

Anger rises as California utility imposes more blackouts

By **DON THOMPSON**
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Associated Press

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Frustration and anger mounted across Northern California as the state's biggest utility began another round of fire-prevention blackouts Tuesday that could leave millions of people without electricity, some for five days or longer.

The shut-offs, aimed at keeping windblown electrical equipment from sparking wildfires, came as fire crews raced to contain two major blazes in Northern and Southern California before the winds picked up again. The fires have destroyed dozens of homes in Sonoma County wine country and in the hills of Los Angeles. Pacific Gas & Electric Corp. said its latest blackout

would affect about 1.5 million people in 29 counties. At the same time, about 1 million people were still without power Tuesday after a shut-off over the weekend that affected nearly 2.7 million. The blackout Tuesday was PG&E's third in a week and the fourth in a month. It included the Sierra Nevada foothills and parts of well-to-do Marin County, population 260,000, north of San

Francisco. Many people in Marin have been without power since Saturday. People searched for places to charge cellphones and stocked up on ice after PG&E gave warning. Petaluma resident Scotty Richardson, whose lights went out Saturday, said the prospect that power might not be restored for days makes him "furious, furious." He vented frustration

over the on-again, off-again outages but also anger at the utility's role in causing deadly fires in the past, and apparently sparking some of this season's blazes. "PG&E can't figure out how to deliver power reliably without killing people," he said. "This is more than three strikes — it's a failure of epic proportions." Gov. Gavin Newsom and top utility regulators have

accused the company of mis-managing its power system and failing for decades to make the investments needed to make it more durable or to plan for such outages. PG&E officials have acknowledged shortcomings in managing the shut-offs, including a crash of its website, and say they are learning from each blackout how to be more precise when they turn off the power.



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