

# N.J. gas stations may not be ready if Hurricane Joaquin hits

By [Kelly Heyboer](#) | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

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When Hurricane Sandy hit, most New Jerseyans were forced to drive for miles and wait in long lines to fill up their gas tanks.

Power outages left many local gas stations without the ability to pump. Other stations with electricity quickly ran out of fuel as panicked residents raced to fill up.

Though lawmakers and industry officials vowed NJ gas stations would be better prepared for the next big storm, experts admit little has changed.

"We're all nervous because of what happened from Sandy," said Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association, an industry group representing the state's gas stations.

Gov. Chris Christie announced in 2013 that gas stations would be eligible for up to \$7 million in federal funding to buy generators to keep pumping gas if they lost power during a storm.

However, few local gas stations have made it through the application process yet and installed their generators, Risalvato said.

"I don't have a lot of guys that have them completed yet," Risalvato said. "Most of those in the program are still in the (application) process."

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority, which is helping oversee the program, did not immediately respond to questions about how many generators have been installed.

More than 60 gas stations had been approved earlier this year, according to state officials, for \$3 million in grants to install generators. Another 86 applicants were waiting for approval. State officials did not list which generators has been installed and were operational.

Risalvato said many stations also had problems getting gasoline delivered after Hurricane Sandy because of damage to the sites that filled fuel delivery trucks.

"In the event of a storm like Sandy, do generators do any good?" Risalvato said. "The problem was getting gasoline delivered."

Last year, the U.S. Energy Department announced it was building a reserve of a million barrels of gasoline in the New York Harbor area and the Boston area in case of another fuel emergency like Hurricane Sandy.

But, it still may be a challenge to deliver the emergency fuel to local gas stations in the aftermath of another major storm.

Danny Jallo, owner of Exxon on the Run gas station in Lakewood, said he installed a \$100,000 generator in August. He is still waiting for the federal money to help pay for the installation.

If a storm hits, the generator is ready to go, he said.

"It will be running for as long as we have natural gas running underground," said Jallo, who has owned the station on Route 88 for nearly 15 years.

During Hurricane Sandy, Jallo's station was without power for about a week. Once power was restored, the station ran out of gas and had to close again until it could get a delivery from an area fuel terminal.

"It was a very sad situation," Jallo said. "We had the power, then the terminals didn't have any power."

During the next storm, Jallo plans to stay open around the clock for as long as he can pump fuel with his new generator.

"Hopefully, we will never have to use it," he said.