent light bulbs to more energy efficient CFL light bulbs, the implementation of smart metering, and the installation of solar heated water geysers.

Last week, Minerals and Energy Minister Buyelwa Sonjica said that the government was finalising a regulatory framework to ensure that the power conservation programme was enforced.

The framework, which was expected to be finalised by the end of June, would provide for sanctions against excessive use and wastage of electricity.

She said that the sanctions would be in the form of a tariff-based penalty, meaning excessive electricity users would pay more.

The power conservation programme aimed to reduce the country's

electricity consumption by at least 3 000 MW in the next three years.

Etzinger also cautioned that South Africa was likely to experience load shedding for the next seven to eight years.

By: Shannon O'Donnell

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