



IMPORTANT NOTICE: PG&E POWER SHUTOFFS

Please Read This Entire Notice For Important Information

September 23, 2019

Dear Harmony Families and Friends,

At Harmony School District safety and wellbeing is our utmost concern. Given the increase of fire impacts to our community in recent years, it is important that our District and our families prepare for both wildfires and **power outages**. Anticipating these occurrences, we want to provide you with the following information to keep you informed about school safety protocols and to help you and your family prepare.

Power Outages

The County Office of Emergency Management has asked for all school districts, businesses, residents and municipalities to prepare for a “*new normal for Sonoma County*”. This new normal takes the form of PG&E **Public Safety Power Shutoffs** (PSPS). The purpose of the shutoffs is to cut power to major transmission lines during times of elevated fire risk, to reduce the potential for live wires to spark wildfires in high wind. Though PG&E has stated their intent to provide 24-48 hours notice to regions that may be impacted by shutdowns, the de-energization of power lines may occur with little notice.

The County Office of Emergency Management is telling Sonoma County residents that communities may experience power shutoffs for extended durations, from 1-5 days, and that these shutoffs may occur multiple times throughout the year. In the event that PG&E includes Harmony in a targeted area for Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS), we should expect the school to close and remain closed for multiple days.

School Superintendents throughout the county recently attended an emergency meeting at the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). Due to the recent wildfires in both our county and in the other regions of the State, PG&E is under new regulations to shut the electrical grid down if certain conditions are met:

- 1. Low humidity**
- 2. Sustained winds of 25+ mph with gusts of 45+ mph**
- 3. Dry fuel on the ground**
- 4. On-the-ground observation**

It is estimated these conditions occur in on an average of six (6) times per year.

School Closures

In the event of a PG&E power outage that occurs during the school day, after students are already at school, we plan to finish out the school day. In the event that power is out the following days, the school district will close. Please note, power outages may not impact all regions at the same time. Thus some districts may be closed while other will be open. Please be aware of this factor if you have students who attend more than one school.

The decision to close school is based on a number of factors.

- No cell or phone service. We are being told that there will be no way to communicate with families when the power is out
- No Fire Alarms for emergencies
- No HVAC
- Bus Transportation availability (fuel pumps and communications require electricity)
- No water or restrooms (inability to pump water and septic)
- Inability to offer fresh food service (refrigeration and kitchen shut down)

Harmony is actively pursuing the installation of school-wide backup power to allow the school to remain open during closures, but such work is not expected to be completed until fall 2020 at the earliest.

Our aim is to communicate our intent to close school *as soon as reasonably possible* after receiving a notice of an upcoming power outage from PG&E. In some cases, this may come on short notice. If a power outage occurs mid-day, we will handle closures on a case-by-case basis, taking into account factors such as the anticipated length of the outage, temperature, and weather/road conditions.

In all cases, student safety will be our top priority. PG&E is telling us the power could be out between 1-5 days at a time and will only be restored after two situations have occurred:

- 1. The weather changes**
- 2. AND all lines have been visually inspected**

School Reopening

Modern communication methods are expected to be out of service during a power shutdown. This means cell phone towers, as well as internet equipment will not be available for the school, or its families, to send or receive communications electronically. In the event of a power shutoff and school closure, we will likely be able to notice families of the closure. But for reopening the school, we may be limited in our ability to send such messages to families of our intent to reopen. As such, Harmony will use physical signage at the school entrance on Bohemian Hwy, as well as downtown Occidental, to provide notice for families of closures and re-openings during PG&E Power Shutoffs.

Making Up School Days

PG&E shutdowns are considered *preventative, but necessary*. Unfortunately they are not currently considered emergency situations by the State. This may have a significant impact on school funding if the state does not account for instructional and fiscal impacts to schools forced to close. This is an important distinction as our District may be unable to receive instructional time and day credit in the event of shutdowns. Should we need to close school the above reasons, we will make up class after our planned last day of June 3, 2020. Our district will first make up classes by using the single emergency days built into our school calendar (June 4th). If we must be closed for additional days, we will make plans to extend further into June 2020. Failure to do so would lead to a negative impact on student achievement as well as a loss of school funding.

We hope to avoid closures and extensions of the calendar, but the reality is that next year's, and future calendars, will need to include additional potential emergency school days. The State has put Sonoma County on notice that fire-related days, much like "snow days" in the mountain areas, have to be planned as they are expected to become a yearly occurrence. Lack of doing so will be grounds for not approving reimbursement for school closures. We will make such adjustments for the 2020-2021 calendar.

Below is a list of resources for families to prepare their own home for any long power outages. We are working with the Sonoma County Office of Education to put the most up-to-date information out to all families. Your cooperation and understanding is appreciated as we work through this "new normal" for all of us. As always, please contact the office if you have any questions (707) 874-1205.

Sincerely,

Matthew Morgan, Superintendent
Harmony Union School District

Resources

Following are some resources to help your family prepare personally:

- Ready.gov: [General Power-Outage Information](#)
- PG&E: [Public Safety Power Shutoff](#) (including resident alert notification)
- [Preparing for Public Safety Power Shutoff](#)
- [Power of Being Prepared Fact Sheet](#)
- PG&E: [Emergency Supply Checklist](#)
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: [Homeowner's Checklist](#)
- PG&E: [Community Safety Measures](#)
- **Wildfire Smoke:** Air Quality guidance has been provided by the California Department of Education (CDE) to protect student health when air quality is poor due to a wildfire or other disaster. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ep/airquality.asp>