



NEWS RELEASE

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9-1-1 Dispatchers Flooded with Non-Emergency Calls During Outage; Event a Reminder to Sign Up for Community Alert System

Hundreds of non-emergency calls were made to 9-1-1 dispatchers in Santa Maria during Sunday night's power outage that affected approximately 150,000 Pacific Gas & Electric customers from Solvang to Atascadero. Power went out around 9:30 p.m. due to an equipment failure at a Morro Bay substation, and electricity was almost fully restored by 2 a.m.

The City's Police and Fire Chiefs remind all residents to call 9-1-1 only in emergencies that threaten life or property. Do not call 9-1-1 to check on power, telephone or cable outages, or to report situations that are not emergencies.

"We received almost 600 phone calls in the first 90 minutes, the vast majority of which were asking if there was a power outage and when would power be restored," Chief of Police Ralph Martin said. "Calling 9-1-1 for the wrong reason may keep someone else from getting the help they need. We were concerned about people who may have had medical emergencies and those who require electricity to operate their medical devices."

Sufficient police and fire personnel were on duty and responded to service calls. Chief Martin and Fire Chief Dan Orr both arrived at the City's dispatch center within 15 minutes of the power outage, and worked hand-in-hand on deploying personnel and making plans for a prolonged outage. The mobile command center was on-site but was not activated.

The outage is a good reminder to residents to prepare for an outage or an emergency by keeping batteries, a battery powered radio, flashlights, candles, and matches handy. During an outage, residents may contact PG&E's 24-Hour Emergency and Customer Service Line at 1-800-PGE-5000 or 1-800-743-5000. Once your outage has been reported, you can call PG&E's Outage Information Line at 1-800-743-5002 to get a status report on your outage and the anticipated time your power will be restored.

The City is using this opportunity to encourage all residents to register their contact information (home and cellular phone numbers and e-mail address) into the secure City-to-resident notification system, to make sure they are ready to receive important information from the City. Primary residential and business phones in Santa Maria are automatically included in the system.



With this Community Alert and Notification Service, authorized City personnel can send and track personalized voice messages in just minutes to any number of residents and businesses, with specific information about time-sensitive or common-interest issues such as emergencies and local community matters. Examples of notifications could include disaster information, crime bulletins, power outages, and other related urgent or time-sensitive information.

This system enables authorized City staff to send priority messages to phones, cell phones and e-mail accounts, notifying Santa Maria residents and businesses if there is an emergency.

The system now has about 45,000 phone numbers. You can be next!

If you or someone you know would like to be included in the system, you can register at any time on the City's website by clicking on the orange icon that says "Community Alert and Notification System, SIGN UP NOW." You can enter your home number, cell number, and e-mail. You can also choose to receive the messages in Spanish or English.

Questions may be directed to the City Manager's Office, 925-0951 ext. 372.

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