



# Public Safety Power Shutoff

## Frequently Asked Questions



**1. Q: What is a Public Safety Power Shutoff event?**

A. A Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) is a practice that Southern California Edison (SCE) may use to preemptively shut off power in high fire risk areas to reduce fire risk during extreme and potentially dangerous weather conditions. The company's priority with the implementation of PSPS is the safety of the public, its customers and its employees. SCE prides itself on service reliability, and turning off the power to its customers is not something the company takes lightly. PSPS events are the option of last resort in a line of operational procedures SCE employs to mitigate fire risk when conditions warrant.

**2. Q: What is the methodology used by SCE to determine High Fire Risk Areas?**

A. SCE considers customers located in High Fire Risk Areas as those within the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Tier 2 (elevated risk) and Tier 3 (extreme risk) Fire-Threat Areas. The CPUC Fire-Threat Map was developed with input from the U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the state's Investor-Owned Utilities (IOU), including SCE. To learn more about the CPUC Fire-Threat map, please visit the [CPUC's Fire-Threat Map webpage](#).

**3. Q: What are the benefits of a PSPS in regards to community safety?**

A. Debris and tree limbs/palm fronds can be blown into power lines during wind events, which could cause a service interruption (e.g. an electric wire to fall). Depending on the situation, these interruptions may have the potential to generate sparks that could ignite a fire. This is especially concerning when strong winds coupled with abundant fuel, dry conditions, and difficult to access terrain can increase the difficulty in fighting fires.

While SCE has operational practices that seek to limit the effects of debris when it contacts overhead electrical equipment, we cannot stop every instance.

Preemptively shutting off power is a last resort in our prevention and mitigation strategy. Although disruptive for our customers, preemptively shutting off power to our lines may be necessary to ensure the safety of our communities and employees when extreme weather conditions present a clear and imminent danger.

**4. Q: What are the factors and criteria for PSPS?**

A. In considering whether to shut off power to lines in affected areas, SCE considers a wide variety of factors which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The National Weather Service has issued Red Flag Warnings\* for counties that contain SCE circuits in High Fire Risk Areas
- Ongoing assessments from the SCE in-house meteorologists regarding the local conditions related to wind speed, humidity, and temperature informed by strategically deployed weather stations

- Real-time situational awareness information from highly trained personnel positioned locally in High Fire Risk Areas identified as at risk for extreme weather conditions
- Input from our Fire Management experts co-located with the Office of Emergency Management regarding any ongoing firefighting efforts
- Specific concerns from local and state fire authorities regarding the potential consequences of wildfires in select locations
- Awareness of mandatory or voluntary evacuation orders in place
- Expected impact of de-energizing circuits on essential services such as public safety agencies, water pumps, traffic controls, etc.
- Other operational considerations to minimize potential wildfire ignitions

**5. Q: How will SCE communicate to customers before and after a PSPS event?**

- A. SCE plans to begin notifying customers approximately 48 hours in advance of a potential PSPS event, and will attempt to notify customers again approximately 24 hours before power is shut off. Additional notifications will be made throughout the outage, when power has been shut off and when it has been restored. There may be situations which prevent SCE from providing advance notice. The actual onset of extreme weather conditions and other circumstances beyond our control may impact coordination and notification efforts.

Notifications may occur via a combination of phone call, text, [sce.com](http://sce.com), email, and social media etc.

**6. Q: How will SCE coordinate with local governments, emergency operations of the local governments and first responders before and during a PSPS event?**

- A.
- In advance of PSPS events, SCE will meet with local governments to inform them about the PSPS protocol, including the location of circuits in their jurisdictions which may be shut off during a PSPS event
  - SCE will activate an Incident Management Team (IMT) when a PSPS event is a possibility.
    - The IMT will manage both the operational and communication tasks associated with an event, which includes interfacing with local governments' emergency operations, first responders such as police and fire agencies, with other government agencies, and essential customers such as hospitals
  - When feasible, notifications to local governments and other agencies will:
    - be made approximately two hours before customers are notified so they have visibility to impacted circuits
    - include key SCE contact information for the agency to use around-the-clock during the PSPS event
    - include when circuits are shut off and when they are restored

- advise that SCE personnel will be available 24 hours a day during the PSPS event to interface with local governments.
  - Notifications to essential customers will be made in advance, when feasible, as well
- 7. Q: What is SCE doing to ensure accurate customer contact information?**
- A. SCE leverages various communications channels, including media advertising to encourage customers to update their contact information on [sce.com/ONI](http://sce.com/ONI) or via MyAccount.
- SCE is conducting a direct outreach to essential, critical, and major customers in high fire risk areas in order to validate contact information
  - We will have representatives available at community meetings to update accounts real-time in addition to the regular practice of verifying and updating customer information during interactions with the contact center during regular inquiries and service requests
  - Leveraging customer-facing communications such as “Dear Neighbor” letters and SCE.com.
    - i. “Dear Neighbor” letters are mailed to customers about infrastructure projects in their area. We will be utilizing this existing process to communicate with customers in PSPS areas
    - ii. SCE.com will launch a dedicated webpage for customers to visit for information regarding PSPS
- 8. Q: How long can a PSPS event last?**
- A. A PSPS event will last as long as the extreme and potentially dangerous weather conditions exist, along with additional time to inspect/repair our equipment in the affected area(s) to ensure safe and reliable power restoration.
- 9. Q: How is it determined if it is safe to restore power?**
- A. First, the extreme weather conditions that triggered the shutoff must subside to safe levels before restoration is considered. Second, ground and aerial patrols will be conducted to ensure that power can be safely restored to our customers.
- 10. Q: Is there a claims process for loss of goods (i.e. food)?**
- A. SCE has a process to evaluate claims related to PSPS. Each claim will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will be done so through the IMT activated during the incident. Please go through the standard SCE claims process -> [Direct Link](#). To navigate here go to <https://www.sce.com> Click on menu in the upper left-hand corner, click on customer support, click on claims & support forms, click on Overview – Claims & Support Forms.

**11. Q: Will SCE provide generators to customers during a PSPS?**

A. SCE does not provide generators to customers, except in limited cases where the need is coordinated in advance between SCE and local agencies for critical life and safety reasons, or for first responders. For customers with personal medical equipment and other critical personal devices, SCE urges customers to explore safe, alternative power sources, such as Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS), that can be used safely indoors to power medical equipment during a potential extended power shutoff. You can learn more about UPS systems on [EnergyStar's UPS webpage](#).

**12. Q: What other steps is SCE doing to reduce fire risk?**

A. We apply robust design and construction standards, aggressive tree trimming and other vegetation management activities, various operational practices (e.g. we will not automatically re-energize powerlines in high fire risk areas after a circuit interruption), and collaborative partnerships with fire agencies to maintain public safety. In addition, SCE is evaluating a variety of additional tools and technologies to advance fire safety throughout our system, including the use of drones, weather stations and cameras, to supplement our current capabilities and improve situational awareness.

**13. Q: Will this be the new normal during high fire/wind events?**

A. Yes. Although PPS events are the last resort in a line of operational procedures SCE employs to mitigate fire risk, it must be part of our strategy as climate change increases the severity and duration of heat waves and other extreme weather events.

**14. Q: How often will PPS events occur?**

A. A PPS event is a last resort when we are faced with extreme weather conditions, and it is impossible to anticipate their frequency. Actual frequency of events will depend on various weather and environmental factors, and the decision will be made with the most accurate assessment of real-time information and situational awareness data available at the time.

**15. Q: Does SCE have the legal authority to shut off my power when deemed necessary?**

A. California Public Utilities Code § 399.2 and § 451 give SCE the authority to shut off power in emergency situations when necessary to protect public safety.

**16. Q: Will customers with solar panels installed still be shut off?**

A. Yes, when utility power is shut off, your solar energy system is designed to immediately shut down for safety reasons (to avoid "backfeeding" the grid; refer to Rule 21). A grid-tied solar electric system does not provide power during outages unless it includes a battery storage system and transfer switch. Your power will typically be reinstated moments after grid power is restored. However, you may need to manually reset your solar system's inverter back to service after your power is reinstated (most systems automatically reset after power is restored).

**17. Q: What are some preparedness tips for communities before, during, and after a PSPS event?**

- A. Ensuring you are prepared for wildfires will enable you to be more resilient and ready for a PSPS event. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or CAL FIRE, has a website focused on wildfire preparedness: <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/> To prepare specifically for a power outage, please visit our webpage ([on.SCE.com/outages](http://on.SCE.com/outages)) which contains great information for dealing with various issues before, during, and after an extended power outage.

**18. Q: Do other utilities have similar PSPS protocols?**

- A. Yes. San Diego Gas & Electric, for example, has utilized a similar protocol for a number of years.

*\* **Red Flag Warning Definition:** A red flag warning is a forecast warning issued by the United States National Weather Service to inform area firefighting and land management agencies that conditions are ideal for wildland fire combustion and rapid spread.*

