

2019 Pacific Power Wildfire Safety and Preparedness

Frequently Asked Questions

June 25, 2019

With wildfires becoming more frequent and intense throughout our region, at Pacific Power, protecting the communities we serve while providing safe, reliable power, is our highest priority. To follow are answers to questions around our wildfire preparation and mitigation plans.

Q: What steps is Pacific Power taking to prepare for the 2019 wildfire season?

A: While maintaining the safety of our system has always been at the center of our wildfire preparedness plans, we are seeking out new ways we can be even more vigilant, as the threat of wildfires grows. This includes enhancing vegetation inspections and vegetation clearance around our power lines or poles, increasing facilities inspections, making investments to improve equipment resiliency during wildfire season, and installing local weather stations.

For areas at a higher risk of fast-spreading catastrophic wildfires, we are establishing a new fire prevention measure called a Public Safety Power Shutoff.

Q: What is a Public Safety Power Shutoff?

A: A Public Safety Power Shutoff is a new measure designed to help keep people and communities in high-risk areas safe, by proactively shutting off power during extreme and dangerous weather conditions that can result in catastrophic wildfires. **This measure would only be taken as a last resort to help ensure customer and community safety.**

Q: Why would a Public Safety Power Shutoff happen?

A: While we work hard to clear plants away from our power lines, debris, tree limbs and other material can be blown onto lines during times of extreme weather conditions, such as high winds. A spark could lead to the rapid spread of wildfire when strong winds are combined with high temperatures, low humidity and other conditions. In these cases, turning power off in areas experiencing extreme weather conditions may be necessary to ensure the safety of the community.

Q: Do you have a map showing which Oregon communities will be impacted?

A: Maps of identified Fire High Consequence Areas – areas at a greater risk of a rapidly spreading, catastrophic wildfire – and potential Public Safety Power Shutoff areas are available in the Public Safety Power Shutoff section at www.pacificpower.net/wildfiresafety.

Q: How frequently would a Public Safety Power Shutoff occur?

A: We take the decision to proactively shut off power in high fire risk areas seriously, and we expect that Public Safety Power Shutoffs will be a rare occurrence. Historical data indicates that Public Safety Power Shutoff events in extreme risk areas are infrequent; however, it is impossible to accurately forecast the frequency of Public Safety Power Shutoffs. Public Safety Power Shutoffs will only occur if extreme weather conditions are present.

Q: How long will a Public Safety Power Shutoff last?

A: In the rare event a Public Safety Power Shutoff is required, a number of variables are considered. A duration of such an event is directly tied to the current situation and will continue until the extreme weather conditions have abated, after which line inspection and power restoration will occur.

Q: How will medical baseline/access and functional needs customers be impacted?

A: For customers who rely on electric or battery-dependent medical technologies such as breathing machines, a power wheelchair or scooter, home oxygen or dialysis, it is critical that you have a plan in place for an extended power outage for all seasons, year-round.

If customers with life support or medical needs have not already notified us, we ask them to do so now. We rely on customers to self-identify as having medical needs dependent on electricity so we can provide additional outreach prior to a Public Safety Power Shutoff.

We continue to work closely with emergency management organizations, state agencies and other entities on communication and coordination plans regarding life support and medical needs customers. Our process adheres to medical information privacy requirements.

Customers can call 1-888-227-7070, or visit www.pacificpower.net to fill out a contact form.

Q: Will Pacific Power provide cooling shelters during a Public Safety Power Shutoff?

A: Pacific Power will provide cooling shelters in affected areas during a Public Safety Power Shutoff. Cooling shelters will offer water, air conditioning and the ability to recharge electronic devices.

Q: How will Pacific Power let customers know if a Public Safety Power Shutoff is planned?

A: We plan to notify customers by text, phone, local media and social media in the event of a Public Safety Power Shutoff. It is important for customers to check that we have their latest contact information.

Q: What protocol will Pacific Power follow in the event of a Public Safety Power Shutoff?

A: We plan to take the following steps, alerting our customers with as much advance warning as possible. However, rapidly changing conditions may require that we operate within a significantly shorter timeframe.

3 to 7 days before: Pacific Power is actively monitoring forecasts for hazardous weather conditions that could lead to a Public Safety Power Shutoff.

Up to 2 days before: Once extreme weather conditions and other hazardous variables are met and sustained, Pacific Power begins coordinating with emergency services and local officials. Customers receive first notification of a possible Public Safety Power shutoff.

1 day before: Extreme wildfire conditions persist. Coordination between the utility and emergency services continues. Customers receive second notification.

Power shutoff: Extreme fire conditions remain and coordination continues. Customers receive third notification that power will be turned off to prevent wildfire ignition.

Power restoration: Extreme wildfire conditions have abated. Pacific Power crews patrol lines to inspect for damage and hanging debris. Once lines are cleared of debris and repairs are made if needed, power will be restored. Customers receive a fourth and final notification that power has been restored.

Q: What can customers do to prepare for this year's wildfire season?

A: There are three key ways customers can prepare now.

1) Update your contact information

Communication is an essential part of any emergency plan. Customers should check that their account contact information is up-to-date, so we can provide updates about increased fire risk alerts, potential power outages and updates on power restoration.

Customers can call 1-888-221-7070 or visit www.pacificpower.net and sign into their account.

2) Keep vegetation low and clear

Just as we're clearing vegetation away from power lines, it's important for customers to create a clear space around their properties. Closest to your home, plant low-growing plants such as annual flowers, succulents and keep lawns trim. Keep trees and shrubs well-spaced and pruned.

3) Ensure your emergency plan and supplies are ready, some key items include:

- Have a two-week supply of shelf-stable food and water for all of the people and pets in your home
- Gather a backup supply of essential medicine
- Create an emergency kit with flashlights, fresh batteries, solar phone chargers, first aid, essential phone numbers and cash
- Designate an emergency meeting location
- Learn how to manually open your garage door

Q: Where can customers go for more information and to help prepare?

A: We are launching a public wildfire education and outreach campaign starting June 24 to share wildfire safety and prevention tips and to inform customers of the company’s Public Safety Power Shutoff measure. We are also planning public information workshops and will be announcing dates and locations for those soon. We are posting information at www.pacificpower.net/wildfiresafety. Customers may also contact Pacific Power by phone anytime at 1-888-221-7070.

Additionally, Pacific Power is holding a series of community events for customers to learn more about our wildfire mitigation planning.

Community Events:

- July 9, Grants Pass, Taprock Event Center, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
- July 10, Roseburg, Douglas County Fairgrounds Cascade Hall, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
- July 11, Medford, Ramada Hotel & Conference Center, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
- July 17, Hood River, Best Western Plus Hood River Inn, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm