



## COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

### SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 11/17/2020

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Department of Human Services & Department of Emergency Management

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Paul Dunaway 565-3673 & Chris Godley 565-2052

**Vote Requirement:** 4/5th

**Supervisorial District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Support for Vulnerable Populations During Disasters

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize the Director of the Human Services Department to work with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) to explore options for collaboration and funding for a project to assist vulnerable community members in preparing for and responding to disasters and Public Safety Power Shutoffs.

**Executive Summary:**

Vulnerable residents of Sonoma County, including seniors and those with access and functional needs, would be better prepared for disasters or PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs if a comprehensive plan were implemented for assisting vulnerable individuals with disaster preparedness and response. This may include additional supports for clients of Adult and Aging programs and possibly the creation of a countywide disaster registry to help identify those in the community that need extra assistance during disasters or power shutoffs. By implementing additional ways to identify vulnerable residents, individuals and households could receive assistance to create unique individualized emergency plans ahead of disasters, be provided with annual check-ins to ensure plans are current to meet changing needs, and receive contact and assistance prior to and during a disaster. A partnership with PG&E could provide a coordinated response and potential funding for the project.

**Discussion:**

In the last few years California has experienced several natural disasters and PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), leaving older adults and people with disabilities, including In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) clients, particularly vulnerable because they may have impaired mobility, diminished sensory capacity, chronic health issues, or lack of social and economic resources. Older adults and people with disabilities are at greater risk of injury or death during an emergency. Natural disasters are happening more frequently and with greater intensity now, forcing individuals and communities to prepare and respond in order to stay safe. PSPS has become more frequently utilized and can require the same level of response as a disaster to ensure public safety.

Between 2017 and 2019, Sonoma County experienced three significant disasters: the Tubbs/Nuns Fires in October 2017, devastating floods in February 2019, and the Kincade Fire in October 2019. Compounding the danger, Sonoma County also had six power shutoffs in 2019, with two taking place during the Kincade fire.

Many Sonoma County staff were diverted from their regular work in order to contact and address the emergency needs of thousands of vulnerable individuals in the county. These diversions compromise the ability of Human Services staff to provide other crucial safety net services, leaving people vulnerable to other issues. Unfortunately, disasters and power shutoffs are proving to be a regular part of life, with the LNU Complex Fire in August 2020 followed by the Glass Fire in September, as well as six PSPS events. Attention to public safety couldn't be more urgently needed.

For example, during the power shutoff on October 9, 2019, 66,000 homes were impacted, which included 3,949 medically fragile individuals from the IHSS list, PG&E's medical baseline list, and Medicare recipients with electrically dependent medical devices. County staff made 1,419 calls to the most critical and urgent individuals and about 40 home visits were conducted to deliver food, water or backup batteries for durable medical equipment. One of the six power shutoffs in 2019 lasted five days. The largest shutoff to date impacted 93,000 homes or about half of the estimated housing units in Sonoma County. During the Kincadee Fire, almost 200,000 of the County's 500,000 residents were required to evacuate.

Individual and community preparedness needs to be woven into the culture of every community facing potential disasters. Much of the ownership for personal safety is the responsibility of the individual and appropriately so; individuals have a right to choose what they will or will not do to keep themselves safe. However, it is the responsibility of the community, government, and PG&E to create a safety net for the foundational safety needs of residents. Despite their best efforts, not all individuals are prepared for disasters and many need extra assistance to stay safe.

There are currently three known lists that identify individuals with various vulnerabilities in our community, but there is not one comprehensive list with reliable information for the purpose of identifying, contacting, and responding to vulnerable people during a disaster. Additionally, there is no coordinated response across county and city organizations, nonprofits and PG&E to outreach to all of the vulnerable members of the community during disasters. The most comprehensive list is the Human Services Department list of IHSS consumers; however, this only includes people who qualify for the IHSS program. PG&E maintains an internal medical baseline list which is primarily used for the purpose of qualifying households for a reduction in utility costs. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has an empower list of individuals who have electricity-dependent medical devices; however, the contact information for individuals is severely out of date and therefore not a reliable list to initiate outreach.

The intention of the collaboration with PG&E is to find an effective way to assist Adult and Aging clients with disaster planning and provide additional help during actual disasters. HSD has initiated negotiations with PG&E to explore moving forward with a formal partnership if a mutual plan can be identified.

The estimated resources needed to put together and maintain a disaster registry, including outreach to individuals annually and during disasters, would be approximately \$500,000 per year. Initial discussions with PG&E have been positive and they have indicated an interest in potentially funding a significant portion of this work.

**Prior Board Actions:**

There are no previous Board items that have addressed this specific need.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 20-21 Adopted</b>	<b>FY21-22 Projected</b>	<b>FY 22-23 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			

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<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

None

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

None

**Attachments:**

None

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None