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RESOURCES:

- [PSP Statewide Fact Sheet](#)
- [Emergency Power Planning for People Who Use Electricity & Battery Dependent Assistive Technology & Medical Devices](#)
- [Food/Water Safety During Power Outages](#)

QUESTIONS:

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916.850.7300

Preparing for Public Safety Power Shutoffs

by Eric Lucero

Several of the worst wildfires in recent years were reportedly ignited by overhead utility power lines and aerial communication facilities in close proximity to power lines. In response, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) developed a de-energization program, referred to as a “Public Safety Power Shutoff” (PSPS). This preventative practice has been approved for state-wide implementation by utility companies whenever certain weather-related factors increase wildfire risk.

Whenever one or a combination of the following conditions exist, a Preventative Safety Power Shutoff could be initiated:

- Red Flag Warning declared by the National Weather Service
- Low humidity levels, generally 20 percent and below
- Forecasted sustained winds generally above 25 mph and wind gusts in excess of approximately 45 mph, depending on location and site-specific conditions such as temperature, terrain and local climate
- Condition of dry fuel on the ground and live vegetation (moisture content)
- On-the-ground, real-time observations from your power company’s field crew

Customers located within an elevated or extreme fire threat area, see Figure 1(Interactive Fire Threat Map), are more likely to experience a Public Safety Power Shutoff. However, your power may also be shut off if your community relies upon a distribution line passing through an area with an elevated wildfire risk. At most, customers will receive a 48-hour notice of a potential PSPS event from their electric company. Being prepared is paramount as each event could endure multiple days.



Figure 1

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Use these tips to help your entity before, during, and after a PSPS event:

Before a Public Safety Power Shutoff

1. Identify and/or update the listed contact whom the electric company will be notifying and determine how to internally communicate a PSPS event notice.
2. Monitor your electric company's webpage for potential PSPS when red flag fire alerts are issued by the National Weather Service.
3. Prepare or inspect emergency preparedness kits (e.g., flashlights, batteries, first aid).
4. Determine how your organization will communicate to staff and community stakeholders before, during, and after a PSPS event.
5. Be aware that VOIP landlines will not work during a power outage.
6. Stock battery chargers for mobile phones and radios.
7. Ensure sensitive electronic equipment is protected by a surge protector.
8. Ensure all Uninterruptible Power Supply devices are functional and tested regularly.
9. If rain is expected, ensure a power supply for critical equipment such as sewer ejector pumps, HVAC condensate drain pumps, or any pumps that provide protection from flooding in low-lying areas.
10. Determine the maximum time that refrigerators, walk-in coolers, and freezers can retain refrigeration and plan accordingly. Ensure thermometers are functioning and freeze additional containers of water to use as ice inside coolers and freezers.
11. If your organization will remain open, determine if medical and/or food service needs will be affected (e.g. refrigeration, powered medical devices, etc.) and plan accordingly.
12. If security is a concern, ensure that your alarm/security systems have adequate battery backup systems, and that telephone connectivity to your monitoring service is not reliant on power.
13. Ensure backup generators and vehicles are fueled and ready to safely operate.
14. Discuss and plan procedures for a PSPS event that begins while class is in session.
15. Update your emergency response policies and procedures accordingly. For schools this will include compressive school safety plans.
16. Review your coverage documents and discuss with your broker any potential coverage issues associated with a PSPS. For example; food spoilage is typically not covered when it results from a planned power outage.

During a Public Safety Power Shutoff

1. Turn off and unplug all electrical equipment to avoid damage from power spikes when service is resumed.
2. Leave one light turned on to indicate when the power is restored.
3. Never run a portable generator inside, or connect a generator to the electrical system without a properly designed and installed transfer system.
4. Do not use candles due to the increased risk of fire.
5. Assign personnel to refuel generators when needed (review fuel consumption rate and set a schedule).
6. Keep doors closed on refrigerators, walk-in coolers, and freezers. For life-safety purposes, never lock doors on walk-in-coolers or freezers.

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After a Public Safety Power Shutoff

1. Write an after action report to identify strengths and deficiencies for improvement purposes.
2. Inventory and restock emergency preparedness kits and other supplies used during the PSPS.
3. Service generators according to manufacturer's guidelines.
4. Determine if food in refrigerators or walk-in coolers/freezers is safe to consume. The FDA recommends discarding any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or leftovers) that has been at temperatures above 40° F for 2 hours or more (or 1 hour if temperatures are above 90° F).

Public Safety Power Shutoffs are a new risk management treatment being employed by electric companies to prevent wildfires. Advanced preparation and planning is crucial to minimize the impact of a PSPS event. For additional assistance, please contact [PRISM's Risk Control Department](#).