

## Grid says double power fault was freak



By Andrew Callus

LONDON (Reuters) - The power system failure that plunged London into chaos on Thursday was a freak occurrence that is unlikely to happen again, the National Grid Transco says.

A spokesman for the privatised company, under pressure from government officials to explain why a simple power failure brought a great city to its knees, said the failure was in no way as serious as the one that blacked out parts of North America two weeks ago, and was quickly rectified.

"Localised protection equipment worked and isolated the faults," he said on Friday. "Under normal circumstances you can re-route the power when a fault like this occurs, but because two happened in quick succession, our ability to do that was restricted. It's very unusual to get two faults together."

Two system faults showed up in National Grid's control rooms at around 6:20 p.m. on Thursday, just as dusk was falling.

They occurred on a 275 kilovolt network typical of those that surround Britain's big cities.

The ring network, a mixture of above and below ground cables in the affected areas, carries power reduced in voltage from the 400 kilovolt cables that ship electricity from power stations.

The grid took action to shut down power to the affected areas in a move that cut off three key substations at Wimbledon, New Cross and Hurst, all in south London. These substations reduced the voltage again from the transitional 275 kilovolt network to lower levels for delivery to the local distribution networks that work independently of National Grid.

Engineers were successful in re-routing power about 32 minutes later, but it was almost an hour before the main local power provider affected, EDF Energy, was able to bring all its customers back on line.

London's Underground network was paralysed for hours because of the outage, and formed the epicentre of disruption in the capital by trapping thousands underground.

A spokesman said that although power was restored quickly, many passengers had left carriages and taken to the tracks to get out, raising safety issues with how quickly trains could run again.