

BLACKOUT!



A White Paper

--By Lois Clark McCoy

October 2011

I have totaled, at least to my satisfaction, between 3 and a half million to 5 and a half million individuals that were affected by the September 8th, 2011 San Diego Gas and Electric power outage, including about 1 and a half million in Northern Mexico.

But who did it? Whoever, if anyone actually caused it IS NOT THE IMPORTANT QUESTION. There are too many theories, some scarier than others. And was it possible that it was the result of the Solar Flares that had been predicted by NOAA for that particular time and not any one person at all?

In this case WHY is not to fix the "blame", or even why it happened. It is WHY WAS IT SO CATASTROPHIC?.

First let's not call it a "power outage", Let's call it what it WAS. It was a loss of KNOWLEDGE by the people AFFECTED.

WHAT WAS GOING ON and WHAT were the consequent possible risks to them and their families.

It was NOT the loss of POWER.... Let's say it like it was: IT WAS THE LOSS OF LIGHT. We were literally "in the dark". No street lights. No traffic lights. No lighted signs to orient ourselves.

IT WAS THE LOSS OF ALL COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE AVERAGE PERSON OF THOSE MILLIONS AFFECTED.

IT WAS THE LOSS OF KNOWLEDGE OF ANY INFORMATION TO AID THEM IN ASSESSING THE POSSIBLE RISK TO THEIR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF THEIR FAMILIES AND TO THEIR COUNTRY.

YES, Television stations were broadcasting but had no information on what was the cause or the extent of the outages. And how many people could access their television (if they even had one?) without their power being on??? Catch 22, yes? And Smart Phones did work but only for SMS as the cell phone companies cut off local person to person calls for chatter and kept open as many capabilities for emergency traffic as possible. They, of all media, did the best job under the circumstances.

Government at all levels failed in its obligation to inform the PUBLIC of the state of the outage and its breadth. On the other hand DID THEY KNOW? Apparently NOT. Did our military

know? I have no idea. Probably Yes. Did they know the extent of the area. Probably not for a long time? Did they know that Northern Mexico was also affected?

It is becoming apparent that the Management of the Power Companies of both San Diego Gas and Electric and Arizona Power did not know themselves what the situation was. Yes, the Operators knew their problems and all were so busy trying to fix the outages that they perhaps did not? brief their Management???? So what could the Corporate heads say to the media IF THEY HAD ANY COMMUNICATION LINKS TO THE MEDIA that were operative???

HOWEVER THE POINT IS NOT ALL THOSE "LITTLE" THINGS.

THE TRUE LESSON TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS EVENT IS THAT WE ESSENTIALLY LOST ALL LIGHT; ESSENTIALLY ALL COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSEQUENTLY ALL **KNOWLEDGE** OF THE SITUATION for perhaps 5 and a half million people for 24 hours. Let's call this event a **BLACKOUT**. We called those outages in the 80's in New York and elsewhere in the Eastern U.S."BROWNOUTS" and they were Nothing on the scale of September 8th. .

WHY? BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF PART OF THE "NATIONAL GRID"; BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF OUR ABILITY TO GENERATE AND DISTRIBUTE ELECTRIC POWER.

Because of the **FRAGILITY OF THE ELECTRIC GRID SYSTEM OF OUR NATION**.

That Fragility was pointed out to the Dept. of Defense in 1983. It is said to be even more FRAGILE TODAY. But the Dept. of Defense and the National Government Agencies only "Regulate" the Utilities of our nation. They do not OWN them or Operate them. Corporations own and operate them for profit. It would appear these privately owned facilities are in a sorry state indeed; Fragile, Run down, poorly organized and dis-functional -- **And have been for at least more than thirty years.**

Japan had NO NATIONAL ELECTRIC GRID in place when their earthquake and tsunami struck a few months ago. We watched that effect on their efforts to recover and the situation continues today.

We in the United States do have a national GRID. But if it crumbles, as a piece of it did on Sept 8th, what is the difference??? The devastating effect is the same.

LET'S CALL A SPADE A SPADE. THE SOLUTION is NOT to focus on who made an error or was it a terrorist plot. THE WHY is the **Fragility** of one of the most essential INFRASTRUCTURES TO OUR VULNERABLE NATION.

THE QUESTION IS "HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS THIS VULNERABILITY "IN TIME"? My thoughts, lois

The information above was provided by the National Institute for Urban Search and Rescue, Office of Rescue, Recovery and Response/The Walking Drum.