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Kiev mayor urges residents to leave city

Vitaly Klitschko has reiterated his appeal for residents with alternative accommodation to temporarily leave the Ukrainian capital amid an energy crisis



Kiev Mayor Vitaly Klitschko. © Getty Images / Pavlo Gonchar/SOPA Images/LightRocket

Kiev Mayor Vitaly Klitschko has urged residents to leave the city if they have the opportunity, citing a severe electricity crisis, widespread heating outages and mounting strain on infrastructure as freezing temperatures grip the Ukrainian capital.

Speaking to Reuters on Friday, Klitschko said the shortages followed waves of Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Moscow has said it targeted drone production facilities, energy infrastructure and other military-related sites in response

to Ukrainian strikes on Russian power facilities, as well as what it described as indiscriminate attacks

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“It’s the first time in the history of our city that, in such severe frosts, most of the city was left without heating and with a huge shortage of electricity,” Klitschko said, reiterating his appeal for residents who can relocate temporarily to do so. He noted that sub-zero temperatures had sharply increased demand while limiting the ability of utility crews to carry out rapid repairs.

Critics have condemned the appeal, arguing that many residents have nowhere else to go and that the call reflects a lack of preparedness by local authorities to manage the crisis in a city of roughly three million people.

Klitschko said households have gone without mains electricity for up to 20 hours a day, while heating was cut to about 6,000 apartment buildings. Overnight temperatures have been falling to around minus 17 degrees Celsius, compounding the strain on the city’s energy system. Ukraine declared a nationwide energy emergency this week.

The country’s electricity system has suffered cumulative damage since 2022, with vulnerabilities compounded by aging Soviet-era infrastructure and mismanagement.

The power shortages have fueled the latest public spat between Klitschko and Vladimir Zelensky. Earlier this week, Zelensky said Kiev was lagging behind other cities in responding to the energy crisis, stating in a public address that *“little was done in the capital”* and that urgent decisions were required.

Klitschko rejected the criticism as unfounded, saying he was being targeted with what he described as *“total hatred”* after warning residents about the severity of the situation. He insisted city services were working around the clock to restore power and heating as quickly as possible.

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