

What are preventative power shutoffs?

California's investor-owned electric utilities, including PG&E, may shut off electric power, referred to as "de-energization" or Public Safety Power Shut-offs (PSPS), to protect public safety. In the PSPS program, power may be cut on transmission and distribution lines in fire-prone areas when the risk of wildfire is deemed to be high.

Who determines when shutoffs will occur?

Each utility will decide whether to de-energize their lines based on a set of criteria in their wildfire prevention plan. For example, PG&E says it will consider shutoffs at humidity at or below 20 percent, average wind speed forecasts at 20 mph or higher, forecast wind gusts of 40 mph or higher, and field observations of dry fuel and live vegetation in the area of concern.

How long will shutoffs last?

PG&E suggests preparing for outages that could last longer than 48 hours as extreme weather conditions are variable.

Who will be affected by shutoffs?

Electricity customers in fire-prone areas are most likely to be affected. Please see the link to [fire risk maps](#) here. Due to the interconnected nature of the power grid, any electricity customer may be affected by power shutoffs, even customers in urban areas.

Will schools and public agencies receive priority notice of shutoffs?

Yes, according to PG&E. Schools are listed among the several categories of "critical facilities" that will receive priority notice of shutoffs.

Is anyone exempt from shutoffs?

No. Shutoffs cover the entire area downstream from the de-energized line. There is no way to exempt individual customers in the affected area. Customers with access and functional needs (called "AFN" populations) can get more information [here](#).

What should we do to prepare?

We recommend that all electricity customers do the following to prepare for potential shutoffs.

- Incorporate PSPS into your emergency plan, which should include stockpiling emergency supplies (water, flashlights and batteries, first aid supplies, etc.) as you would for an earthquake or other disaster scenario.
- Consider purchase of a backup generator to power essential items and/or secure a place to rent.
- Have a battery or other backup source for cell phones. Be aware that cell service may be affected by PSPS.
- Keep cash on hand and a full tank of gas

Are there additional considerations for schools?

Yes. Districts and school sites should follow pre-established power outage protocols. They may declare that a campus will close as soon as they receive an advance PSPS notice, to provide students and their families as much notice as possible.

How will customers be notified?

PG&E has created a website where it will post updates on weather and potential shutoffs.

Notice methods will include automated phone calls, texts, emails and online announcements. Whenever possible, notifications will adhere to the following minimum notification timeline:

Anticipated de-energization (Shutoff of power)

- 48-72 hours in advance: notification of public safety partners/priority notification
- 4-48 hours in advance: notification of all other affected customers/populations
- 1-4 hours in advance: notification of all affected customers/populations
- When de-energization is initiated: notification of all affected customers/populations

Re-energization (Restoration of power)

- Immediately before re-energization begins: notification of all affected customers/populations
- When re-energization is complete: notification of all affected customers/populations

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SHUTOFF CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISTRICTS

Preparations

- Ensure data systems are secure and “backed up” to maintain their security during a shutdown. Inform sites to make sure they have done the same. Check to make sure that the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) is working in order to power down the data system appropriately.
- Have a designated staff member (i.e. safety officer or maintenance staff) communicate with your electricity utility representative to discuss PSPS issues. Having one contact point for the utility is critical. Make sure that your rep’s current contact information is readily available to appropriate members of your team. There is no substitute for having an individual contact person at your utility who can address your specific concerns.
- Ensure that your electric utility has current contact information for your team, and particularly your lead. All too often, a utility has only your billing information on file. Ask your rep to ensure that all of your relevant contact information is part of the utility’s PSPS notification system. Each utility should have an online system to register your contact information. We recommend that you go the extra mile and speak with your rep to confirm the information on file for your team.

Considerations

Average Daily Attendance

According to California Dept of Education Management Advisory 90-01 (revised February 10, 2005), Average Daily Attendance Credit During Periods of Emergency, “School districts and county offices are to be held harmless from revenue loss that might otherwise result from the loss of ADA or instructional time in the case of emergencies.” See www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/pa/ma9001.asp.

In case of a “false alarm” scenario in which PG&E notifies of a shutdown, but then does not shut down power, CDE has explained that while it cannot provide an approval in advance, due to the unforeseen nature of a “false alarm” notification, school districts would most likely meet the conditions for a waiver.

Suggested Communication Protocols for Districts

- Post this FAQ (page 1) on your website and school sites and encourage entire school community (including staff) to read up in advance on how this might impact schools.
- Should your district receive notice of a shutoff, be prepared to respond quickly. As utilities customers, they will also be receiving notice from PG&E about shutoffs soon after you get it and will be wondering quickly whether this will impact the school schedule. The phone will begin to ring. Prepare shutoff/school closure messaging in advance.
- Loop cabinet, leaders and staff into the response process as quickly as feasible to make sure you are keeping stakeholders in the loop, which will minimize issues when you go public. Make sure your staff aren’t “the last to know.”
- Know that all districts may not be in the same boat here, depending on the scope of the shutoffs. It’s entirely possible that some districts may need to close, while others can remain open.
- Communicate with your local agencies in advance. Determine whether your city has a plan to open gathering places for community members in need and add, as applicable to communications.

Suggested Talking Points

- The safety of our students, staff and our school community is our top priority.
- The district has no control over when and where these shutoffs will occur.
- PG&E will likely provide some advance notice to our district of a possible shutoff and we will make a decision about whether to move forward with the school day quickly in order to provide the most notice possible to our community.
- We may not be able to operate our schools under shutoff conditions during the school day.
- Our district does not have enough generator support to run the district normally under shutoff conditions (if this applies).
- We will have no advance notice of a potential “false alarm”, meaning there is a possibility we could receive advance notice of a shutoff, decide to shut down school and the power could remain intact at PG&E’s discretion.