

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 6, 2019**

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## **How Water Agencies Delivered Reliable Water Service During Power Shutoffs**

**Bay Area** — Last week, the Bay Area experienced the first significant rain of this winter, signaling an end to the 2019 wildfire season – and likely for accompanying public safety power shutoffs (PSPS). Under Pacific Gas & Electric's pre-emptive power shutoffs, many people and businesses in the Bay Area experienced several days without energy for their day-to-day needs. As water service providers, we are PG&E customers too. And just like residents, we grappled with sustained power outages.

Thankfully, our collective hard work – and critical support from our wonderful customers - - ensured that water kept flowing. A number of water utilities acquired emergency backup equipment to help keep the pumps and treatment plants running. But as a failsafe measure, many water agencies asked their customers to minimize water use to preserve water in local water storage tanks. We want to thank our customers for responding so quickly; numbers showed dramatic drops in water use during the PSPS events. These actions helped whole communities stay safer.

Water agencies are heavily dependent on power to pump, treat and distribute the water that customers need for drinking, bathing, cooking and irrigating, and for water at hydrants that firefighters count on. Knowing the impacts of losing power, water agencies began preparing for power shutdowns a year ago. While much work was done to address the short-term impacts, we found benefits from continued, long-term infrastructure maintenance and investment.

**Standby Power:** Although we have made previous investments of onsite generators for our major facilities, we also rented and purchased many generators and pre-deployed them throughout our service areas. Early deployment meant less scrambling to move heavy equipment to locations far and wide. When the time for shutoffs neared, we were able to dispatch technicians to switch facilities to generator power. We also secured fuel services needed to keep those generators running.

**Full Reservoirs:** The above and below ground water tanks in your neighborhoods store water that flows by gravity to the community. Under normal operations, we allow the water level in the reservoirs to go down during the day and then in the late evening, when energy is least expensive, we refill the reservoirs. Ahead of the power shutoff events, we filled each reservoir to the top to maximize water available for consumers.

# PRESS RELEASE



**Communication:** We notified affected customers using a variety of methods – emails, news media, social media, websites and direct and early notification for elected officials. Maps showed precisely which pressure zones were affected – and those same customers were asked to conserve water.

We were also reminded of the importance of regional coordination among water and wastewater agencies to prepare and respond to immediate emergencies and longer-term challenges like climate change.

The bottom line: the water kept flowing in the midst of challenging times, thanks to our preparedness – and important thanks to the response and cooperation we received from our customers in the face of this emergency.

Thank you.

As always, we are here to provide water service 24/7/365. We will always be part of this Bay Area Community.

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