
Talking Points

What to Do During a Power Outage

Short-Term Power Failures:

- Don't panic.
- Check to see if your neighbors still have electricity.
- If your neighbors have electricity, the problem could be inside your home. Check your main fuses or circuit breakers to see if they have blown or tripped.
- If your neighbors do not have electricity, call your electric supplier. A repair person will be dispatched as quickly as possible. Your supplier should also be able to tell you if it will be an extended outage.
- Unplug appliances with electronic components, such as microwaves, televisions, and DVD players. This will help eliminate damage to your appliances from voltage surges when the electricity is restored.
- Wait a few minutes before turning on these appliances when the electricity is restored. This will reduce demand on the power supplier's electrical system.
- If you use a standby generator, be sure it has been installed and wired properly. If improperly installed, a generator could cause dangerous conditions for utility employees working to restore power.
- Check the basement periodically for flooding. You can use a portable, gasoline-powered pump to pump out a basement or crawl space when the power is interrupted to an electric sump pump. Never wade into a flooded basement unless electricity supplying sump pumps, freezers, etc. has been disconnected.

Prepare a kit for such emergency situations. It should include:

- Flashlights with fresh batteries.
- Matches for lighting gas stoves or clean burning heaters.
- Wood for a properly ventilated fireplace.
- First aid kit, prescription medicines, and baby supplies.
- Food that can be kept in coolers and a manual can opener.
- A non-cordless telephone and/or fully charged cellular phone.
- Bottled drinking water.

For more information and videos on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety and energy efficiency, and supported by a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting safe use of electricity.

- Battery-powered emergency lights and radio.

Summer Power Outages:

- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. Wrap blankets around the appliances to provide extra insulation.
- Make sure you have bottled water and a supply of freeze-dried or canned food in your emergency kit to prevent dependence on your refrigerator.
- A barbeque grill is an excellent way to prepare food. A charcoal grill should always be used outside.
- Air conditioners should be turned off during power outages. Do not turn them back on for several minutes after the power has been restored.
- Dress comfortably, and use natural ventilation to keep your home cool.
- If health of family members is a concern, stay with friends or family or go to a shelter.
- Your electricity supplier should be notified if you use life support equipment in your home.

Winter Power Outages:

- Dress warmly. Several layers of clothing provide better insulation than a single layer of heavier clothing.
- Move to a single room, preferably one with few windows. Ideally, this room should be on the south side of the home for maximum heat gain in the daytime. The room should also be shut off from the rest of the house.
- If you use an alternate heat source, be sure and follow operating instructions.
- To keep your water pipes from freezing, a small stream of water can be left on to prevent this.

Extended Power Outage/Home Shutdown:

- Unplug everything in your home. Turn off breakers or remove fuses. Leave one lighting circuit on so you know when the electricity comes back on.
- Winterize your water supply system completely. Be sure to disconnect the electrical supply to the water heater before draining.
- The drainage system in the home also needs to be winterized. This is done by pouring antifreeze into the traps in the drains below sinks, toilets, washing machines, etc.
- Empty all food from freezers and refrigerators, and leave doors open.
- If your home is equipped with an electric heat pump, special care is needed when turning the unit on after an extended outage. It takes a period of time (check with dealer) for the lubricant in the refrigerant to warm up.
- Keep curtains closed except on south facing windows in the winter when the sun is shining.

(See also "Generator Safety Talking Points" for more)

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