

Weekly ReCap for November 1, 2019

Next CPC meeting November 4, 2019 - Note time - 4:00 to 6:00 P.M., at the Volunteer Center, Lewis Street, San Andreas.

BOS – next meeting November 5, 2019

(Thanks for the article, John L.)

Mom-and-Pop Pharmacies Say California's Lower Drug Reimbursement Rates Are Putting Them In the Red

The floral wallpaper and cheerful signs at Pucci's Pharmacy in Midtown Sacramento invoke an old-timey feel that sets it apart from a Rite Aid or CVS.

Behind the counter, owner Clint Hopkins greets the two resident support dogs, Allie and Ella, before counseling a patient about her inhaler.

Hopkins took over the 90-year-old pharmacy in 2016. Lately, he's been struggling to make ends meet, because the state changed the way it reimburses him for buying certain prescription drugs. California is also taking back money from past claims, he said.

These challenges are spurring independent pharmacies across the state to question whether they can continue serving Medi-Cal patients.

"We're stuck between a rock and a hard place, providing the medications to the patients that need them or being sorry we're not filling prescriptions because we're not being paid," he said. "It's only so long until it puts us out of business."

In 2017, following a ruling from the federal government, the state Department of Health Care Services changed how it reimburses pharmacies that buy drugs for Medi-Cal patients. This applied only to patients in "fee-for-service" Medi-Cal, where the state pays the provider, in this case the pharmacy, directly for services rather than going through a managed care plan such as Anthem Blue Cross.

After California began implementing the new reimbursement rates in February, some pharmacies started getting less money back from the state when they submitted claims for these patients.

Now, these pharmacies say the lower rates are doing serious damage to their bottom lines.

Jon Roth of the California Pharmacists Association said small pharmacies that treat high numbers of chronically ill, low-income patients are being hit hardest.

“The issue really disproportionately affects what we call our independent community pharmacy, like ‘Joe’s drug store on main street,’” he said.

Hopkins said he’s losing money on patients with HIV, cancer and other complex conditions that require expensive medication. He’s committed to continuing to serve this population, but suspects other small pharmacies will stop ordering these drugs — or even shut their doors.

This spring, the California Pharmacists Association surveyed 241 independent pharmacies and found 85 percent have stopped serving Medi-Cal patients or are thinking about it, and 74 percent might close or sell their businesses.

The Department of Health Care Services says they reached the new reimbursement rates after several meetings with pharmacists across the state. They also decided to raise what’s called the “professional dispensing fee,” which the state pays to pharmacies for staffing and other operating costs.

Geoffrey Joyce, an associate professor with the University of Southern California’s School of Pharmacy, said this was an effort to standardize the variety of payments the state was making to pharmacies, and crack down on abuse in the Medicaid system.

“When I look at those reimbursing rates and dispensing fees, they’re very generous,” he said. “This is a step toward greater transparency.”

But it doesn’t shake out well for everyone. How the rate change affects a pharmacy depends on how big it is, how many patients it serves and what quantity of drugs it buys.

“It is an average, which means some pharmacies are going to get a price below that average and some are going to pay more,” he said. “And I’d imagine the smaller pharmacies, they may say, ‘Hey, you know what, we’re actually losing money on this spread.’”

On top of the shifted rates, the department recently started asking for money from some pharmacies.

For claims filed between 2017, when the new rates were approved, and when they actually took effect this February, the state was still reimbursing pharmacies at the old rate. Now, they’re telling pharmacies they should have been paid back at the new rate — and that they may owe the state the difference. Some pharmacies are getting money back from the readjustment.

The California Pharmacists Association is suing the department over this recoupment and also the new rates, so the take-back is on hold for now. The case is on the desk of federal judge in Oakland.

“Even though [independent pharmacies] are losing money on the go-forward, at least they don’t have the clawback on top of it,” Roth said. “But if the clawbacks come back into play ... it’ll just

be a matter of how quickly they go out of business, as opposed to whether they go out of business.”

Clint Hopkins had to give between \$6,000 and \$7,000 back to the state before the recoupment came to a halt.

“We’re waiting on that judgment,” he said. “We’re all on pins and needles.”

And he says the situation is a public health threat.

If independent pharmacies can’t stock vital medications, he argues more people will end up in the emergency room, and that the risk of infectious disease spread will increase.

“It is counterintuitive for the state to be expanding Medicaid coverage to more people, but simultaneously not ensuring that those enrollees have access to their necessary medications,” he said.

The Department of Health Care Services says it's assessing the impact to pharmacies and considering changes to the recoupment process. The CPhA says they’re trying to gain traction on the issue in the Legislature.

Sammy Caiola

Healthcare Reporter

Sammy Caiola has been covering medical breakthroughs, fitness fads and health policy in California since 2014. Before joining CapRadio, Sammy was a health reporter at The Sacramento Bee.

RCRC – The Barbed Wire – October 25, 2019

[RCRC and CAFWA Partners Submit Comments on the Water Resilience Portfolio](#)

Last week, RCRC and its partners in the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA) provided comments on the Water Resilience Portfolio ahead of its initial draft release. Led by the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food & Agriculture, the Water Resilience Portfolio Initiative seeks input to help shape a roadmap for meeting future water needs, and ensuring environmental and economic resilience through the 21st Century.

CAFWA’s state-level recommendations include:

- A comprehensive, “all lands” approach to improving forest health covering large landscapes and all ownerships within California, including local, state, private and federal lands;
- Increasing the pace and scale of ecologically-based active forest management and prescribed fire;
- Supporting policies that increase the economic feasibility of forest restoration through biomass and new innovative wood products;
- Encouraging the use of watershed scale planning and project implementation;
- Encouraging the use of state funding and personnel to accelerate forest restoration on all lands in California, including federal lands; and,
- Increasing funding and identifying new funding sources for forest restoration from federal, state, local, and private sources.

Founded in 2014, CAFWA was formed to advocate for increasing the pace and scale of ecologically sound forest restoration projects that can help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and promote healthier, more resilient forests across California. CAFWA is a nonpartisan, urban-rural coalition representing water interests, local governments, the conservation community, agriculture, and the forestry sector.

CAFWA’s letter can be accessed [here](#). CAFWA’s website can be accessed [here](#).

Federal Appropriations Update

With barely five weeks left before the current [Continuing Resolution](#) (CR) expires on November 21st, Congressional leaders are scrambling to make progress on a long-term appropriations bill for the fiscal year that began on October 1st. There is belief amongst some lawmakers that another CR could be needed to fund at least part of the government through the end of 2019, and perhaps as far as into early spring.

"Unless a miracle happens around here with the House and the Senate, we will have to come forth with another CR," said Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Alabama), noting that next February or March is "probably in the ballpark." On Thursday, the Senate voted 92-2 to pass a four-bill spending package ([H.R. 3055](#)) that combines the fiscal 2020 Agriculture, Commerce-Justice-Science, Interior-Environment, and Transportation-Housing & Urban Development bills. The Appropriations Committee had advanced all four measures on unanimous votes. When work on the first package is completed, the Senate would proceed to a defense funding package that would also feature funding for opioids treatment and prevention, among other programs, according to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky).

Broadband Update

The Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability Act ([S. 1822](#)), sponsored by Senator Rodger Wicker (R-Mississippi), would require the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to collect detailed data twice-a-year on the availability of broadband internet access services.

Under the bill, the FCC would establish and maintain a comprehensive database and create detailed and publicly available broadband coverage maps. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently estimated that the bill would cost the FCC approximately \$65 million over the 2020-2024 period. However, because the FCC is allowed to collect fees to offset the costs, CBO estimates the net effect on spending would be insignificant.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai stated his fear that a patchwork of local and state regulations on internet technologies could hurt the competitiveness of the US in the tech sector. As the FCC has continued deregulation at the federal level, states have stepped in to fill the void with their own regulation. California has been at the forefront of this effort with their passing of internet protections following the dismantling of net neutrality. Chairman Pai argued that "while that federalist system has served us very well" up to this point in our nation's history, it's time for Congress to consider "whether or not we can still maintain a multilayer regulatory system." He said allowing states and local governments to pass their own laws regulating internet services, creates market uncertainty.

State and Local Income Tax Deduction (SALT) Update

On Wednesday, Senate Democrats forced a vote to overturn Internal Revenue Service rules blocking workarounds to the State and Local Income Tax (SALT) deduction's \$10,000 cap. The 43-52 vote in rejection of the repeal was mostly along party lines, though Senator Rand Paul (R-Kentucky), crossed the aisle to vote for the Democrats' measure, while presidential candidate Michael Bennet (D-Colorado) voted against it.

Republicans included the SALT deduction cap in their 2017 tax law in order to raise revenue that could be used to finance other tax cuts and because they thought that the deduction was subsidizing states that levy high income and/or high property taxes. The resolution would only repeal state tax laws that allow for workaround rather than an entire repeal of the law, although Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee say they are preparing legislation to at least partially, or temporarily, roll back the \$10,000 limitation.

Federal Forestry and Wildlife Update

On Wednesday, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System announced a Director's Order to allow the use of low-speed electric bicycles (e-bikes) at national wildlife refuges. E-bike use is now permitted at any refuge where traditional biking is allowed.

In 2018, more than 1.3 million people bicycled at 193 national wildlife refuges. This guidance will enable visitors to use these bicycles with a small electric motor (less than 1 horsepower) power assist in the same manner as traditional bicycles.

Valley Springs Community Plan proposal going online

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / October 25, 2019

The public will have an opportunity to view online a rough draft of a new Valley Springs Community Plan and make comments as soon as today.

District One Supervisor Gary Tofanelli gave a Valley Springs Community Plan update at the end of Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting.

He and District 5 Supervisor Benjamin Stopper held a public meeting Oct. 16 to discuss status of the community plan update.

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors is days away from adopting an update of the Calaveras County General Plan, but it will not include a Community Plan for Valley Springs and several other Calaveras County communities.

However, the board has agreed to eventually include all of the community plans and Valley Springs and Copperopolis have the highest priority.

Valley Springs has two competing versions of a community plan that were drafted nearly a decade ago.

Tofanelli said both versions will be posted on the planning department's website in addition to the rough draft combining elements of both. He asked for the public to post their comments between now and the December holidays.

Early next year, a second public meeting to discuss the Valley Springs Community Plan update will be scheduled, he added.

Supervisor Stopper, whose district includes a small portion of Valley Springs, also encouraged the public to take a look at the website and leave their comments.

County Planning Director Peter Maurer on Wednesday said his department has been busy focusing on the General Plan update and recent cannabis ordinance, but hoped to have the Valley Springs Community Plan posted on Friday for comment.

Auditor Says Sonora And Angels Camp Have Moderate Risk Of Fiscal Distress

[By B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Oct 25, 2019

Sonora, CA — The California State Auditor’s Office has ranked all of California’s 471 cities when it comes to their risk level of financial distress.

It is specifically in relation to the local government and its revenues. The lower the ranking a city receives...the higher amount of financial distress. The ratings are based on things like general fund reserves, liquidity, debt burden, revenue trends and pension liabilities. Compton in the greater Los Angeles area came in number one as having the most financial distress, followed by Atwater in the Central Valley and Blythe in Riverside County.

The report finds that 18-cities are at a high risk of financial distress, 236 are a moderate risk and 217 are low risk. The City of Sonora came in at 83 and Angels Camp is 165, both falling in the “moderate risk” category.

Many of the cities with the highest rankings, and lowest financial stress, are in the Silicon Valley region and around Orange County. Also ranking high, closer to the Mother Lode, are Elk Grove (370), Galt (320), Lathrop (465) and Manteca (335).

You can find an interactive map showing all the cities by [clicking here](#). The report does not address the fiscal risk of counties in the state.

Update: PG&E Planning To Give All Clear On Monday Morning

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Oct 27, 2019

Update at 6:15pm: The “all-clear” from the weather event is now anticipated to come early Monday morning, around 6am, and PG&E will begin patrolling shortly after to inspect the lines for any damage.

PG&E will then turn the power on as the various areas are deemed safe. Water districts continue to request conservation this evening as facilities are running on backup generators. The CHP and Caltrans urge caution while approaching intersections and treat all stop lights as four way stops.

PG&E continues to warn that another wind event could come by Tuesday morning. The latest update is that power could be shut off again in the region on Tuesday and through midday on Wednesday.

Additional weather modeling will occur this evening and more updates will be released tomorrow morning.

For some early school-related information, [click here](#).

Update at 1:45pm: The Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services reports that the “all clear” from the weather event is still anticipated to come around midnight.

That said, the weather is beginning to moderate in areas to the north, and PG&E is looking at the potential of moving up the re-energization process in that area of the state.

Jason Terry with the Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services notes, “I spoke with a National Weather Service representative this morning and learned that Tuolumne County had recorded highs for gusts of 35 mph at Mt Elizabeth and 31mph in Twain Harte.”

Heavy winds have also been noticeable at times this afternoon in the Mother Lode.

He adds, “A point of clarification, if we are given the all-clear at midnight as planned, patrols will begin at first light to reinspect lines. While they will not inspect at night, they will work to preposition resources for inspection.”

When it comes to another potential planned outage in the days ahead, Terry says it could occur as early as Tuesday, updating an earlier statement.

He adds, “The timelines will continue to be refined as we draw closer to the potential event. Even with a possible upcoming event, it is the intent of PG&E to continue to restore power up to the point where they will be de-energizing for another event. This means we could potentially be partially or fully restored before the next potential event.”

Update at 8:23am: In response to the power outages across the Mother Lode, Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services representative Jason Terry updates, “There has been no change in the all-clear time which should occur around midnight tonight. After the all-clear, PG&E will begin the process of restoring power systematically across the County and deal with any potential damages to their infrastructure.”

More updates will come throughout the day.

It is unclear what the wind speeds reached in Tuolumne County overnight, but Terry says in other areas of the state, up to the north, PG&E recorded sustained winds of 72 mph and a top speed of 93 mph.

There is also an increasing chance of another PSPS event in a few days. Terry says, “There is another system that is a few days behind this current event that could create conditions for another PSPS around mid-week. This system is forecasting weaker than this current event, but still may meet the wind/humidity conditions that lead to these Public Safety Power Shutoffs. PG&E noted that while the winds are not quite as strong as this event, the winds are continuing to dry out the fuels and create even lower humidity conditions. As we have seen with this current event, weather conditions are dynamic and forecasts change constantly. However as an early look, a potential PSPS could occur as early as Wednesday morning.”

Information about Community Resource Centers is listed below.

Original story at 7:33am: Sonora, CA — During the early morning hours, around 1am Sunday, PG&E cut power across Tuolumne and Calaveras counties.

The latest estimate is that the anticipated weather event will last 24 hours, and the company hopes to give the all-clear at around midnight so that it can begin the process of inspecting lines to see if there is any damage. There is not an estimate as to when electricity will be restored. PG&E indicates that the planned outage is impacting upwards of around 900,000 addresses in the state.

There will be numerous community resource centers open today in the Mother Lode. In Tuolumne County, they are at Eproson Park in Twain Harte, Mary Laveroni Park in Groveland, and the Motherlode Fairgrounds in Sonora. In Calaveras County, they are located at the Meadowmont Shopping Center in Arnold, West Point VFW Hall and in the Roundtable Pizza parking lot in Valley Springs.

Caltrans notes that many stoplights are not working today, so you should treat them as though they are stop signs.

Water districts are asking for conservation during the planned power outage because facilities are running on backup generators.

The City of Angels Camp will host a community meeting at 10am today at Utica Park to discuss the city's response to the outage and answer any questions. You can also charge devices today at the Angels Camp City Hall.

Update: PG&E Gives All-Clear Following Weather Event

By [Tori James](#) / MML / Oct 28, 2019

Update at 6:45pm: To view an updated story about the planned power outages planned for Tuesday and Wednesday in the Mother Lode, [click here.](#)

Update at 6:17pm: Mother Lode OES officials are sharing updates on recovery from the current power shutdown.

According to Tuolumne County OES Coordinator Jason Terry, “The latest update shows 46 percent of customers restored in Tuolumne County as of 4 p.m. Crews will continue to work to restore lines tonight until they cannot see to inspect lines and will begin again in the morning. The goal is to restore as many customers as feasible before another potential PSPS event.”

Calaveras County OES Director John Osbourn reports, “We are getting reports that Valley Springs is starting to see power as well as in San Andreas. This was confirmed by PG&E, who reports that about one-third of the customers in our county have been restored.”

Early in the 6 p.m. hour the utility indicated 589,140 customer addresses were still without power, including 25,730 in Calaveras and 14,330 in Tuolumne counties.

Update at 3:37pm: PG&E reports that 770,777 customer addresses are in the dark. Of these, 31,532 are in Calaveras and 17,958 in Tuolumne counties.

On Monday, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statement further commenting on a major investigation by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) of utility-led Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS).

He stated that he wants to see the CPUC launch a total reform of power shutoff rules and regulations. “Utilities must be held accountable and be aggressively penalized for their overreliance on PSPS, and the product of this investigation must be new rules and regulations to do that,” Newsom mandated. “I also want to see customers not charged for PSPS. It seems obvious, but under the current rules, utilities can do just that. It’s unacceptable and must be remedied.”

Update at 2:24pm: More Mother Lode OES officials are sharing updates on the current and pending power shutdowns.

According to Calaveras County OES Director John Osbourn, “PG&E is inspecting lines with 47 aircraft and 6300-plus workers across the 30-plus counties. We have heard some pockets in the county have been restored, but that information is from word of mouth. We did see significant PG&E resources out and about this morning, so they are inspecting.”

Despite an earlier map posted by PG&E outlining potentially impacted areas should the utility move forward with another PSPS event on Tuesday, Osbourn says the utility has NOT provided any updated outage maps, which his office and other OES offices were expecting to have by now. (View map in image box.)

“PG&E advises they hope to have them out in the next few hours,” Osbourn continues. “At this time, and until we hear different, if you are currently de-energized, the safest assumption to make is that you will be included in the next event as well.”

Currently, 816,170 customer addresses are without power across the state, including 31,665 in Calaveras and 22,963 in Tuolumne counties.

Update at 1:45pm: The latest PG&E power outage figures indicate 868,532 customer addresses across 35 counties are still without power, including 31,665 in Calaveras and 23,158 in Tuolumne counties.

Update at 1:23pm: Tuolumne County officials share the latest and confirm power is back on in some downtown Sonora government buildings.

Tuolumne County OES spokesperson Jason Terry reports, “We have seen the power come up in some of our county buildings in Sonora and anticipate continued restoration throughout today and into tomorrow.”

He continues, “PG&E’s goal is full restoration within 48 hours though this is still dependent upon damages received to infrastructure during the event.” He confirms that the Community Resilience Centers will remain open until power is restored.

Terry adds that PG&E is still in the process of analyzing the forecasted weather event due to arrive later tomorrow morning. “We had hoped for an update this afternoon, but it looks like we will be waiting a few more hours to hear who may be impacted by this future event,” he shares.

According to Terry, while PG&E is optimistic that the footprint of the event will be significantly smaller, no data has yet been provided to indicate the level of impacts to Tuolumne County.

He also shared a sampling of wind speeds recorded by the National Weather Service between 11:36 a.m. and 7:02 p.m. at various locations across the county, which ranged between 31 to 44 miles-per-hour. The highest ones were from Mount Elizabeth, north-east Groveland-Big Oak Flat, and west Strawberry.

BJ Hansen posted the following earlier updates.

Update at 10:57am: The power is beginning to come back on in some areas of Tuolumne County, and more areas will be added throughout the day. PG&E has not indicated which areas can expect to have power restored earlier rather than later.

Update at 8:10am: The Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services reports that PG&E crews have received the “all-clear” from the weekend weather event. Patrols have begun to start clearing lines as part of the process of restoring power in the county. They have not yet provided restoration times for Tuolumne County, but we should systematically start seeing the power come on throughout the day depending on the level of damage received to PG&E infrastructure.

As for the next event, Tuolumne County OES reports that the two PG&E weather models overnight have shown that tomorrow’s potential PSPS is likely to be smaller than anticipated and will affect fewer counties than originally projected. They do not yet have an update on whether this next event will still impact Tuolumne or Calaveras counties. More information should be known this afternoon.

Original story posted at 6:45am: Sonora, CA — Most schools in the region are either closed this morning or running on an altered schedule due to the lingering power outages.

[Click here](#) to find the latest information. In addition, Watch Resources is closed.

PG&E says it is planning to begin inspecting the lines in the Mother Lode early this morning ahead of turning the power back on.

PG&E, however, continues to warn that another wind event could come by tomorrow. The latest update is that power could be shut off again in the region on Tuesday morning and continuing through midday on Wednesday.

We'll pass along more information when it becomes available.

[Click here](#) to view a recap from yesterday.

Written by [BJ Hansen](#).

Report breaking news, traffic or weather to our News Hotline 532-6397. Send Mother Lode News Story photos to news@clarkebroadcasting.com. Sign up for our FREE myMotherLode.com Daily Newsletters by [clicking here](#).

For power outage preparation tips and detailed power outage information view our [Power Outage Page here](#).

During heat or snow, overburdened electric cables, transformers, and other electrical equipment can fail. Be safe, never touch a downed power-line or electrical equipment. For our yellow page listings of local power providers [click here](#).

Newsom Declares State Of Emergency Following Extreme Weather

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Oct 28, 2019

Sacramento, CA — Citing damage occurring in California related to heavy winds over the weekend, Governor Gavin Newsom has declared a State of Emergency.

Newsom notes that it notably caused the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County to explode, along with the Tick Fire in Southern California. Some areas of the state not experiencing wildfires reported other related wind damage. In Sonoma County there were 200,000 residents forced to evacuate, and in Southern California there were tens of thousands.

Newsom says, “We are deploying every resource available, and are coordinating with numerous agencies as we continue to respond to these fires. It is critical that people in evacuation zones heed the warnings from officials and first responders, and have the local and state resources they need as we fight these fires.”

In addition, the Governor has announced a \$75-million program for state and local governments to mitigate impacts of power shutoffs and announced a series of new partnerships to help secure services for medically vulnerable populations during these events.

Pressure Mounting From State Lawmakers Regarding Power Shutoffs

[By Tracey Petersen](#) / MML / Oct 30, 2019

Sonora, CA – With the lights set to go out again this afternoon for another PG&E power shutoff even while some in the Mother Lode are still in the dark from the last one, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle are voicing similar frustrations.

Governor Gavin Newsom has already been very vocal regarding what he calls “greed and mismanagement” by the state’s largest utility, as reported [here](#). He issued this further comment on a major investigation by the California Public Utilities Commission of utility-led Public Safety Power Shutoffs stating he wants to see the commission launch a total reform of power shutoff rules and regulations.

Newsom states, “This cannot be the new normal. We cannot absorb this year after year.”

Mother Lode State Senator Andreas Borgeas (R-Fresno) also criticizes that PG&E is beyond culpable for decades of neglect, stating, “PG&E is ‘too big to fail,’ but has shown us that they are no longer fit to be stewards of energy and safety for the countless citizens of their immense territory.”

This latest round of fire-prevention blackouts could leave millions of people without electricity in the state. some for five days or longer. As reported [here](#), the Mother Lode could see another nearly 9,500 in Tuolumne and 16,000 in Calaveras County involved in today’s PSPS.

PG&E Planning To Give Credits To Customers Impacted By Power Outage

[By B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Oct 30, 2019

Sonora, CA — Governor Gavin Newsom says his office is working with PG&E to ensure that customers impacted by the October 9 planned power outage will receive some form of financial credit.

The Governor had earlier proposed that residential customers receive \$100 and businesses \$250. The details are still being worked out behind the scenes.

Newsom announced the development at a press conference and called it “significant” because utilities in the past have not given financial credits for disruptions.

PG&E has indicated that it will only give credits for the October 9th outage citing issues with communications it had encountered including its website periodically crashing.

Update: OES Provides Update On Calaveras Outages

[By Tracey Petersen](#) / MML / Oct 31, 2019

Update at 5:45 p.m.: PG&E is reporting that the number of those without power in the latest power shut off is just over 11,000. There remain 22 addresses in Calaveras County along Highway 4 stretching from Cottage Springs up to the Big Meadow area. The utility has posted a 9 p.m. restoration time.

The utility reports that during this latest round of line inspections more than 6,300 PG&E personnel and contractors along with more than 45 helicopters are deployed and supporting the restoration process. The company adds that nearly 830 electric workers from other utilities across the U.S. have aided them with those inspections and repairs.

Update at 3pm: The latest PG&E power shut off is near a close as the company reports that of the statewide 328,255 customers who lost electricity in the most recent planned power shutoff, just over 17,000 remain without electricity. Of them, 22 customer addresses remain without power for Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) power shutdown. They are concentrated along the Highway 4 Corridor from Cottage Springs up to the Big Meadow area. The utility has posted a 9 p.m. restoration time.

The company also reports that there were 143 incidents of damage or other hazards to the electric system identified in this latest PSPS and they expect that number to climb. PG&E officials state “It is these types of damages or other hazards that could lead to wildfire ignitions if power lines are not de-energized.”

News Director BJ Hansen contributed the details below.

Update at 11:40am: PG&E reports that of the statewide 328,255 customers who lost electricity in the most recent planned power shutoff, 36,745 are still without electricity. All of the customers in Tuolumne County are restored and the remaining customers in Calaveras should be restored by midday.

Original story posted at 9:53am: Railroad Flat, CA — While all of the PG&E planned outages were restored in Tuolumne County yesterday, there are still some customers waiting to be restored in Calaveras County.

Calaveras County Office of Emergency Services Coordinator John Osbourn reports that 97-percent of the Calaveras customers have been restored. The areas without power include parts of Glencoe, Railroad Flat, West Point and Rich Gulch. PG&E hopes to have the final customers restored by midday.

There are also 182 customers in the Forest Meadows community without power and PG&E says it is unrelated to the planned shutoff. The company is investigating the cause of that outage and there is not currently an estimated restoration time. The Community Resource Centers in West Point and Arnold will remain open until there is full restoration.

Osbourn adds that PG&E is not projecting any additional planned outages during the current seven-day weather forecast.

Proposed New Laws Following PG&E Shutoffs

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Oct 31, 2019

Sacramento, CA — A variety of proposed new laws are being floated in Sacramento and Washington, DC in response to wide-scale PG&E planned shutoffs over recent weeks.

At the state capitol, SB 378, co-authored by Republican Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham and Democratic Senator Scott Wiener, would mandate that PG&E shareholders reimburse local small business owners and families for costs associated with energy company shutoffs. Cunningham, who represents San Luis Obispo, says, “For too long, utilities have had little incentive to fire harden their vulnerable infrastructure, and now the ‘solution’ is to shut off power. Power shutoffs hurt ordinary people and small businesses. It’s only fair that the utilities’ shareholders be responsible for any losses incurred by shutting off the power.”

Another bill, authored by a pair of Republicans, Senator Jim Nielsen and Assemblyman James Gallagher, calls for pausing renewable power mandates in California so that utilities can use the extra money to harden infrastructure.

In Washington, DC, Democratic Congressman Josh Harder, who represents parts of the Central Valley, is developing what he has dubbed the “No Bonuses During Blackouts Act” that would put new taxes on companies that give out high executive bonuses instead of investing in failing infrastructure. Harder cites recent bonuses paid to top executives, as well as reports that PG&E has failed to pay federal income taxes over the past decade.

PG&E begins restoring power, again

The Union Democrat / Oct 31, 2019

Lots of good news from PG&E this morning.

Everyone's power has been restored from the Sunday morning blackout.

Crews have been given the all clear to inspect lines shut down Tuesday afternoon. That would be communities along Highway 4 in Calaveras County and Highway 108 north of Soulsbyville in Tuolumne County.

And PG&E doesn't expect another outage for at least a week.

"PG&E reports that the winds picked up overnight but has since dropped off," said Jason Terry of the Tuolumne County administrator's office. "There is still a red flag warning in effect, but this alone will not trigger another PSPS event."

About 9,000 customers in Tuolumne County were affected by the Tuesday shutdown.

Also, PG&E president Bill Johnson said the company will give \$100 reimbursements to residential customers and \$250 to businesses.

He said company officials understand the hardship to customers and that the company did not effectively communicate information about the shut offs.

"This is not an industry standard practice, nor approved as part of a tariff, but we believe it is the right thing to do for our customers in this case, given the challenges with our website and call center communications," he said in a statement released Tuesday.

This is for the Oct. 9 shut off only and was approved by the company at the request of Gov. Gavin Newsom.
