

PG&E Planned Power Shutdown FAQs

Updated Sept. 5, 2020

Notice of PG&E planned power shutdown

Q: How much notice will the Lab receive that power will be turned off by PG&E?

A: The Lab could receive between 24 and 72 hours notice of a planned shutdown by PG&E. A shutdown is extremely difficult to predict because it is based solely on weather forecasts. This is why we as a Lab must be prepared in short order to respond to such events.

Q: What are the conditions that drive notice of a potential public safety power shutoff??

A: PG&E considers multiple criteria when determining if power should be turned off. These include red flag warnings, low humidity levels, forecasted sustained winds, condition of dry fuel and other on-the-ground, real-time information ([see PG&E criteria here](#)). It is important to note that power could be shut down even if a wildfire or wildfire conditions are not near the Lab. PG&E has plans to shut down major transmission lines, so the areas that will lose power could be quite large and distant from an actual or potential wildfire.

Q: What is the process PG&E is following to start a public safety power shutdown?

A: The National Weather Service will have issued a Red Flag Warnings for the potential wildfire area. Wind conditions, vegetation moisture, and temperature will drive the next steps. When PG&E decides it is in the best interest to turn off the power, PG&E will notify the areas affected by a public safety power shutdown (PSPS) based on the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) [map and areas of concern](#). You can monitor [PG&E's PSPS predictive webpage](#). Once the Lab is in a PSPS zone, it will get notified by PG&E through our Site Operations Center which is staffed 24/7. That notification will trigger a cascade of notifications within the Lab that begins with a Labwide email. Division leadership will in turn execute their Division specific plans to notify emergency essential personnel and commence power shutdown preparations.

Q: Will the Lab's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) be activated?

A: Yes, the Lab's EOC will be activated and will stay activated until power has been restored and normal operations have resumed.

Q: How will employees and others onsite be notified of the power shutdown?

A: The initial notification will come from a Level One email. LabAlert will be used for designated response personnel and/or for the greater Lab community in times where more time-critical messages are needed. It is important [you are signed up for LabAlert](#) so you can receive mobile notification of an event and ongoing updates. If you have not already done so, [please sign up for LabAlert](#).

Planned Shutdown

Q: Will the Lab be proactively evacuated or will we wait for power to be shut down?

A: Evacuations are unplanned events that occur when conditions exist that threaten the life-safety of Lab personnel. PSPS events are not unplanned and do not threaten the life-safety of Lab personnel. The steps the Lab will take will depend on the timing of the notification from PG&E, the time of day, the day of the week, and whether a wildfire is distant or close to the Lab. Safety will always be the first concern.

Q: How long can employees remain on site after the shutdown notice is received?

A: The time you can remain onsite will depend on how much notice the Lab has received, the time of day, the day of the week, and the conditions triggering shutdown. It is important to be registered with [LabAlert](#), read your emails, and stay in contact with your supervisor to receive the latest information. For your safety and the safety of others, you must, in all cases, follow the instructions of emergency personnel. Updates will be communicated via emails, on status.lbl.gov, and on Twitter [@LBNLstatus](#).

Q: Will mission-critical equipment be protected?

A: Yes. Each mission essential system or piece of equipment that has been identified as at risk during a PSPS event has a designated power backup plan coordinated at the Division level. If you know of such a risk for the systems and/or equipment you use, please ask about the backup power plan for those assets and know your role to ensure research continuity in your area.

Q. What are the dangers of remaining on-site when the power is out?

A. Essential building systems such as lighting and ventilation may be inoperable or minimally powered (which includes emergency lighting in buildings), restricting normal building occupancy. Telephones and cellular service may be inoperable. If you are not a designated emergency essential employee please do not stay on site during these periods. If you think you need site access to attend a critical research project please work with your supervisor and/or operations area leadership for site access.

Operations During the Shutdown

Q: Which employees will remain on-site?

A: The decision will be dictated by the mission-critical functions identified by your division or area. Talk to your supervisor if you have questions.

Q: Where can I go to get the latest information on the power shutdown?

A. The latest information will be posted on status.lbl.gov and on Twitter [@LBNLstatus](https://twitter.com/LBNLstatus). Since you may not have power to reach a website, also keep in touch with your supervisor.

Q: If I need to be at the Lab to perform a mission-critical function, which gate should I use for access?

A. The Blackberry Gate will be the only open gate. Anyone who enters will need to have their Lab ID badge to gain site access.

Q: What are my work options if the Lab has no power?

Since most of the staff are teleworking, continue to telework. If you have no power at your home or you have been working on site, contact your supervisor for more information.

Q. What systems will be operational during a planned power shutdown that can be reached offsite to continue working?

A. In general and unless extreme conditions exist, IR provided collaboration and productivity services as well as business systems will remain available. IT provided HPC services will be shut down in advance of the anticipated PSPS and will not be available.

Q: Will I still be able to authenticate using my cell phone? With my key?

A: Assuming Lab Identity Management services are available, yes. For Operations employees, logging in to Windows workstations using Yubikey or Google Authenticator is possible regardless of whether Identity Management services are available (workstations only, not other services).

Q: If I am going to work remotely using a PC, will I be able to access my Google files? What about with a mobile device?

A: Provided Lab Identity services are available, yes, your Google files will be available since Google uses cloud storage. Otherwise, the answer depends on whether you have an “active session” with Google. See below.

Q: Is there anything I can do to stay logged in?

A: Existing sessions with Google services and access from smartphones to Google Suite services should continue to work normally without power at the Lab. Depending on the expected length of the outage, IT may implement workarounds to make it possible to login to Google systems. Check the status.lbl.gov page for the latest on systems and other information.

Q: Once the shutdown is over, how long will it be before services are available.

A: Networking, identity management, and telephones are our first priority and should come back quickly, in minutes to hours. Business systems are the next priority (hours (during working hours), provided that cooling is operational in the building. Scientific systems,

especially clusters, take a significant amount of time to restart and require full cooling capability in the building. It typically takes one to three days to restore full cluster operations.

Q: Will employees get paid during a planned shutdown?

A: Yes, employees will continue to be paid. Information on how to charge your time will be provided if we have a shutdown due to loss of power.

Q: Will a planned power shutoff change the dates of our financial year-end closing process?

A: We don't know how a loss of power will change due dates for the year-end financial close as it depends on whether or not the key participants in the year-end financial close process have access to power for their computer. We will do a daily assessment to see if we can execute the closing activities for that day or not. We will provide information once we have made the daily decision.

Reopening the Lab

Q: As soon as power to the Lab is restored will the Lab be opened to all?

A: No. The Lab will need to reopen in an orderly fashion. EOC personnel in both operations and research areas will be working to restore conditions to normal operations. Please be patient and wait for permission from your supervisor or line manager on restart of operations.

Loss of Power at Home

Q: What should I do to prepare for a planned power shutdown at my home?

A: Just as in any emergency such as an earthquake, you should prepare for loss of power. [PG&E has planning material on its website](#). Make sure you update your contact information with PG&E so you can receive the latest information from them.

Q: How can I learn about planned shutdowns?

A: PG&E has more information [on its planned shutdown page](#).

Supervisor Information

Q: What role does a supervisor play in an evacuation/non-opening of the Lab?

A. Supervisors should be communicating with their employees about the path forward for communications.

Q: How should supervisors stay in touch with employees?

A. Supervisors should have contact information such as home telephone numbers and cell phone numbers for their team members. Remember that employees may not have power at home as well and it may be difficult to stay in contact.

Cafeteria

Q. When will the cafeteria close once there is notification of a power shutdown?

A. The closing of the cafeteria will depend on the timing of the notification from PG&E, the time of day, the day of the week, and whether a wildfire is distant or close to the Lab. We want to make sure the cafeteria employees have time to leave the Lab and return home. Safety will always be the first concern.

Shuttles

Q. How long will shuttles run prior to a shutdown?

The shuttle schedule will depend on the timing of the notification from PG&E, the time of day, the day of the week, and whether a wildfire is distant or close to the Lab. We want to make sure that shuttle employees have time to leave the Lab and return home. Safety will always be the first concern.

Q. Who will notify the shuttle company of the planned shutdown and the re-opening of the Lab?

A. Our shuttle vendor has a call tree system to notify drivers of both the shutdown and reopening of the Lab. Drivers will be allowed back on the property when it is safe to move shuttles into positions to start operations.