

Wildfire Smoke

New Guidelines Released By Dept. of Education

New Guidelines and Planned Outages

Dear WESD Families,

As we begin a new school year, student safety and comfort is a top concern. This is also fire season, and it is important that schools and 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.

Sincerely,

Adam Schaible, Superintendent

Wildfire Smoke:

Earlier this month Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, released new state guidelines for dealing with wildfire smoke when school is in session.

[The guidelines](#) are not meant to supersede local control, but rather to provide us with quality, scientifically verified information upon which to make informed decisions when wildfire smoke is present.

Here are a few of the highlights:

- AirNow.gov is the recommended measure of air-quality. Websites like "purpleair" are specifically called out as unreliable
- Due to limitations in quality and fit, it is not recommended that schools hand out masks
- School districts should consider closing based on local, site-by-site concerns when air-quality reaches the "Very Unhealthy" level on AirNow.gov (200 - 300 AQI)
- Schools should use "medium or high-efficiency" "MERV" rated filters in HVAC systems
- "Where possible," schools should install portable HEPA filters in classrooms
- When students are being kept indoors, windows and doors should be kept shut as much as possible

Most of our District schools have HVAC units that use the medium/high range recommended by the guidelines. Classrooms that do not have air-conditioning still have air filters and we expect to have HVAC in all of our classrooms by the end of the year.

The WESD Board will review and discuss the new guidelines at their September meeting. Please feel free to email or call the District Office if you have any questions or comments.

Power Outages

As you may be aware, PG&E is prepared to implement Public Safety Power Shutoffs (also known as de-energization) when weather conditions put parts of our community at a high risk for fire. This important precaution is meant to help reduce the risk of wildfires.

It is important to note that power outages are not new to our county—indeed, many rural schools regularly experience outages due to inclement weather. Standard practice in the county has been to cancel class if a power outage is expected to last more than two hours. In the event of a planned PG&E power outage, we will cancel class for any schools expected to be impacted for more than two hours. Please note, power outages may not impact all schools within our district at the same time. In this case, only the schools with power outages will be closed.

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. As well, 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.

Making Up School Days

Should we need to close school for either of the above reasons, Districts must first make up classes by using the emergency days built into our school calendar. If we must be closed for additional days, these may have to be added to the end of the school year.

Resources

Following are some resources to help your family prepare personally:

- Ready.gov: [General Power-Outage Information](#) | [Fact-sheet on power outages for kids](#)
- PG&E: [Public Safety Power Shutoff](#) (including resident alert notification instructions)
- [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](#)



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