

Tegucigalpa electricity distribution

The Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica (also commonly known as ENEE) is Honduras's government owned and operated electrical power company, operating within the Electricity sector in Honduras.

The organization was created on February 20, 1957, as an autonomous organization responsible for the production, transmission, distribution and commercialization of electrical energy in Honduras.

The first large-scale project was the first hydroelectric power station, Caóveral, which included the construction of transmission lines and substations in order to distribute its generated power to the final consumers. The so-called National Interconnected System continued to expand and now covers most main regions throughout the country. In 1985 the Francisco Morazán Hydroelectric Project (El Cajón Dam) was completed at a cost of US\$775 million.

The electricity sector in Honduras has been shaped by the dominance of a vertically integrated utility; an incomplete attempt in the early 1990s to reform the sector; the increasing share of thermal generation over the past two decades; the poor financial health of the state utility Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica (ENEE); the high technical and commercial losses in transmission and distribution; and the low electric coverage in rural areas

The key challenges in the sector include financing investments in generation and transmission in the absence of either a financially healthy utility or of concessionary funds by external donors. Tariffs need to be re-balanced, arrears need to be cut and commercial losses, including electricity theft, need to be reduced without fostering social unrest. In addition, the government must reconcile environmental concerns with its objective to build two new large dams and associated hydroelectric plants. Access to electricity in rural areas needs to be improved.

In June 2007, the president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, declared an "energía emergencia". An Intervention Board (Junta Interventoria), headed by the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Finance, was temporarily put in charge of ENEE to address the crisis. The mandate of this board has recently been extended until October 2022

With an installed generation capacity of 1,568 MW (2007), Honduras relies on a thermal-based power system (accounting for nearly two-thirds of its total installed capacity), which is very vulnerable to high and volatile international oil prices. The generation mix is as follows:

Firm electricity generation capacity is substantially lower than installed capacity due to seasonality (i.e. the

natural uncertainty affecting hydroelectric generation), the old age of some of the plants, and mothballing of thermal capacity.

Total electricity sold in 2007 was 4,932 GWh. In 2005, electricity sold by connection was 4,376 kWh, which was much higher than in the neighboring countries of Guatemala (2,337 kWh per connection), Nicaragua (2,931 kWh per connection) and El Salvador (3,109 kWh per connection). It is, however, much lower than in the more developed Central American countries, such as Costa Rica (7,969 kWh) and Panama (7,574 kWh).

While peak demand in 2006 was below total installed capacity, it lay slightly above firm capacity. According to supply and demand projections by the World Bank, new generation capacity to be commissioned in the period between 2007-2010 will not be enough to meet demand growth, which means that an energy shortfall is likely to happen in the near future.

The Honduran electricity grid is interconnected with the grids of its neighbors Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. However, the capacity of the interconnections is limited. It is expected to be expanded as part of the Central American Electric Interconnection System (SIEPAC) through a 230 kV transmission line with a capacity of 300 MW. (See Regional integration, the SIEPAC project below)

In 2002, Honduras imported about 420 GWh of electricity (more than 10% of its consumption) without any exports, thus making it a net importer of electricity.

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