



City of Modesto

**CITY PRIDE**

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City Wide

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**W I N T E R**

# Power crunch continues as energy supplies remain tight

The electrical crunch continues as power supplies remain tight throughout California and the western United States.

The Modesto community has been at Stage 3 alert off and on for a number of weeks now, and many neighborhoods and businesses have been impacted by rolling blackouts.

The City of Modesto has been preparing for power disruptions since last summer, when high temperatures and overuse of air conditioners throughout the state caused similar threats of power shortages.

A coordinating team of city staff representing all departments of the city, including information services, communications, public safety, transportation and operations, is continuously monitoring the energy situation and is ready to move into action if necessary.

Last month, the Modesto City Council adopted a resolution of reducing energy consumption in city facilities



by 7 percent. The action comes as part of an overall plan spearheaded by Governor Davis' administration and the League of California Cities to demonstrate California's commitment to conservation and to avoid the threat of rotating outages.

The city has already been making strides to curtail usage, but is implementing further conservation efforts in city facilities in hopes of achieving additional reductions.

The city committed to reduce electricity usage by 5 percent by January 16, 2001. With the resolution adopted January 23, the city confirms its intentions to reduce overall on-going energy usage by

7 percent. In addition, the City is taking steps to encourage its employees and private citizens to join in the conservation effort, by kicking off a public awareness campaign entitled:

## ***"Together, We've Got the Power"***

Here are some ways in which the City of Modesto is conserving energy:

- Conducting energy audits of city operations.
- Sponsoring a citywide campaign offering citizens conservation tips/ideas and encouraging consumers to shift demand away from the peak periods of 5:00 -9:00 a.m.

and 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.

- Using city utility tax windfall from energy price increases to invest in energy saving programs.
- Lowering the thermostat at Tenth Street Place and in all city buildings by 2 degrees, thus creating a 3% savings.
- Removing some fluorescent tubes from light fixtures in the airport offices/buildings.
- Asking airport tenants for their cooperation in conserving energy.
- Using surface water during the winter months in lieu of groundwater, thereby saving energy by not pumping.
- Asking city employees to turn their computers off two hours a week during the workday, during evenings and weekends.
- Retrofitting traffic signals with new energy efficient bulbs.
- Retrofitting street lights where appropriate.
- Modifying the lighting in city parking garages.

***For more details on what the City of Modesto is doing, see Page 3.***

# Answers to your frequently asked questions

In this issue, we have called upon the Modesto Irrigation District to supply answers to commonly asked questions about the power situation.

## Why are we having rolling blackouts?

Since the 1970s, California law has required that, in an electrical emergency of this magnitude, all utilities connected together in the vicinity of the problem must work together to alleviate the emergency. The current power

emergency affects all of northern California.

MID has a written agreement with PG&E (called an interconnection agreement) that dates back several decades. It obligates both utilities to help each other in time of emergency. If MID ever suffered a catastrophe, other utilities would help them.

## Why does the problem seem worse in northern California?

There is a transmission bottleneck between northern and southern California. If that problem could be cleared up, then there could be more flow of power between the two parts of the state. Unfortunately, it's a lack of transmission and it could take 8 to 10 years to build new transmission.

There's been no investment in bulk transmission from Bakersfield to Tracy in over 20 years. This path is used by the whole western grid. Generally in cool months power moves from the south to the north. In summer more power tends to move from the north to the south.

## Will we be having more outages?

The current situation does not appear to be ending very soon, so we should probably expect more disruption for the near future.

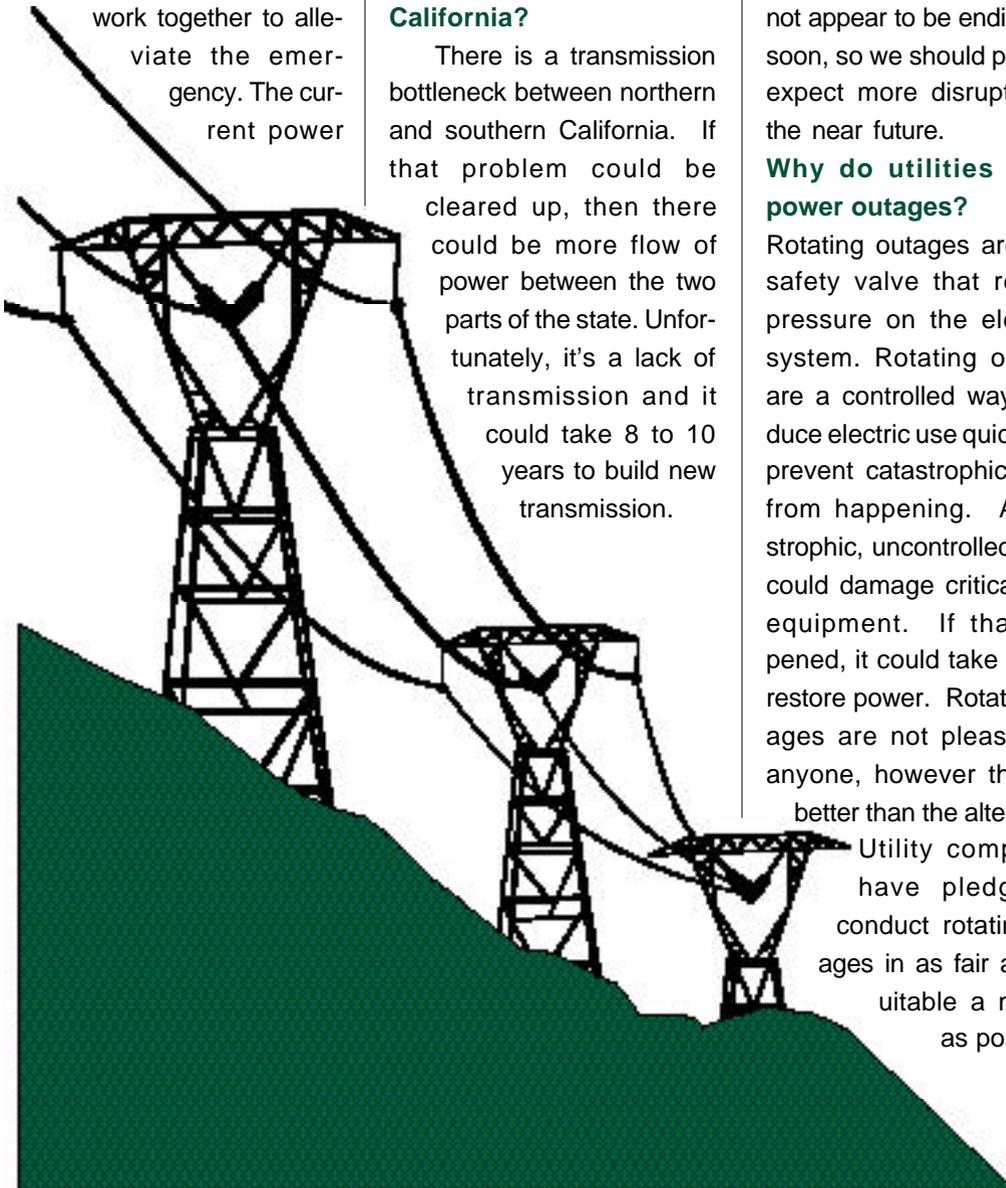
## Why do utilities rotate power outages?

Rotating outages are like a safety valve that relieves pressure on the electrical system. Rotating outages are a controlled way to reduce electric use quickly and prevent catastrophic failure from happening. A catastrophic, uncontrolled failure could damage critical utility equipment. If that happened, it could take days to restore power. Rotating outages are not pleasant for anyone, however they are better than the alternative.

Utility companies have pledged to conduct rotating outages in as fair and equitable a manner as possible.

## Things to remember during rotating outages

- Residential security alarms may go off during power outages.
- Traffic signals could be affected. If a signal is out, treat the intersection as a four-way stop. Use special caution in the fog – don't drive faster than is safe for weather and road conditions.
- Know how to open your garage door if it is on an automatic opener.
- Cordless phones, alarm clocks, VCRs and answering machines could be affected.
- Remember that elevators could also be affected.
- If your gas heating system has electronic components (a thermostat and fan, for instance), it will not run during a power outage.
- If you get cold during the one-hour outage, add layers of clothing, a hat, gloves and warmer socks. Use blankets or sleeping bags.
- Use a fireplace in a safe manner.
- Do not bring an outdoor barbecue indoors.
- Ensure refrigerated and frozen food stays at the proper temperature by not opening appliance doors.
- Candles can cause fires. Use them in the proper holders. Never leave unsupervised young children or pets near candles.
- If you have a neighbor or friend who relies on home care, please keep them in mind. They'll appreciate it if you check on them.



## City implements energy-saving measures at neighborhood parks and tennis courts

In an effort to conserve energy, the City of Modesto will implement several measures during the next month at city-managed parks and recreation facilities.

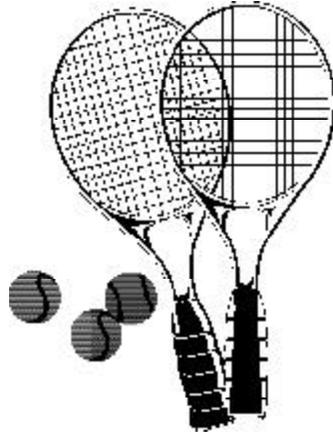
The most dramatic decrease in power usage will be seen at local tennis courts, where lighting used for night play will be reduced during the winter from 5:00-11:00 p.m. to 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Additionally, fewer courts will be available for night play: Beyer and Davis parks will operate three of six courts, Downey and Graceada parks will operate two of six courts, Roosevelt will operate two of four courts and East La Loma Park and Modesto High School will operate four courts each. The courts at Johansen High School and Sutton Community Park do not have lights. Signs will be posted on courts where lighting has been reduced or is not available.

In reviewing options for conserving energy in the area of parks and recreation facilities, city staff found tennis courts to be the largest user of energy. By decreasing the lighting hours by 50 percent, the city hopes to see a sub-

stantial savings in energy without compromising the services provided to the community.

During daylight savings time when use is greater, the city will adjust the lighting to accommodate the needs of



citizens by offering longer hours and more courts.

City staff recommended not to compromise on security lighting, which operates via solar cells that turn on and off automatically from dusk to dawn. An average security light uses 2.3 kilowatts per day, or about 20¢ per light.

Most incandescent lights have been replaced by multivapor lights, which reduce energy consumption by

35 percent. The city utilizes minimum voltage fixtures for security lighting at all parks facilities to ensure the security of the facilities and the safety of the neighborhoods surrounding the parks.

Lighting on sports fields will not be affected by the energy-cutting measures. Currently sports fields are only lighted when in use by reservation, and a secured key is required to turn on the lights. The lights are also closely monitored to ensure that they are turned off when not in use.

Neighborhood pools are also exempt from the new energy-saving measures. Several years ago the city developed and implemented energy conservation efforts pertaining to city pools. This involved replacing most 5 hp motors with 1 hp motors. During the winter, the pumps only cycle once per day, which takes about one to two hours to efficiently filter the chemicals in the pools. For health and safety reasons, the pumps operate daily during hot summer months, when the pools are most often used.

## Rolling blackouts and your computer

**If the power goes off in your area unexpectedly:**

- Turn off the power on all your PCs, monitors, and printers.

**When the power comes back on:**

- Turn the power ON for each device, one device at a time.

- If you have a device that will not power up or work properly, contact technical support for your equipment and report the problem. Be sure to tell them it was related to powering down.

**While the power is on:**

- Frequently SAVE your files. This will prevent loss of too much data if the power goes down while you are working. You will only lose what you were working on since the last SAVE.

**When leaving for the weekend or an extended period of time:**

- Please turn off your computer, monitor, and printer. For personal computers, use the correct 'ShutDown' routine.

## Don't get caught in the dark without a phone

With rolling blackouts now affecting California, some consumers may need to take a few precautions to make sure they do not lose telephone service.

- **Make sure you have at least one telephone in your home and office that does not use an electrical**

**outlet.** Cordless phones, while convenient, don't work in power outages. So customers should always have on hand a regular non-electrically powered telephone that can quickly plug into a telephone jack.

- **Don't count on answering machines during an**

**outage.** Answering machines and the telephones attached to them depend on electricity and will not operate during a blackout.

- **Make sure you have a charged backup battery for your PCS phone.** Businesses served by Pacific Bell Centrex will not lose

telephone service in a blackout because the power is being supplied from the Pacific Bell central office. Customers using PBX equipment will suffer a loss of dial tone unless their systems are equipped with backup capability.



## Helping Modesto's storm drains work in winter storms

The City of Modesto storm drain system works best when leaves, dirt and debris are kept out. Even small amounts of leaves, concrete or plaster will block-up the well. Hazardous materials like motor oil, antifreeze and paints are especially damaging causing permanent blockage and polluting our lakes and rivers.

Keeping the drains clean and free from debris and hazardous contamination is CRITICAL. Here are ways you can help:

Recycle used oil, call 577-5493 for more information.

Fix oil-leaking automobiles, and clean driveway spills with absorbent material -- don't hose it off.

Keep yard clippings out of the gutter.

Rinse your latex paint, brushes, rollers and pans in the sink, not in your driveway or gutter.

Dispose of antifreeze and other hazardous materials at the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility. It's FREE! For details and hours call 525-4123.

For more information, or to report flooding or illegal dumping, call the City of Modesto at 577-6200.

## Utility users tax refund available for low income Modesto residents

Utility users refunds are available to households with an annual income of less than \$8,700.

If you have been a resident of Modesto (within the city limits) for the past year, have qualified annual income, and have utility bills issued in your name for electric, gas, telephone and/or water service, you may qualify for a refund of up to \$30 in Utility Users' Taxes.

Claim forms are available in the city's Finance Department, 1010 Tenth Street on the second floor. These forms must be completed and filed with the city between January 2 and April 15, 2001.

To qualify for a refund, you must be the person whose name appears on the utility bills. For more information about this refund, contact the City of Modesto Finance Department at 577-5207.

Please do your part to conserve energy during this critical energy crisis. You can learn how by visiting the City of Modesto online at:  
[www.ci.modesto.ca.us](http://www.ci.modesto.ca.us)

**TOGETHER, WE'VE GOT THE POWER!**

## Mark your calendars for Earth Day 2001

Earth Day in the Park Festival, 2001 is coming Saturday, April 21 to Modesto's Graceada Park.

This year's theme is "**Focus on the Future**" and reminds us that we must think beyond today with respect to our limited resources. A wide variety of vendors will be on display, including environmentally friendly products and services, earth friendly crafts, lots of food, and plenty of things to keep the kids busy!

If you would like to help sponsor this event, have an earth friendly product or craft to sell, or have a message or service you want to send out, please contact the City of Modesto Solid Waste Management Office at 577-5494.

## Apps available for Business Recycling Awards

Applications for City of Modesto Business Recycling Awards 2001 are now available to any commercial business, organization, or non-profit group located or operating within the City of Modesto. Last year's winners included Memorial Hospitals Association, Modesto Disposal/Waste Management, Prime Shine Express Car Wash, Save Mart Supermarkets, Target #0273, Target #0838 and Mervyn's.

Applications are available at the city's Solid Waste Office, 1010 Tenth Street, Suite 4100, at the Modesto Chamber of Commerce at 1114 J Street, or by calling 577-5495. Winners will be publicly recognized by the city.



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*Scenic Nursery-- 1313 Scenic Drive*  
*Westurf -- 1612 Claus Road*