



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: August 31, 2021

03

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

REPORT TO THE BOARD ON PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUTOFFS: ADDRESSING GAPS AND IMPROVING COORDINATION (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On March 2, 2021, the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to consult with stakeholders and produce a report and recommendations to increase regional resiliency for Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events.

As a result, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) formed the 2021 PSPS Regional Resiliency Working Group, with members from the County of San Diego, State of California, federal, city and tribal governments, the Fire Chiefs Association, SDG&E, County Water Authority, County Office of Education, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), mobile providers, and the Air Pollution Control District. The working group analyzed existing PSPS gaps and identified opportunities to further improve mitigation strategies, operational area coordination, and lessen the impacts of PSPS on residents. OES also requested public input, conducted a survey, and hosted a PSPS Public Forum. The collection of input from the public will be ongoing through a survey posted on the Office of Emergency Services' website.

Today's action is to receive and review the staff report addressing operational area coordination and PSPS mitigation opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Receive and review the August 2021 PSPS Regional Resiliency Report addressing Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) operational area coordination and mitigation recommendations.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services (OES) recognizes natural and human-caused hazards may increase systemic inequities throughout the region. OES is committed to equitable and inclusive coordination of all-hazard planning, mitigation, response, and recovery to foster strong, capable, and prepared communities. Therefore, OES formed the 2021 Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Regional Resiliency Working Group to seek PSPS-related feedback through stakeholder meetings and surveys to affected partners and residents. The feedback

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received includes suggestions regarding County policy, interagency coordination, outreach, and equipment to address the county’s energy needs during a PSPS event. These potential actions could improve PSPS experiences for low-income populations, individuals with disabilities, individuals with access and functional needs, underserved communities and populations that are more likely to be adversely impacted during a power shutoff.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the Board’s acceptance of the report. There is no change to net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

According to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), electric utility infrastructure has historically been responsible for less than ten percent of reported wildfires. However, fires attributed to power lines comprise roughly half of the most destructive fires in California history. With the continuing threat of wildfire, utilities may proactively cut power to electrical lines that may fail in certain weather conditions to reduce the likelihood that their infrastructure could cause or contribute to a wildfire. Temporarily turning off power to specific areas with the goal of reducing fire risk is often referred to as a “Public Safety Power Shutoff” (PSPS).

In 2012, the CPUC issued a ruling that granted electric utilities the authority, under California Public Utilities Code Sections 451 and 399.2(a), to shut off electric power to protect public safety and/or prevent fires when strong winds, heat events, and related conditions are present. As a result, San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) has the authority to implement PSPS events within San Diego County, and indeed exercises this authority during extreme weather situations.

PSPS events continue to impact California residents in negative ways with a loss of refrigeration affecting foods and certain medications, inadequate heat and cooling in the home, interruption of power for life-sustaining medical devices, inability to pump water from wells, and loss of cellular and broadband VoIP communication capabilities which might result in an inability to call 911 or to receive alert messages. Cities and counties have been impacted as well through school closures, loss of Federal and State revenues for social service programs, and business impacts due to inventory loss of perishable products and loss of sales revenue.

On October 25, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom launched the \$75 million “Local Government Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Resiliency Program” as a funding opportunity to mitigate the impacts of utility initiated PSPS events on California’s public health, safety, and commerce. As part of the program, all 58 California counties were allocated funding based on county size and experience with PSPS. The County of San Diego received an award notification in the amount of \$1,214,656, and funds were allocated to the following projects:

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• County Fire Station Generators	\$665,000
• County Library Generators	\$415,000
• County Sheriff’s Department Generator Pad Design and Automatic Transfer Switch (ATS)	\$120,000
Total: \$1,200,000	

On October 2, 2020, the County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services (OES) received an allocation notification for the Fiscal Year 2020-21 “Community Power Resiliency Allocation Program” in the amount of \$607,328, with specific guidance and requirements. This guidance required OES to use at least 50% percent of the award to support one or more of the resiliency areas: schools, election offices, food storage reserves, and/or COVID-19 testing sites. On October 20, 2020, the County of San Diego OES Director submitted the Notification of Subrecipient Allocation to the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and identified COVID-19 testing sites as the specified resiliency area.

OES, in consultation with the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD) and the County of San Diego Department of Public Works (DPW), identified eligible projects and finalized project funding on February 17, 2021. Of the total amount, \$303,664, or 50%, was allocated to HHSA for backup generator design costs for the Health Services Complex (located at 3851 Rosecrans Street), which houses a primary laboratory for COVID-19 testing. Of the remaining 50%, \$151,832 will be allocated to SDCFPD for installation of backup generators at three fire stations. Additionally, \$151,832 was allocated to DPW to replace back up batteries for 54 traffic signals at major intersections in the unincorporated areas.

The County of San Diego recognizes the disproportionate impacts that hazards, including wildland fires and power outages, can have on our communities. The County’s Office of Emergency Services’ (OES’) staff have worked to identify PSPS mitigation gaps and opportunities to further improve operational area coordination as directed by the Board of Supervisors March 2, 2021.

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors directive led to the formation of the 2021 PSPS Regional Resiliency Working Group. Stakeholders included representatives from federal, state, tribal and local government, public utilities, non-governmental organizations, public safety and community groups. Additionally, OES publicized and conducted a public survey regarding PSPS experiences and received 2,305 survey results. On July 30, 2021, OES hosted a virtual PSPS Public Forum, reviewed findings from the survey and offered a question-and-answer session. OES will continue to collect public feedback on PSPS impacts and mitigation opportunities on the OES public website at: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/oes/> and will inform the Board of any significant additional public recommendations for PSPS mitigations.

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The working group and members of the public provided valuable feedback resulting in recommendations to improve community resiliency during PSPS events. Some key findings included:

Policy Considerations

- Encourage residents to pursue energy rebate programs, generator options, and renewable resources to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Review the plan check and permit process for utility undergrounding for opportunities to improve.

Coordination and Outreach

- Collaborate with partners to educate the public about generator usage, regulations, and regulation flexibilities during PSPS events. Track any legislation related to generator usage requirements at the local level.
- Explore the usage of trained volunteer teams including Community Emergency Response Teams or the Sheriff's You Are Not Alone program to perform welfare checks on residents with Access and Functional Needs or to assist at Community Resource Centers.
- Incorporate SDG&E's customer contact information into AlertSanDiego to expand outreach, notification, and alert and warning capabilities.
- Explore partnerships with non-profit organizations that promote the re-planting of native, more fire-resistant vegetation before and after wildfires.
- Identify and target outreach programs and events in underserved communities in high fire threat areas.
- Promote 2-1-1 as a resource and referral source during PSPS events.
- Create additional outreach materials to help familiarize the public with common emergency terms such as de-energization, Red Flag Warning, Evacuation Order, and Evacuation Warning.

Equipment

- Research opportunities to install backup power alternatives for critical infrastructure and key County facilities.
- Research available options to strengthen and maintain regional VHF radio coverage.

Recovery

- Advocate for state or federal reimbursement opportunities for costs to local jurisdictions associated with PSPS events.

Today's action will allow staff to present key findings and recommendations from the Regional Resiliency Working Group efforts and public input.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's action supports the Living Safely Initiative of the County of San Diego's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan by addressing gaps and identifying mitigation strategies to lessen community

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impacts and to ensure the safety of county residents during Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A - August 2021 Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) Report: Addressing Gaps and Improving Coordination

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: ☐ Yes ☒ No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED

☐ Yes ☒ No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:

January 14, 2020, Office of Emergency Services – Ratify Acceptance of Fiscal Year 2019 Public Safety Power Shutoff Funds from the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

March 2, 2021, Office of Emergency Services – Ratify Acceptance of Fiscal Year 2020-21 Community Power Resiliency Funds from the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:

N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:

N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:

N/A

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION
NUMBER(S):**

N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Office of Emergency Services

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

CONTACT PERSON(S):

Jeff Toney

Name
858-715-2201

Phone
Jeff.toney@sdcounty.ca.gov

E-mail

Stephen Rea

Name
858-715-2202

Phone
Stephen.rea@sdcounty.ca.gov

E-mail