



NEWS



News Headlines 10/10/2019

- Power shutoffs possible to more than 62,600 customers in Riverside, San Bernardino counties due to wildfire risk
- Traffic snarled after minor injury rollover crash on 15 freeway in Hesperia
- Windstorm may cause periods of PSPS

Power shutoffs possible to more than 62,600 customers in Riverside, San Bernardino counties due to wildfire risk

Risa Johnson, Palm Springs Desert Sun

Posted: October 9, 2019



Pacific Gas and Electric Co. is shutting off power to hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses amid dry conditions in an effort to prevent fires. Wochit, Wochit

Over 62,600 Southern California Edison customers in Riverside and San Bernardino counties were on notice as of Wednesday morning that their power could be shut off due to wildfire risk from high winds.

Across California, more than 1 million people were without power as Pacific Gas & Electric began preemptive shutoffs in its service area in northern and central California. Some areas of the state could be without power for up to a week.

The increased frequency of mega-fires in California, which a Southern California Edison representative previously attributed to climate change, has changed how the state's three large power companies — Edison, PG&E in Northern California and SDG&E in the San Diego area — approach transmission line safety.

Power companies now are facing the delicate task of monitoring their equipment — and deciding when to preemptively shut power off. If power companies wait until it's too late, they could be leaving themselves liable in court for billions in wildfire damages, and loss of life.

Local cities that may be affected

Southern California Edison said cities in Riverside County that may experience outages included Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Hemet, San Jacinto, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Perris, and Riverside.

Communities that may be affected in unincorporated Riverside County included Whitewater and Bonnie Bell, Banning Pass, Cabazon, Owl, portions of Desert Hills Outlet Mall, North Palm Springs, Gilman Hot Springs, Lakeview, Nuevo, Mons, Mead Valley, Eden Hot Springs, Mountain Center, Good Hope and other unincorporated areas of Beaumont and Banning.

Cities in San Bernardino County that may experience outages included Big Bear, Calimesa, Fontana, Hesperia, Highland, Rancho Cucamonga, Rialto, San Bernardino, Upland, Yucaipa, and Yucca Valley.

In San Bernardino County, unincorporated areas that were under warnings included Doble and Upper Holcomb Valley, Cajon Pass, Devore, Etiwanda, Lucerne Valley, Lytle Creek, Running Springs, Lake

Arrowhead, Cedar Pines Park, Valley of Enchantment, Crestline, Valley View Park, Joshua Tree, Homestead Valley, Crestline, Oak Hills, Muscoy, Green Valley Lake, and Morongo Valley.

SCE outage warnings can be found at <https://www.sce.com/safety/wildfire/psps>.

Sixty-five customers in Kern County on the Tehachapi circuit saw their power cut at approximately noon Wednesday due to high winds. However, a weather station at the Tehachapi Municipal Airport indicated maximum gusts at 32 miles per hour for the next 24 hours.

Sce.com was also experiencing intermittent issues preventing visitors from logging in, making payments or completing requests. The public safety power shutoff information page was working, but not in its usual format.

Weather expected to change Thursday

On Wednesday in the Coachella Valley, it was expected to be “a little breezy” in the afternoon and evening, according to the National Weather Service.

“It will be dry and warm and a bit windy, as a trough of low pressure passes through the north,” said Mark Moede, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in San Diego.

Around 10 a.m. the Palm Springs International Airport weather station recorded wind speeds of about 16 miles per hour, with gusts up to 27 miles per hour.

Around the same time, the Ontario International Airport weather station recorded winds up to 12 miles per hour with gusts up to 19 miles per hour. There were wind speeds of up to 7 miles per hour with gusts up to 20 miles per hour at the Riverside Municipal Airport.

Moede said that Thursday's weather would be noticeably different — cooler and dry.

A National Weather Service red flag warning will be in effect from 3 a.m. Thursday to 8 p.m. Friday for the Coachella Valley and all Southern California desert and mountain communities, Moede said.

That’s because of the forecast combination of strong wind and low humidity, which presents a high fire danger, he said.

Moede said "most of the state" would be affected by high winds and resultant wildfire risk.

The area expected to be the most affected in Southern California is from Ontario to Riverside, he said. Winds should die down Friday through Sunday.

“We just have to get through this period of above-average, wind-elevated fire danger, then the weekend is looking pretty nice,” Moede said.

'Very dry and receptive' fuels

This is the first significant Santa Ana Wind event of the year. Southern California Edison recently hired a fire scientist to begin managing the company’s own fuel monitoring program. Tom Rolinski, who previously worked for the forest services, is the creator of the Santa Ana Wind Threat index model, which calculates

threat based on a combination of wind speeds and fuel moisture, says live fuels are not as dry as they were this time last year.

“Fuels are still very dry and receptive, and we are certainly in a critical fire weather pattern,” Rolinski said, explaining that Edison had also installed weather stations, wildfire observation cameras, and high-performance supercomputers for weather modeling that have helped Edison make the power cuts more surgical. “We want to impact as few customers as possible.”

According to Rolinski, the parts of the grid of greatest concern include higher elevation areas of the San Gabriels where winds are strongest, as well as Santa Clarita and Ventura, as well as the Cajon Pass in San Diego County.

Edison employees turn the power back on once critical conditions have wound down, which Rolinski says is likely to happen early Friday evening.

“There will be two peaks in wind conditions, one on Thursday and then again Friday afternoon. After that, things should die down.”

Firefighters prepare for outages

The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** has temporarily added units in anticipation of the red flag warning. There will be additional staffing starting Wednesday at 6 p.m., and effective until the threat subsides.

A type 1 strike team, which specializes in structural defense, will be assigned to Devore.

"One of the most wind-prone communities, the Devore location also places this team in an ideal position to rapidly respond to fires that occur in the areas affected by the Red Flag Warning," the department said in a statement.

A ban on outdoor burning remained in effect in the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District. The fire department urged the public to be cautious when using power tools or any devices that could produce sparks.

The department also encouraged residents to prepare an evacuation plan for both at home and at work. For more information about how to prepare for wildfires, go to sbcfire.org. The department shares information about incidents on its Twitter feed, @SBCOUNTYFIRE.

Traffic signals may be affected

Caltrans warned on Tuesday that power outages could affect traffic signals on state routes throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Signals will cycle regularly for approximately three hours after an outage, then start flashing red for another three to six hours, according to Caltrans. If the outage is ongoing after six hours, signals will go into "blackout" mode.

If a traffic signal is not working, motorists are advised to treat it as a four-way stop, according to Caltrans. For more details, see the DMV Driver's Handbook at dmv.ca.gov.

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2019/10/09/mass-power-outages-possible-riverside-san-bernardino-counties/3918162002/>

Traffic snarled after minor injury rollover crash on 15 freeway in Hesperia

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: October 9, 2019



HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) A minor injury crash snarled traffic Wednesday afternoon.

Reported at 1:51 p.m., the San Bernardino County Fire Department responded to the northbound 15 Freeway, about one mile south of Bear Valley Road, and located a 2003 Mercury Sable with major damage.

The CHP logs reported that only minor injuries were sustained after the Mercury came off Mariposa Road and onto the Freeway.

The #1 and #2 lanes were closed while a tow truck cleared the scene.

At this time, the crash remains under investigation.

Traffic was backed up on the north and southbound side of the freeway for several miles. Expect delays in the area.

<https://www.vvng.com/traffic-snarled-after-minor-injury-rollover-crash-on-15-freeway-in-hesperia/>

Windstorm may cause periods of PSPS

Staff Writer, Inland News Today

Posted: October 9, 2019



INLAND EMPIRE – (INT) – As the season’s strongest Santa Ana windstorm develops, Southern California Edison says it may cut power to customers in some areas to minimize the chance that arcing power lines will cause a wildfire.

The precautionary outages could affect nearly 63,000 customers in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

“We’re going to have a mixture of heat, dryness and wind,” said forecaster Mark Moede. “Anything from a cigarette butt to a spark from mechanical equipment could cause a fire. People need to be very careful.”

Fire agencies have risen to the occasion to counter the impact of a Red Flag Fire Warning.

The US Forest Service has implemented 24-hour shifts in the San Bernardino National Forest.

Current fire restrictions include prohibitions on smoking, campfires outside certain campgrounds and target shooting.

The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** has added additional units to augment its on-duty firefighting force. A high level strike team has been pre-positioned at Devore, one of the most wind-prone communities in the Inland Empire. The additional staffing will continue into Friday or until the fire danger eases.

Power outages known as Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) periods were initially carried out in Northern California.

Traffic signals could also go dark. Those on state highways will continue to cycle regularly for approximately three hours after the outage and will then cycle to “red-flash” for another three to six hours. If the outage remains in place for more than six hours the signals will then go to “blackout” mode. Motorists must treat blacked out traffic signals as a 4-way stop.

<http://www.inlandnewstoday.com/story.php?s=56443>