



AS OF 27 JANUARY 2026

In the 21st century, few could have anticipated that millions of people in Europe would face prolonged winter conditions without access to electricity, heating, water, or gas. Ukrainian government authorities have warned that sustained damage to the energy system has reached a critical level, turning essential public services into scarce resources and exposing civilians to living conditions more typical of large-scale humanitarian emergencies than modern urban environments.

More than one million Ukrainians have experienced disruptions to electricity, water, gas supply, and heating following continuous Russian strikes on energy infrastructure. In Kyiv alone, according to Ukraine's Minister of Energy, Denys Shmyhal, more than 800,000 households and buildings are without electricity.

Temperatures inside apartments in multi-storey residential buildings are currently ranging between +2°C and +8°C. At present, the most critical situation is observed in Kyiv and Kyiv Oblast, which are facing major disruptions for the third time this month.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

- Following the attack on 9 January, more than 6,000 buildings were left without electricity. Over the course of a week, repair teams managed to reduce this number to 100 buildings, of which only 16 multi-storey residential buildings remained without power supply.
- Following the attack on 20 January, according to the Kyiv city authorities, 5,635 multi-storey residential buildings were left without heating. Nearly 80% of these were buildings where heat supply had previously been restored after the 9 January attack. The left bank of Kyiv and several districts on the right bank were temporarily left without water supply. According to the President of Ukraine,

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as of the evening of 20 January, more than one million households were without electricity nationwide. At the same time, according to the Mayor of Kyiv, approximately 600,000 residents left the capital in January, out of a population of around 3 million.

- As a result of the large-scale attack on 24 January, the city's critical infrastructure was again damaged, leaving nearly 6,000 buildings without heating.

Specialised experts, together with energy workers, are continuing efforts to stabilise the situation, restore the electricity supply, and resume the normal operation of the water supply system. However, due to severe frost and the prolonged absence of heating, temperatures in some apartments have dropped to nearly 0°C. Frozen water has caused pipes and radiators to burst, making it impossible to rapidly restore heating and water supply throughout entire buildings.

Older prefabricated panel buildings have proven to be particularly vulnerable. As a result, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, together with local authorities, has established two tent camps for local residents. For example, in just one neighbourhood, there are approximately 20 residential buildings housing between 12,000 and 14,000 people. In addition, support points have been established at 10 schools.

The older people, people with limited mobility, and families with young children are the most vulnerable to cold temperatures and power outages — an estimated total of approximately 65,000 individuals. Furthermore, electric public transport services in the capital have been restricted, and retail chains have adjusted their operating hours, reducing opening hours.

OVERALL SUPPORT

! Support to Heating Points. In the capital, approximately 100 heating points have been established and are currently operating on a 24/7 basis. In addition, heating tents have been deployed directly in the courtyards of multi-storey residential buildings to ensure that assistance is as accessible as possible to affected people.

URCS: Currently, the URCS supports the operation of heating points, including those deployed by the SESU, through providing the relevant equipment (generators, heat guns, etc.), logistical and supply support (tables, chairs, extension leads, outdoor lighting equipment for heating points, disposable tableware, etc.), and by engaging volunteers and staff of the organisation (300 people across the country, including 101 in the capital). At the same time, the URCS coordinates the involvement of volunteers from other civil society organisations, namely: Salvation Army, Donbas SOS, and World Central Kitchen. In addition, as part of the response, the URCS has deployed six tents to support affected people. Emergency Response Teams from different regions are participating in the response.

! Food Support. In the capital, the SESU has deployed **41 field kitchens** to support people unable to prepare hot meals due to power outages.

URCS: As part of longer-term support, the organisation is currently undertaking relevant procurements and organising food deliveries to field kitchens to provide **approximately 5,000 portions of hot meals at stable heating points**. In addition, since the beginning of the response, the URCS has already provided hot meals and drinks to more than 3,000 people at heating points. URCS is also ready to deploy its own field kitchens upon request. In addition, volunteers deliver hundreds of portions of hot meals almost daily from field kitchens to heating points where kitchens have not been deployed.

! Energy Sector Support. The situation remains critical in Kyiv and Kyiv Oblast, where medical, social and other essential facilities continue to face electricity and heating outages.

The organisation is delivering a total of 526 generators of various capacities. One hundred units will be allocated to Kyiv and Kyiv Oblast, while the remaining generators will be deployed to frontline regions with the most acute needs. Of these, 447 generators have been mobilised by the European Union from the rescEU strategic reserve under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). Distribution is being coordinated by the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine, in cooperation with the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS).



! To support vulnerable people, the URCS is **distributing 2,000 transit hygiene kits**, which include thermal blankets. In addition, within the framework of the “Home Based Care” program, social assistants are conducting additional needs assessments and **providing support to nearly 8,000 living alone** or with limited support and in need of additional care. At the same time, beneficiaries in the capital who required such assistance have already been provided with blankets. Support is also planned for children from vulnerable groups, namely, the distribution of psychosocial support kits.

In addition, the following items have already been delivered to support affected people in Kyiv’s Desnianskyi District: **420 sleeping kits, 300 bedding sets, 1,440 blankets, and 540 hygiene kits.**

Teams across the country continue to support the population during this challenging period. Volunteers and staff are engaged not only in the evacuation of vulnerable population groups, but also in **on-site response activities following shelling incidents.**



PREPAREDNESS

In the prolonged absence of central heating, preparedness is increasingly focused on enabling people to maintain minimum living conditions inside their homes and to safely cope with prolonged winter outages. When electricity is intermittently available, households rely on electric heaters, portable radiators, electric blankets, power banks,

and other electricity-dependent devices. People often concentrate daily activities in one room, heat water to temporarily increase indoor temperatures, and adapt living spaces simply to remain inside their apartments for limited periods of time. Where electricity is unavailable, people use hot-water bottles and warming pads, additional blankets and layered clothing, and basic measures to reduce heat loss in apartments.

At household level, preparedness also includes maintaining essential reserves and practical coping options. Families store drinking and technical water for basic needs, keep limited stocks of ready-to-eat food, and use small gas cylinders or camping stoves for cooking when electric appliances cannot be used. These measures, while basic, have become critical for daily functioning during repeated and prolonged outages, particularly in multi-storey residential buildings where centralised heating systems remain disrupted.

Preparedness measures are implemented jointly by district-level local authorities, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU), and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) as one of the key humanitarian actors. This cooperation includes the establishment and support of mobile heating points and night-time facilities, ensuring access to warm spaces when remaining at home is no longer safe, as well as guidance on safer household-level coping practices and the provision of essential items such as blankets and heating equipment. URCS volunteers and staff support these efforts at community level, helping to identify urgent needs and reach the most vulnerable groups.

Alongside material and practical support, preparedness also addresses the human and psychological impact of prolonged winter disruptions. Repeated exposure to cold, uncertainty, and disruption places significant strain on affected people, as well as on volunteers and frontline responders. Preparedness activities therefore integrate First Psychological Aid and basic psychosocial support, helping people manage stress, maintain coping capacity, and remain connected to available assistance during extended periods of instability.



COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

In the context of prolonged winter outages, the Ukrainian Red Cross Society plays a coordinating role in aligning humanitarian assistance with the most urgent needs of the population. URCS coordinates closely with District State Administrations (RDAs), local authorities, and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine to support district-level decision-making, particularly in Kyiv, where repeated disruptions to electricity and heating have significantly affected living conditions. This coordination allows priority areas and facilities to be identified based on real-time information from the districts and communities most at risk.

In parallel, URCS coordinates the involvement of humanitarian and civil society organisations, including the Salvation Army, Donbas SOS, and World Central Kitchen, to ensure complementary service delivery and avoid duplication of assistance. Through this coordination, international support — including the 447 emergency generators received from the European Union on 27 January — is translated into people-centred assistance, such as maintaining access to heating points, shelters, water supply, and essential social and medical services. This structured coordination enables humanitarian aid to directly support people's safety, dignity, and basic living conditions during prolonged winter disruptions.

