

Boardwalk mulls life without electricity

Park is powerless
over outages, says
park spokesman

Boardwalk 3-29-01
By **RAMONA TURNER**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

If you think rolling blackouts wreak havoc on your day-to-day life, think about how they would affect amusement parks during the busy summer tourist season.

"If people can't get on rides, they'll want their money back," said

SANTA CRUZ John Robinson, public relations manager for the Santa Cruz Seaside Co., which owns the Boardwalk. "If they don't want to wait for the power to come back on, then they'll want to leave."

Neither Robinson nor Timothy Chanaud, manager of communications for Paramount's Great America in Santa Clara, could comment on how much money they could lose if amusement park visitors requested their money back or were given free entry to the family fun venues on another day.

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JOHN ROBINSON,
SPOKESMAN

into alternative power options as well as how they can conserve energy.

"We're talking about a situation that changes our operations, and there's nothing we can do about it," Robinson said.

Plans are in place at both the Boardwalk and Great America if the electricity ceases to flow.

"The solution is fairly simple: we'd close down the rides," Chanaud said.

Santa Clara-based Silicon Valley Power is the Great America's utility company. If a power emergency occurs, it would give Great America a two-hour notice of intent to shut off the park's electricity, Chanaud said.

If there is no warning, "all the rides would stop with guests in a secure and comfortable position, and we would very quickly be assisting guests off those rides," Chanaud said.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Boardwalk's lead coaster mechanic Brian Walters maintains the Hurricane ride on Wednesday.

"In dark places, like the Haunted Castle or the Cave Train, we have emergency lights that come on and our staff would escort people out," said Robinson of the Santa Cruz Boardwalk.

Roller coasters at both the Boardwalk and Great America rely upon electricity to get the cars to the top of the tracks. After that, the power of gravity and physics return the rides to their stations.

Other rides at the parks, such as the Boardwalk's Ferris wheel and Great America's Drop Zone, will slow down before coming to a halt — measures that ensure no one gets hurt during a lapse of electricity.

Contact Ramona Turner at
rturner@santa-cruz.com.