

The Nursing Home Resident Safety Act of 2020 SB 1207 (Jackson)

The Problem: California Nursing Home Residents Are at Great Risk of Harm or Death Due to Power Blackouts

California's nursing home residents have always faced serious risks from disaster-related emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, mudslides and wildfires. Today, however, the dangers they face have magnified exponentially due to massive blackouts triggered by PG&E and other utility companies to prevent wildfires. In 2019, dozens of California nursing homes lost power – sometimes for days – due to these Public Safety Power Outages (PSPS). Public officials are warning that the dangerous blackouts are likely to continue for a decade or more.

Nursing homes without power are a grave risk to their residents. Most residents are extraordinarily vulnerable, many are completely dependent on their caregivers due to poor health and some rely on electrical-powered life support systems to stay alive. Unsafe temperatures, unrefrigerated medications, and medical devices without power can have deadly consequences for facility residents.

Thus, it is of great concern that few California nursing homes are prepared to keep residents safe during emergencies and extended power outages. According to a November 2019 report by the federal HHS Office on Inspector General, California nursing home residents are at an increased risk of injury or death during emergencies because all of the nursing homes it examined in high risk areas of the state repeatedly violated critical emergency preparedness standards.

The California nursing home industry has also sounded the alarm, telling the Mercury News that “You could kill people right away” during blackouts if backup power isn't immediately available for residents who rely on oxygen, dialysis and other life-sustaining equipment.

Yet, California law is silent on backup power requirements for nursing homes. State regulations only require nursing facilities to provide very limited backup power for up to 6 hours. This weak standard is a recipe for disaster in California's current era of extreme weather, wildfires and power outages.

California nursing home residents are in harm's way. To keep them safe during outages, the state must set stronger backup power requirements for nursing homes.

The Solution: SB 1207 (Jackson)

Senator Jackson's bill would require a skilled nursing facility to have a backup power system that maintains safe temperatures and power to all critical systems for resident health and safety for no less than 96-hours during any type of power outage.

Support

SB 1207 is co-sponsored by California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR) and Long-Term Care Ombudsman Services of San Luis Obispo County.

Support SB 1207 to help protect the lives of nursing home residents during power blackouts!