

## **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN AND OUTREACH EXAMPLES**

The fiscal year (FY) 2026 electric utility communications strategy addresses the cost drivers for a rate increase including the City's significant investment in electric grid infrastructure, rising costs for transmission access charges, increasing renewable energy portfolio standards, tightening resource adequacy requirements, and financial reserve recovery. One of the larger capital improvement projects in progress now is the electric grid modernization, which was developed to expand capacity and enhance reliability for increased electric load. Thus the equity transfer to the General Fund has increased along with the grid modernization asset value and will be reassessed as the utility issues debt.

Staff will inform customers of the need to recover funds to bring electric supply operations reserves above the minimum guidelines following the reserve drawdowns during the pandemic, drought, and high winter energy prices during 2022-2023. It is also important to educate customers about the cost to buy and transport electricity to Palo Alto, and distribute it within Palo Alto. Critical components of CPAU's expenses include maintaining and replacing infrastructure, customer service, billing, and administration. Long-term cost trends show supply and distribution costs increasing over time. Despite raising rates, electric costs to customers still remain lower than the comparator regional investor-owned utility, PG&E.

City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) communication methods include utilities webpages, utility bill inserts, messaging on utility bills and MyCPAU online account management platform, email newsletters, print and digital ads, social media, and business and neighborhood customer presentations. CPAU promotes energy efficiency programs to help customers keep utility bill costs low even as market prices increase or CPAU raises utility rates. Programs such as GoGreen Financing and advisor services for energy efficiency and electrification offer residents assistance for home upgrades. CPAU provides free consulting services and rebates for commercial energy efficiency upgrades and programs for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure to assist in the switch from fossil fueled transportation to clean, electric driving. Throughout the year, CPAU hosts free educational workshops to help residents and businesses better understand energy usage and learn ways to improve efficiency to keep utility costs low. The MyCPAU online account management portal provides customers with direct access and more information about utility account and consumption data.

CPAU customers benefit from local control and policy setting, and community values-driven programs and services, including the decision to go carbon neutral in 2013. Palo Alto's renewable energy purchase agreements contribute to our utility's long-term energy security and commitment to sustainability. The City's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (S/CAP) focuses on electrification as a primary way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. CPAU recently launched several new rebate programs in partnership with the State and other industry entities to offer rebates for customers to switch from natural gas appliances to electric. CPAU will highlight these resources and reinforce how community-driven policies, such as for beneficial electrification, factor into our utility rates, and reflect the value provided by CPAU as a municipal utility.

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## STAY INFORMED DURING WINTER POWER OUTAGES.

Text message notifications allow us to communicate with you when there is a power outage.



You don't want to be in the dark if a power outage happens during the holidays or any time of the year. The City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) Outage Management System allows us to provide customers with information about power outages through text messages.

### HOW WE WILL CONTACT YOU:

CPAU will automatically send alerts about potential outages that may affect your service address.

Confirm that your contact information is up-to-date. Visit [mycpau.cityofpaloalto.org](http://mycpau.cityofpaloalto.org), email Utilities Customer Service at [UtilitiesCustomerService@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:UtilitiesCustomerService@cityofpaloalto.org), or call (650) 329-2161 to ensure we have the best contact information on file for notification purposes. CPAU can store up to three (3) mobile phone numbers per account.

**Text Message Notifications.** We can text you with information about power outages and provide status updates. If you need to report a power outage or other electrical emergency, please call or text OUT to (650) 496-6914.

## WINTER STORM SAFETY TIPS

Storms and power outages can be dangerous. Follow these guidelines to keep yourselves safe:

- Stay away from downed power lines and poles.
- Watch out for nearby power lines when you use a ladder or work on your roof.
- Stay inside your car if a power line falls across it when you're in it. Warn others away and wait for rescue personnel. If you must get out due to fire or other danger, hop with both feet together or jump out without touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time.
- If you smell gas, do not turn any lights or appliances on or off. Do not look for a gas leak yourself. Leave the area and call 911 or report it immediately to City of Palo Alto Utilities at (650) 329-2579.

Do not connect an emergency or recreational vehicle generator to house wiring. Unless installed safely, you could damage property and endanger the lives of utility workers working to repair power lines.

Keep your refrigerator and freezer closed. Tightly sealed doors will normally keep food safe for several hours.

Install surge protectors for all sensitive electronic equipment.

Turn off all appliances to avoid damage from a power surge when power is restored.

Leave one light on to show when power is restored.

To restore service during an outage as well as perform routine maintenance, utility crews need access to the power lines and poles on your property. We appreciate your cooperation!

### IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

You can check power outage status, maps, ways you can prepare and stay safe by going to [cityofpaloalto.org/outages](http://cityofpaloalto.org/outages).

Log in to MyCPAU at [cityofpaloalto.org/MyCPAU](http://cityofpaloalto.org/MyCPAU) to update your account information or contact Utilities Customer Service at [UtilitiesCustomerService@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:UtilitiesCustomerService@cityofpaloalto.org) or (650) 329-2161

You can also call us at (650) 496-6914 with the phone number associated with your utility account to report an outage or other electrical emergency.

Follow us on X at @PALUTILITIES for updates: [cityofpaloalto.org/preparedness](https://twitter.com/PALUTILITIES)

Be aware that during an outage our crews work around the clock to restore service.



Persons with disabilities who require materials in an accessible alternative format, audio files, or modifications to graphics or instructions to access Our website, programs, or services should contact the City ADA Coordinator George Hui at (650) 329-2160 or by emailing [ADA@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:ADA@cityofpaloalto.org). TDD: (650) 329-2160 or by emailing [ADA@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:ADA@cityofpaloalto.org).

## Loose Balloons Can Spoil the Party for Others.



Mylar balloons can explode and catch fire when coming in contact with power lines, creating a dangerous and disruptive situation. Please consider skipping mylar balloons when shopping for event decorations to avoid the possibility of outages, injuries, road closures, property damage, and more.

### WHEN HANDLING MYLAR BALLOONS, CONSIDER THESE SAFETY TIPS:

- Make sure helium-filled Mylar balloons are securely tied to a heavy weight to prevent them from floating away.
- Do not bundle Mylar balloons together.
- Never attempt to retrieve anything that becomes caught in a power line.
- Avoid a power line that has fallen to the ground or is dangling in the air. Always assume downed electric lines are energized and extremely dangerous. Keep far away and immediately alert 911.

Visit [cityofpaloalto.org/safety](http://cityofpaloalto.org/safety) to learn how to contact us in the event of an emergency, stay prepared before a hazard strikes, and access free helpful resources for safety and emergency preparedness.

In the event of a power outage, check [cityofpaloalto.org/outages](http://cityofpaloalto.org/outages) for immediate updates.

- Pre-cool your home by opening windows on cooler nights and early mornings—and shut them before the day heats up.
- Replace or clean your A/C unit filter and use a programmable thermostat.
- Upgrade your attic insulation and weather-strip doors and windows for year-round comfort.
- Upgrade your old water heater to an efficient heat pump water heater. Visit [cityofpaloalto.org/switch](http://cityofpaloalto.org/switch)

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## POWER CONTENT LABEL FOR 2023 DOES OUR COME FROM?



- LARGE HYDROELECTRIC—58.6%
- BIOMASS AND BIOWASTE—1.1%
- SOLAR—33.7%
- WIND—0.3%
- SMALL HYDROELECTRIC—1.6%
- UNSPECIFIED POWER—4.7%

Like a nutrition facts label that shows the ingredients in food, the Power Content Label shows the sources of electricity purchased by City of Palo Alto Utilities to power local homes and businesses.

### POWER SOURCES IN 2023

CPAU power sources include: six solar PV projects, one wind project, five landfill gas-fired projects, the Calaveras hydroelectric project, and the Western Area Power Administration contract, which is sourced from Central Valley Project hydroelectric facilities. All of these resources are located in California. Power supply percentages vary annually based on the available output from our contracted generators. In 2023, CPAU's hydroelectric generation was significantly higher than long-term average levels due to favorable weather conditions, so CPAU had a large surplus of renewable generation that it was able to sell to other utilities, which helped lower CPAU's rates.

### 100% CARBON NEUTRAL ELECTRICITY SINCE 2013

Carbon neutral electricity comes from a variety of sources, including renewable resources like solar, wind and small hydroelectric plants. Large hydroelectric sources are also carbon-free, but the state of California doesn't consider them renewable.

Find more details at [cityofpaloalto.org/PowerContentLabel](http://cityofpaloalto.org/PowerContentLabel) and [cityofpaloalto.org/CarbonNeutral](http://cityofpaloalto.org/CarbonNeutral)



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