

### Blackout Scenario

Shortly after 4PM on August 14, 2003, more than 50 million people in eight Northeastern and Midwestern states and Ontario, Canada experienced a massive power outage. In New York City, many offices and businesses shut down shortly after the blackout occurred, instructing their employees to leave their buildings. After walking down dark stairwells, hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets, trying to figure out how to get home. Without electrical power, subway and other commuter trains were not operational. Traffic lights didn't work, resulting in a massive gridlock of cars on the road. Overloaded mobile networks interrupted cell phone service, making it difficult for people to communicate with their loved ones.

It was very hot and humid in New York City as people started their long walks home. For some, the trek took 10 hours or more, exacerbating underlying health problems and, in the profound darkness, making them easy prey for muggers.

In retrospect, one might question why so few employees were given an opportunity to shelter at work. Even without preparing in advance for this contingency, most buildings would have provided a safe venue for people to stay for 12 hours (which is how long the blackout lasted) with land line telephones employees could have used to communicate with family members at home and cafeteria food they could have eaten before it spoiled from lack of refrigeration. With additional preparations, employees would have been assured of having the medications and supplies they need to shelter-in-place safely.