

Hundreds of patients evacuated from Los Angeles hospital building that lost power in storm's wake

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Los Angeles Fire Department personnel gather by the emergency entrance to the Adventist Health White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles on Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023. A succession of power outages at the Los Angeles hospital prompted the evacuation of 28 patients in critical condition to other hospitals early Tuesday, while 213 other patients were moved to another building in the medical center, authorities said. Credit: AP Photo/Richard Vogel

A succession of power outages at a Los Angeles hospital prompted the evacuation of 28 patients in critical condition to other hospitals early Tuesday, while 213 other patients were moved to another building in the medical center, and a baby was delivered by flashlight, authorities said.

The power failure blacked out Adventist Health White Memorial's main six-story building, disabling elevators, said Fire Chief Kristin M. Crowley. More than 100 firefighters and numerous ambulances were dispatched to the facility east of downtown.

The building includes OB-GYN and neonatal intensive care, Crowley said.

"All patients are safe," John Raffoul, the hospital president, said at a morning press conference.

Fire personnel remained at the hospital during the day.

Power was finally restored shortly before 2:30 p.m. Tuesday and most patients were returned to their rooms, according to the hospital.

The hospital originally lost power at 3 a.m. Monday after Tropical Storm Hilary dumped record rainfall on the city, and backup generators that were supposed to last three days kicked in, Raffoul said.

But that power source was later either cut off or failed and another blackout was reported at 11:45 p.m. Monday, authorities said.

Firefighters were dispatched to evacuate patients, assisting them down flights of stairs in many cases, the Fire Department said.



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A baby boy was born at the hospital after the emergency power failed.

"Our supervising nurses were there, physicians were attending, and what they ended up doing was putting together a whole bunch of flashlights and shining them up at the ceiling and illuminating the room so there was plenty of light," hospital spokesperson Grace Hauser said.

"They knew what to do. They kept us calm and we kept moving forward," the father, Justin Ugaldo, told KTLA.

Water may have short-circuited an electrical panel or system, severing it from the city's power supply, although the exact cause was still being investigated, authorities said.

"Environmental impacts" hit the hospital's "main bus and switch gear," Chief Financial Officer Chip Owens said in a statement released by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

"We don't know the cause of the double failure that we had here ... other than the fact that we had a major storm that hit us here in Southern California," Raffoul said earlier.



The emergency entrance is seen to the Adventist Health White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles on Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023. A succession of power outages at the Los Angeles hospital prompted the evacuation of 28 patients in critical condition to other hospitals early Tuesday, while 213 other patients were moved to another building in the medical center, authorities said. Credit: AP Photo/Richard Vogel

"We must get to the bottom of what happened and ensure that lives are not put at risk in this way ever again," Mayor Karen Bass said in a statement. "Many years ago, I worked at White Memorial in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. A power outage risks the lives of all of those babies—and also the rest of the patients in critical care whose lives depend on respirators, ventilators and other critical life-sustaining equipment."

According to Raffoul, the generators were purchased in 2008 at the time the hospital was built, and they have been regularly tested since, the [Los Angeles Times reported](#).

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