What to Do When the Lights Go Out

Dealing with Public Safety Power Shutoffs

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Producers are familiar with short-term power failures resulting from storms, road accidents, or animal intrusions. However, in the fall of 2019, California experienced the most geographically widespread and longest duration Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) in the state’s history. In an effort to prevent wildfires, some 800,000 residential and commercial customers, including some dairy producers, lost power for up to four days. Most producers have already invested in standby generators for the milking parlor, but during extended outages, there may be challenges powering other systems, such as feed mixing, irrigation, and housing fans. Customers typically have at least 24 to 48 hours’ notice prior to power loss, and there are several useful actions producers can take during the interim.

Perform a Final Generator Check: In addition to the weekly or monthly maintenance, run a final check under load immediately before the planned power outage.

Ensure Several Days Fuel Supply: A 400 kilowatt generator can consume 16 gallons of diesel fuel an hour. A 2 megawatt generator can consume 72 gallons an hour. Fuel supplies may be in short supply, and road closures from fires or flooding can limit deliveries.

Update Emergency Contact Information: A utility company may only possess a dairy service or billing address. You

Winter Rains Bring Winter Inspection

During the rainy season Regional Board staff stop by dairies to check on how stormwater is being managed. It is important to remember that producers should drain corrals and manure storage areas of standing water within 72 hours of the end of a storm to avoid a violation on that issue. Producers must also only apply manure, including lagoon water, according to their Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). Disposal or “emptying the lagoon” outside of what is prescribed in the NMP is prohibited and has resulted in Notice of Violations and even expensive fines being issued to some dairies. Application of lagoon water to saturated soil is a tricky issue in the Dairy WDR, with the WDR stating that it is prohibited unless tests show there is an agronomic need and current conditions indicate that the threat of nitrate leaching is minimal. Work with your agronomist to make sure your NMP works with your cropping system and available storage to meet crop agronomic needs and avoid applications outside of those prescribed in your NMP.

Review 2019 While Boxing It Up

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It’s time for the annual ritual. Collect the year’s receipts and invoices. Box them up for the accountant. While you’re at it, take a few moments and review your Water Quality Annual Report. Why? The report represents your dairy.

Important items to review:

☐ Number of animals in each production category (the milking + dry cow number determines fees)
☐ Annual milk production
☐ Number and timing of irrigation
☐ Results from well samples
☐ Results from solid (2x/yr) and liquid manure samples (3 to 4x/yr)
☐ Copies of manure manifests
☐ Graphs that represent nutrient applications

Submit a modified report to your Regional Board if you identify items to correct. It’s much easier to submit a modified report now than to explain to an inspector later that your report had errors.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
What to Do When the Lights Go Out continued

can arrange for outage information to be sent directly to your voicemail, or via text or email. This information is typically more current and specific than what can be found on internet sites.

**Identify Rental Equipment Early:** Besides the milking parlor, there may be other critical systems requiring power during an extended outage. Portable generators from 10 kW to more than 4,000 kW exist, but “store runs” limit rental inventory before and during a PSPS.

Diesel generators without diligent, continuous maintenance face a high risk of start-up failures. During Hurricane Sandy 16% of emergency medical service diesel generators failed to perform. It’s always prudent to consult your owner’s manual or service technician for specific requirements, but a comprehensive checklist for standby generator maintenance is available. Air quality regulations allow you to run standby generators for unlimited hours during an emergency, but there are annual limits of use hours for repair and maintenance. Repairing an existing diesel generator may be less expensive than replacing it with a newer one required to have a higher EPA/ARB Tier certification. Producers interested in more information on expanding emergency power capacity, regulatory requirements, equipment rental, and maintenance can visit CDQAP’s webpage, *Dairies & Emergency Power*.

Join us at the California Dairy Sustainability Summit. Register today.

CDQAP is proud to be a cohost of the California Dairy Sustainability Summit, which will return to Sacramento on March 25-26, 2020. We are planning for an even more robust and impactful program. For decades, California dairy farms have been achieving sustainability goals, leading the world in the development of sustainable practices. Through engaging and interactive sessions, the Summit will help dairy farmers, policy makers, technology providers, industry leaders, and others as they celebrate progress, embrace opportunities, and overcome the challenges ahead.

The early bird rate for farmers is $50 for full conference registration. To learn more and to register, visit [CADairySummit.com](http://CADairySummit.com).