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### Keeping the lights on during load shedding

#### *Solutions to keep your business running*

As Eskom's struggle to meet electricity demand continues, companies will have to start moving towards solutions that will protect their mission-critical data and platforms. This is the view of Gavin Meyer, executive director at Itec Group.

"One of the biggest issues facing businesses is the fact that load shedding is so unpredictable. It is usually implemented at very short notice, making it practically impossible to plan, even when the schedule is up to date," he says. "Customers, who in the past were hesitant to host their physical servers offsite are beginning to do so as a result of this uncertainty. We are witnessing a trend where customers are either moving their server hardware into our data centres, or where they were due to replace their hardware, they are moving to virtual servers." If electricity is interrupted on client site, they can still access their data via the Itec LTE network. "In addition to ensuring access to their data, in spite of electricity cuts, it also improves their overall security as their data is now hosted behind in a firewall protected environment."

Itec has two local datacentres, which means that they can host their clients' physical or virtual servers, while backing up the data to another local data centre, which means they are fully POPI compliant.

"Cloud-based communications is another trend we are observing. By moving communication infrastructure to the cloud, clients reduce their risk of downtime significantly. This is managed through centralised servers for big branch networks, allowing for branches to automatically divert to head office in the event of a power failure."

In spite of these solutions, a company still needs some form of power on site. This is where alternative power supplies come in. "The most widely used alternative supply remains the generator, but this comes with its own challenges. Often companies will invest substantial amounts of money in purchasing generators, but not take the need for maintenance into account," says Meyer. Then, when a power failure or load shedding hits, the generator does not work and the company is left in the dark.

"It is crucial that companies looking at using generators as backup ensure that a proper needs analysis is done and that they partner with a reputable company to install and maintain the generator. The challenge at the moment is that, due to high demand, there are extensive delays in even just getting someone out to do determine your specifications."

Itec has developed full turnkey solution from installation to maintenance contracts. "With a country-wide footprint and large fleet of consultants around the country Itec is able to install, manage and maintain generator installations across South Africa. Each unit is fitted with a GSM modem, allowing for remote monitoring – either by the customer or by Itec," he says. The unit also automatically notifies the customer and Itec's resolution centre of any issues such as faults or low diesel levels.

Another potential solution is the UPS, but this is mostly used to bridge the gap between the power going out and the generator kicking in. Itec, in partnership with Megatron, has custom made a compact power supply (CPS) as a more affordable alternative to the generator. “The inverter which starts at 1kW and runs up to 3kW is portable, fully battery operated and can run for up to 6 hours, depending on the load. It can run key factors of the business completely and the power life can be extended by attaching solar panels to the unit.”

For smaller organisations that do not have the capital to invest in a generator, this is a great alternative. “It has external plug points and can be made available on a rental option. It also runs completely silently and larger capacity units are available for companies that require more output,” says Meyer. Another key benefit is that while a standard UPS battery generally has 250 cycles in it, resulting in roughly a three year lifecycle, the CPS battery has 1200 cycles, which means it will last over 10 years. “Through the rental option you don’t require capital, it’s off balance sheet and 100% tax deductible,” he concludes.

## **ABOUT ITEC**

Itec is Southern Africa’s fastest growing office automation, production printing and telecommunications solutions provider - with annual revenue of nearly two billion rand. Through its 47 Southern African branches and an international footprint that includes the United Kingdom, the company implements total office solutions based on imported, industry-leading, and award-winning products.

Itec serves medium-sized and large businesses in sectors as diverse as financial services and retail - supporting its innovative solutions with proactive service delivery. Some of its 18 000 customers include Value Logistics, Implats, Department of Housing, Business Connexion, ADT, Rand Refinery, First National Bank, AngloGold Ashanti, National Health Laboratory Services and Advtech.

Itec management rebranded the company in 2004 following a merger of the separate copier, printer, and fax business units initially established in 1987.

For more information, please see [www.itecgroup.co.za](http://www.itecgroup.co.za).

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