

Power Failure Safety Tips: What You Need to Know When the Power Goes Out

Brighton Volunteer Ambulance

Snowstorms, electrical storms, windstorms, and other natural disasters are some of the causes for power failures, and being prepared for hours—or even days—without power is a must. Most power outages last only a few hours, but recent experiences have shown us that power can take up to a week or more to be restored. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that families develop an emergency plan and prepare a disaster supply kit for emergencies. We've listed some basic emergency preparedness tips below, but you can see detailed recommendations at the [CDC site](http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/needtoknow.asp).

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If the power fails:

- Stay calm.
- Monitor local radio stations and online media for updates. (Also remember there may be a lot of unsubstantiated chatter online during emergencies.)
- Turn off all electrical equipment that you were using so that when the power comes on a surge won't destroy the electronics. Keep one light on to know when the power comes back up.
- Call 9-1-1 only in emergency situations.

Preparing

You should assemble a disaster supply kit of essential equipment and have it in an easily accessible location. Keep enough food, water and prescription medication for at least 3 days. A list of what to put in your emergency kit is in the box below. Installing a sump pump backup system will keep your basement from flooding for a few days (water- and battery-powered back-up systems are available).

If you have serious medical conditions

- Have reserve oxygen tanks in case your concentrator battery fails.
- Considering buying a gas-powered generator or whole house generator if you use home dialysis equipment, oxygen, or home ventilator.
- If you use a battery-powered wheelchair, have an extra charged battery and keep a lightweight manual wheelchair on hand for emergencies.
- If you are blind or have a visual disability, store a Braille, talking clock or large print clock with extra batteries.

What you should know

- Know how to work your electric garage door manual override.
- Have flashlights and know where they are (can you find them in the dark?) Replace batteries when you change your smoke detector batteries at each time change.
- If you have standard telephone service, keep an old-fashioned phone set ready to plug in. Telephones requiring electricity, and those with VoIP or cable phone service, won't work without electricity or battery back-up systems.
- Back up your computer files regularly.
- Always keep your gas tank at least half-full because gas stations may not have power to their pumps.
- To minimize the risk of fire, use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns, rather than candles, gas lanterns or torches.
- Limit your driving, traffic lights may be out and other disruptions will make driving more hazardous.

Generator & gas grill safety

- Never run a generator or gas grill inside your home or in a closed environment.
- Follow all manufacturers' safety instructions.

Keeping Food & Drinking Water Safe

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to keep food cold as long as possible.
- If the power is out for less than four hours, (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/needtoknow.asp>) the food in your refrigerator or freezer is safe to consume. If the power is out longer, the [American Red Cross](#) provides tips on safely storing your food and how to determine if your food is still safe (<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/food-safety>). (Print out a copy of the instructions and leave with your emergency kit, since you probably won't be able to go online during an emergency.)
- In some emergency situations, water purification systems may not be functioning fully. Monitor the news for any water safety recommendations.

What to Put in Your Emergency Kit:

Keep this kit in an easily accessible spot, along with enough food, water and prescription medications for at least 3 days.

- Flashlight
- Batteries
- First Aid Kit (including a digital thermometer)
- Portable radio (preferably one with a hand crank or solar charging apparatus)
- At least one gallon of bottled water per person per day
- A small stock of dried and canned foods (don't forget a manual can-opener)
- Some emergency cash (ATMs may not be working)
- The power company's emergency number: 1-800-743-1701 (electric), call 9-1-1 if you smell gas or for any gas emergencies. The outage hotline is 1-800-743-1702.
- Car cell phone charger (in an emergency you can charge your cell phone with your car running)

For More Information

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://emergency.cdc.gov) at <http://emergency.cdc.gov> has excellent safety tips. You can find more information on emergency plans and supply kits in the [Emergency Preparedness and You](#) section of that site.

This information comes from Brighton Volunteer Ambulance, 1551 Winton Road South, Rochester, N.Y. 14618, (585) 271-2718, www.brightonambulance.org or follow us on Facebook.

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