

Power Outages

Don't Be Left in the Dark

Storms can sometimes cut off your power for long periods of time, leaving you, quite literally, in the dark. But in the dark is the last place that Pacific Gas and Electric Company wants you to be. That's why PG&E crews work around the clock during major storms to restore your service.

PG&E cares about the safety of our customers and employees. If you see any electric or gas hazards, call us so that we can send our crews to correct those problems first.

Our phone lines may become very busy during major storms, so we ask for your patience if you are trying to reach us. Stay tuned to your local news stations for outage updates.

PG&E's 24-hour, toll-free power outage hotline is 1-(800)743-5002 (1-800-PGE-5002). You can use this number to find out if an outage has been reported in your area and when power would be restored, to report an outage and ask for a call back when power returns, or to speak to a PG&E representative.

You See Downed Wires

Treat all downed power lines as if they're live, or carrying electric current. Do not touch or try to move them. It's especially important to keep children and animals away. Report downed power lines immediately to PG&E and 9-1-1. If a power line falls across a car that you're in, stay in the car. If you **MUST** leave it, jump clear so that no part of your body is touching the car when your feet touch the ground.

Generator

Some customers prepare for the possibility of outages by installing a standby electric generator to keep lights and appliances or life-support devices running until we can restore service. If you have a generator, be sure that it's installed safely. If it's not, you risk damaging your property and endangering the lives of PG&E lineworkers who may be working on power lines some distance from your home. Ask us for our free brochure, "*Standby Electric Generator Safety*".

If someone in your household uses a life-support device, make plans now for backup power.

Heat

If a major storm arrives during cold weather, your house will stay warm for a while--even if the power goes out. Your home will stay warmer if it's well insulated and free of drafts. Since wood-pellet stoves and many furnaces need electricity to work, they won't operate during an outage unless you have a generator. If you have a fireplace, keep an ample supply of dry firewood in an accessible spot. Burn wood or logs made of newspapers.

Don't burn charcoal indoors; it releases carbon monoxide, an odorless and sometimes deadly poison. Make sure that any backup heat source meets all safety requirements and is approved for indoor use.

Radios and Flashlights

Every home should have battery-powered radios, flashlights and lanterns, as well as fresh batteries. You can buy battery-powered lights that plug into a wall socket and come on automatically during an outage. If you must use candles, be careful and keep them away from flammable materials, drafts and children.

Water

If your water is pumped electrically and there is enough warning before a major storm, fill your bathtub and spare containers with water in case power goes off. You can flush toilets by pouring a bucket of water into the bowl.

Food

To help prevent food from spoiling, fill used plastic soda bottles with water and put them in the freezer now. During an extended outage, transfer the bottles to your refrigerator. If your power goes out, resist the urge to keep checking inside your freezer or refrigerator. Every time you do, you let warm air in, which reduces the unit's effectiveness. Adding block ice to your refrigerator and dry ice to the freezer will keep them cooler. Keep a supply of canned foods handy in case your power is off for a long time. For recorded information on food safety and power outages, call the government's meat and poultry hotline at 1-800-535-4555 or visit: www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp

Appliance Protection

If your power goes off, unplug or turn off electric space heaters and stoves, washers, dryers, TVs, microwave ovens, computers, refrigerators and freezers. Otherwise, when power is restored, several appliances may come back on at the same time and overload your circuits, or hot appliances may come on while you're away or asleep and pose a fire hazard. Leave a single lamp on to alert you when power returns. Remember to turn your appliances back on--one at a time--when conditions return to normal. If brief outages occur for a few seconds during a storm but power is fully restored after these short outages, you don't need to turn off your appliances.

If the lights don't go off but continually flicker or dim, you have a low-voltage condition and should take the outage precautions listed above. If you only have power in part of your home, first check for tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses in your electric panel; keep spare fuses of the correct size on hand. If breakers and fuses are normal, follow the outage instructions.

Vehicles

Keep your vehicle's fuel tank at least half-full, because many service stations can't pump gas during an outage. Know how to use the manual option on electric garage doors.

Restoring Service

PG&E knows that losing your electricity is a hardship, so we plan for storms far in advance, making sure equipment is working well and supplies are stocked. We're developing new systems to detect potential problems and outages, accelerating our tree-trimming programs, and inspecting millions of power poles. During a major storm, we bring in extra crews from other areas as needed.

Even though PG&E crews work long hours to restore your service, repairing the damage may take a long time. Until we complete damage assessment and other tasks, it's hard for us to tell you when your service will be restored. We ask for your understanding and cooperation, and we promise to restore service as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Since the safety of our customers and employees is a priority of PG&E, we first restore electricity to hospitals, police stations and other vital public services. At the same time, PG&E must be sure that all hazards, such as snapped or leaning utility poles, uprooted trees or fallen wires, are cleared and made safe.

Even if you don't see crews in your neighborhood, we may already be working to restore your power. Before we can restore service to your street, often we need to repair damaged substations, transmission lines and wires that feed power to streets such as yours. Sometimes our crews must wait for access roads to be cleared of flooding, landslides or downed trees. After restoring power to your general area, PG&E repairs any downed or damaged wires between utility poles and individual homes.

Remember that the service-entrance cable running down the side of your house belongs to you. If it's damaged, please call an electrician and ask that your repair work be coordinated with PG&E.