



# Wildfires and Planned Power Outages

**For Administrators**

Planned power outages may occur due to active wildfires or the prospect of a wildfire igniting. Power outages can severely impact care delivery in health centers.

## Why are there planned power outages?

Planned power outages may be necessary to protect the power grid and to prevent the ignition of wildfires. Temporarily shutting power to an area can be a means to decrease load on the grid which can prevent widespread blackouts. Power may also be shut off in areas where the environmental conditions make wildfire ignition more likely.

## What types of weather conditions make planned power outages more likely?

### Extreme Heat

- Higher demand for electricity for air conditioning during extreme heat can strain the power grid, leading to loss of power for several hours or days.
- Power transformers can also exceed their capabilities during days of high demand and overheat due to extreme heat, leading to malfunctions and/or explosions which could ignite fires.
- Heat dries out grass, leaves, and trees making them easier to ignite if a power line falls.

### High Winds

- High winds can knock down power lines and poles, which can create sparks and ignite grass, leaves, and trees nearby. Pre-emptive power outages can prevent downed power lines from sparking fires.
- High winds can rapidly spread fires.

## Stay informed

- Planned power outages may be announced on media outlets, by alerts from utility providers, and/or via emergency notification systems. Pay attention to wind forecasts and heat advisories and alerts as these can increase the likelihood of a planned power outage.
- Contact your local utility company to see if there is a priority notification system for critical infrastructure such as health centers.
- Sign up for local emergency alerts.
- Monitor your power company's website where they may display real time power outage information.

- You can find fire weather outlooks on the National Weather Service’s Alert page at <https://www.weather.gov/alerts>. See **Weather Hazard Monitoring** for more information.

## **Prepare for potential power outages**

Have battery powered radios and flashlights handy. Ensure critical systems are supported with battery-powered backups to reduce the loss of critical information in the event of a sudden outage.

Ensure that you can keep patients and staff notified of any changes in operations through outgoing voicemail messages, mass notification systems, and social media.

For facilities that provide life-sustaining services, develop a referral or business continuity plan for critical patients in the event of an extended outage.

For more information about power outage resiliency, see our **Health Center Power Outage Preparedness and Response** and consider distributing the patient information sheet **Plan for Power Outages**.

**Notes:**

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