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Puerto Ricans Hit With Seventh Electric Rate Hike in One Year

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Safety cones blocking an exit at the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority are moved by a driver in Palo Seco, Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, on Oct. 19, 2017. By. XAVIER GARCIA/BLOOMBERG

For the seventh time in twelve months, Puerto Rico residents are bracing for higher utility bills following the announcement of another electricity rate increase on Wednesday.

While residents continue to grapple with frequent power outages, they are now being asked to pay 33 cents per kwh, a 13.79 percent increase from the current rate in Puerto Rico, and more than double the average electricity rate of the United States, which stands at 14 cents per kilowatt hour, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

The increase will take effect on Friday.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands residents are paying 41 cents per kilowatt hour, as the local government continues to subsidize the cost of fuel by providing the V.I. Water and Power Authority with [\\$4 million a month since March](#).

Puerto Rico's rate hikes began after Luma, a private company, [took over](#) transmission and distribution of power from Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority, assuming \$9 million of debt in the process.

Officials say the increases are necessary to support continuing work in restoring Puerto Rico's power grid, almost completely destroyed by Hurricane Maria in 2017. The power systems also took a significant hit in April when a fire at the main power plant resulted in an island-wide blackout.

The ravages of Maria left some residents without power for up to a year afterwards, and even today, hundreds of thousands face constant power outages which authorities say are the fault of [poorly maintained infrastructure that is now rapidly deteriorating](#).

Amid backlash from the public, and growing concerns that investors would be scared off by the pattern of increases, the Energy Bureau assured that the electric rate will be revised before or on October 1st this year.

The territory is also hoping to increase the use of renewable energy the coming years in hopes of delivering a more affordable product. Renewable energy sources account for about 3 percent of the generated electricity there.