

Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings

[MUSIC PLAYING] At Pacific Gas and Electric company our most important responsibility is the safety of our customers and our communities that we are privileged to serve. Given the growing threat of wildfire PG&E is evolving its wildfire prevention efforts. Severe drought conditions and rising temperatures are increasing wildfire risk across California and the Western United States.

We understand the urgency to operate our system safely in this rapidly changing environment. That is why we have implemented additional unprecedented safety measures in certain high fire risk areas. One of these measures involves updating settings on protection devices on power lines. We are adjusting the sensitivity of our breakers and reclosers, so they turn off more quickly if there is an issue on an energized line.

This video provides an overview of our updated settings and how they make our system safer. While these updates can help prevent wildfires, it can also result in more frequent and longer outages for our customers. We recognize that being without power is a burden and we want to outline the steps we are taking to improve the power reliability of your service without compromising safety.

To help protect customers in our communities during this extreme drought and dry conditions, we're updating the settings on circuits and high fire threat district areas as defined by the California Public Utilities Commission. Updating the sensitivity and operating speed of our equipment will automatically turn off power faster, if the system detects a potential problem.

Our system has a series of protective devices, circuit breakers, fuses, reclosers that operate much like the electric system in your home. If there is a fault whatever it is a tree branch hitting a wire, a problem with the equipment itself it will trigger the protective devices and turn off power. During less extreme conditions the power does not shut off as frequently because the equipment is in normal configuration. But in today's current environment we must ensure that we are taking every step possible to reduce catastrophic wildfires.

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Once power has gone out crews inspect the line for damage. Something has caused the system to lose power. So we must ensure there isn't an issue that could start a wildfire when the power is turned back on. Inspections are conducted either on the ground or in the air via helicopter.

Ground patrols may need to be conducted on foot and in difficult terrain with limited access. This could contribute to the duration of an outage. If you have power lines on your property, we may need access in order to restore power. Crews will restore customers in stages or steps as individual portions of the circuit are deemed safe and ready for re-energized. Our priority is to maintain safety while restoring power as quickly as possible.

It is important to note that outages resulting from these updated device settings are not public safety power shutoffs or PSPS events. Where a PSPS event is focused on preemptively turning off power during times of dry fuels coupled with high wind conditions, these outages associated with our new device settings are unplanned. They occur when our system experiences a fault condition or a problem on the power line. As these outages are unplanned we are not able to provide advance notice.

We will however provide all information regarding when power will be restored to our customers as soon as it is available. We encourage customers to visit our website at pge.com/outage for updates on current outages. We know the hardship these outages may cause and are only using this new measure to protect our customers and communities.

One example of this measure improving our safety took place on September 7th, when approximately 1,000 customers in the Oakhurst area lost power. A PG&E qualified technician arrived on website to find a live green oak tree had broken and fallen on a power line taking down two poles and the power line with it. The sensitivity and speed of the protective devices on our circuit de-energize this line before it had an opportunity to ignite a fire. This is just one of many similar instances where a significant hazard was found on the line and our system de-energized automatically, potentially preventing a catastrophic wildfire.

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Since these enhanced settings were implemented in late July of 2021, we have seen a drastic decline in California Public Utilities Commission reportable ignitions in high fire threat districts. Under the wrong circumstances these ignitions could have resulted in catastrophic wildfires. Based on our findings the data shows more than a 50% decrease from the previous three year average and an approximate 60% decrease from last year alone. This is a substantial reduction in the risk of major wildfires and is helping to protect lives, homes and the environment.

We are working diligently to reduce the frequency, duration and size of outages. We're doing this by further optimizing settings for a more targeted approach to shutting off power, by responding to all outages and high fire threat districts as quickly and as safely as possible. And reducing the duration of outages by leveraging ground and air patrols.

We recognize the hardship on our customers who have experienced numerous outages as a result of these additional safety measures. We are working hard to improve our customers' experience, while also putting safety at the heart of everything we do.

We have resources available to help our customers prepare for outages and stay safe. For example, customers in our medical baseline program who live in high fire threat areas may be eligible for a portable battery program. There is a generator rebate program for customers who rely on well water, customers in our medical baseline program and certain small businesses. We have also enhanced our notification and coordination with critical customers, telecom carriers and local agencies.

If you would like to learn more about these resources and the other steps we are taking to prevent wildfires, you can visit our website at pge.com/wildfiresafety. We also have additional emergency preparedness resources at safetyactioncenter.pge.com. If you have any questions, we have people standing by to help. You can email our team at wildfiresafety@pge.com or call 1-800-PGE-5000. Thank you for watching and have a safety.

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