



## SDG&E's Emergency Fire Preparedness Program – FACT SHEET

### Background

As part of its preparation for high risk fire season in San Diego, SDG&E® has implemented an Emergency Fire Preparedness Program that involves proactively shutting down power in high-risk fire areas during certain extreme weather conditions. Under normal conditions, SDG&E leaves the power on as long as power lines remain intact.

The conditions that would need to be met in order for SDG&E to activate the program include all of the following:

- The National Weather Service calling a Red Flag Warning;
- Localized wind speeds in an area or community are sustained and greater than 35 mph or there are wind gusts greater than 55 mph. Where possible, existing National Weather Service's weather stations will provide the wind speed measurements;
- The relative humidity (moisture in the air) is less than 20%;
- The moisture level in sticks, twigs and leaves ("non-living" materials) is less than 6% as determined by the National Weather Service's weather stations; and
- The moisture level in "living" plants and bushes is less than or equal to 75% as determined by Cal Fire and the Forest Services.

All five of these conditions need to be met before the shut down procedures are triggered.

The procedures, when triggered, will only be implemented in the highest fire risk portion of our service area, an area that encompasses approximately 45,000 of SDG&E's 1.4 million customers. Please see the enclosed map that shows high-potential outage areas. Moreover, the weather criteria for triggering the shut down procedures are set at a level that we project activating the shut down procedure as infrequently as one time or less per year and the likelihood is that 1,000 to 10,000 customers would be affected at one time.

Before shut down procedures are implemented, SDG&E will work with the County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services (OES), local law enforcement and the media to attempt to notify affected customers in advance. The County OES may use the Alert SanDiego (also known as Reverse 9-1-1) notification system. In some cases, however, there may not be enough time to notify people in advance.

This program was developed in consultation with Cal Fire and other fire-fighting agencies, law enforcement, the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services, the San Diego and Imperial Valley Red Cross, and others. We are also continuing to work with these and other community groups to explore other ways to support our customers in the event we need to implement this program.

## **Commonly Asked Questions about SDG&E's Emergency Fire Preparedness Program**

### ***Q. How often does SDG&E plan to activate this program?***

**A.** Implementing SDG&E's Emergency Fire Preparedness program should not happen often – SDG&E projects activating the program once every few years. The actual frequency will depend on weather conditions in specific areas. Typically, the National Weather Service declares Red Flag Warnings on 15 to 20 days per year. However, in order to activate this program the other four extreme weather conditions described above must also occur in addition to the Red Flag Warning. When the shut down procedures are implemented, it will be in very specific areas, not widespread, and be limited to those areas meeting or exceeding the threshold conditions. Please see the enclosed map that shows high-potential outage areas. These areas will change from year to year based on vegetation and other conditions.

### ***Q. How many people are impacted?***

**A.** Approximately 45,000 of SDG&E's 1.4 million customers are located in the high-potential outage area. Because power outages will depend on local weather conditions at individual weather stations, the likelihood is that 1,000 to 10,000 customers would be affected at one time.

### ***Q. How will I be notified if the power is going to be shut off?***

**A.** Before shut down procedures are implemented, SDG&E will attempt to call customers in advance. SDG&E will also notify the County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services (OES), local law enforcement and the media. The County OES may use the Alert San Diego (also known as Reverse 9-1-1) notification system to advise affected areas of the extreme weather conditions and the possibility of power outages. In some cases, however, there may not be enough time to notify people in advance.

### ***Q. How is this program different than outages that happen now?***

**A.** The outages under this program are different in that SDG&E will proactively shut down the power in specific areas due to extreme weather conditions to help reduce the potential for fires. SDG&E also conducts planned outages throughout the year in order to perform maintenance on its electric distribution system. In these cases, customers are notified well in advance so they can prepare. Unplanned outages also happen due to local system emergencies that may involve SDG&E's equipment.

### ***Q. What if a fire is already burning?***

**A.** A fire already burning is not a condition for activating the program. Outside of this program, we may proactively shut off power at the request of fire fighting agencies.

### ***Q. How else is SDG&E helping to reduce the potential for fires?***

**A.** SDG&E has taken a number of steps to reduce the potential for fires, including replacing more than 300 wood poles with steel poles and using heavier wire in certain sections of our system through rural areas. SDG&E has also completed a detailed inspection on the highest risk areas of the transmission and distribution system.

## How you can prepare

### **Q. Will my access to information be affected?**

**A.** If you live in an area where the power is turned off, you will not have access to information from the television or radio unless you have a portable TV or radio running on batteries. An old-style, corded telephone may possibly work. A laptop computer running on batteries will still work, but you may not have an internet connection.

### **Q. What happens if my electrical power is turned off?**

**A.** As with any outage, your appliances will not work, including your TV, air conditioning, refrigerators, computers, and lights. You may also lose phone service, including Reverse 9-1-1 capability (except for corded home phones) as well as power to water pumps. To better ensure that you will be notified for this or other emergencies we urge all San Diego County residents to register to the County of San Diego's Alert SanDiego system (also known as Reverse 9-1-1). You can register your cell phones, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone and email by going online to [ReadySanDiego.org](http://ReadySanDiego.org).

### **Q. What should I do to prepare in advance?**

**A.** It's a good idea to have an emergency kit ready. The kit should include medical and personal items, and a flashlight. We also recommend a battery-powered radio. You should also have a manual can opener, a supply of easy-to-prepare, nonperishable foods and bottled water. Since your water supply may be affected, consider filling your tubs and sinks with water so you can flush toilets.

We recommend that you keep a corded phone that does not require plug-in electric power to operate, connecting only through a conventional phone jack. The County Office of Emergency Services has a brochure on Family Disaster Planning and Personal Survival Guide you may find helpful.

### **Q. Can I use a portable generator?**

**A.** Yes, you can use a portable generator. It's essential that you follow all safety procedures when using your generator and ensure that it's been properly installed by a qualified installer. Also, please make sure you let SDG&E know you have a generator by calling 1-800-411-7343.

### **Q. How long will the power be out?**

**A.** The power will be out as long as the extreme weather conditions exist, plus the additional time for SDG&E to perform a safety check prior to turning the power back on. This could be several hours, a day or longer. In general, outages could last 12 to 72 hours.

### **Q. What if someone in my home depends on electrically powered medical equipment?**

**A.** If anyone in your home depends on medical equipment, please call SDG&E today at 1-800-411-7343. You should still develop an emergency plan – and be prepared to follow it – in case the power goes out for any reason.

### **Q. Will my power be turned off during those really windy winter rain storms?**

**A.** No, even though winter storms are windy, rain storms are not a concern. The power may go out because of the rain storm conditions but that is outside the scope of this program. SDG&E's program is focused on conditions commonly associated with strong Santa Ana winds where it is very dry, extremely windy and fire potential is high.