



Vax Facts: Vaccine Storage During Public Safety Power Shutoffs

October 7, 2019

As we enter October, the danger of fall wildfires driven by high winds may increase the chances that Pacific Gas & Electric will need to turn off electric power lines to protect public safety. Even though the city of San Francisco is not itself a high fire danger area, there is a chance that power to all or parts of SF could be shut off for hours or days as part of an effort to protect neighboring regions.

Last week the California Department of Public Health released a letter outlining steps that clinics can take to prepare and respond to an extended power outage and reduce the risk of spoiling a clinic's entire vaccine supply. Although the letter is directed to Vaccines for Children providers, it offers recommendations useful to other practices that store and administer vaccines.

Please review the letter at: http://eziz.org/assets/docs/VFC_Letters/2019/09-26PowerShutOffs.pdf

Key recommendations include:

- Register with PG&E (https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/outages/alerts/alerts.page) and AlertSF (<https://sfdem.org/public-alerts>) to receive outage notifications and updates
- Arrange for an alternate vaccine storage location, with proper storage units and temperature monitoring, to temporarily store your vaccines during an emergency. Consider places with a back-up generator (hospitals, retail pharmacies, large healthcare providers).
- Maintain enough thermal mass in your vaccine storage units -- add water bottles to your refrigerator and ice packs to your freezer -- to maintain temperatures during the first 2 hours of a power loss as you prepare to transport your vaccines.
- Make sure you have proper supplies needed to transport vaccines, such as a hard-sided cooler, cold packs, insulating material, and a temperature data logger.

The California VFC website offers state-of-the-art training resources and job aids regarding vaccine storage, handling, and transport. See <http://eziz.org/eziz-training/> and <http://eziz.org/resources/>

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