

Hot demand for electricity forces factories to close

A total of 506 factories and enterprises in eight cities of East China's Anhui province had their electricity cut off on Sunday.

The electricity suspension, which will last for a month, is due to the enterprises' failure to meet the energy conservation and emission reduction goal set out by the provincial government.

The eight cities are Huaibei, Lu'an, Fuyang, Anqing, Chaohu, Chizhou, Tongling and Huangshan. Most factories are in industries that require high-energy consumption such as metallurgical, coal and chemical industries. Some of the factories even increased their energy use during the past six months.

2010 is the last year of Anhui's 11th five-year plan, which set a target of decreasing energy consumption per unit of GDP by 20 percent. From 2005 to 2009, the province had achieved an 80 percent reduction.

"The factories maintain limited GDP growth and consume large amount of energy," said Zhao De from the Office of Energy Conservation of the province's Department of Economic and Information Technology, "Some of their high energy consumption is due to the factories' antiquated production facilities."

During the past four years, the province has limited the electricity usage of high-energy consuming factories during peak periods in summer. This is the first time that they have cut-off electricity for enterprises in such a large number, Zhao said.

In the following month, the factories must stop production lines that require higher energy use and use the downtime to examine and repair any faulty equipment.

Local factories are concerned at the effect the electricity suspension will have on their business operations.

Zhongcheng Cement Factory in Huaibei is one of the 506 enterprises concerned. Sun Yangzhi from the factory's general administration office told China Daily that the factory received the notice of a one-month electricity cut-off two days before the blackout.

"We are quite worried because several tons of coating material will be wasted if we do not put them into production as soon as possible," Sun said, "We are also anxious because we will not be able to complete several orders."

The factory, located in northern part of Huaibei, produces approximately one million tons of cement each year and sells its products to nearby cities such as Fuyang and Suzhou.

The factory has 700 workers. Most of them are from nearby townships and villages. They will be paid reduced wages for the coming month.

"We still require them to go to work and we will do the facility examination and do some cleaning," Sun said.

The factory is usually in production around the clock and consumes about 250, 000 Kwh of electricity and 167 tons of coal every day, according to Sun.

The one-month electricity cut off is also intended to ease Anhui's electricity use. The province announced an orange alert on August 4 as the temperature in Anhui has remained over 35 since the beginning of August.

"The one month cut-off will also help the province to pass the peak time for electricity consumption during the high temperature period," Zhao said.

It will save about 500,000 tons of coal in total, he said.

Since August, many areas in China have conducted a similar practice in restricting electricity use, both to achieve energy conservation goals and to ease the demand during the peak period for electricity use.

Nanjing in Jiangsu province has restricted the electricity use to 1,000 local enterprises since August 12 to guarantee that residents will not be affected. The city asked factories with high-energy demands to stop production.

In the city of Jinhua of Zhejiang province, 69 high-energy consuming enterprises also had their electricity restricted from July to September.

The province's Shaoxing city, which consumes about a quarter of the province's electricity, will restrict the electricity to about 200 enterprises till the end of this year.