



## Power Outages

Extended power outages may impact the whole community and the economy. A power outage is when the electrical power goes out unexpectedly. A power outage may:

- Disrupt communications, water and transportation.
- Close retail businesses, grocery stores, gas stations, ATMs, banks and other services.
- Cause food spoilage and water contamination.
- Prevent use of medical devices.

### PROTECT YOURSELF DURING A POWER OUTAGE:

- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
- Use a generator, but **ONLY** outdoors and away from windows.
- Do not use a gas stove and ovens to heat your home.
- Disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.
- Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices.
- If safe, go to an alternate location for heat or cooling.
  - Check with your local officials for locations of cooling or warming centers. Locations may have changed this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - CDC has provided [cooling shelter operators with guidance](#) to help protect people from COVID-19. This guidance can be used for warming shelters, too.
  - If you go to a public cooling or warming center, keep at least six feet of space between you and individuals who are not a part of your immediate household.
  - Wear masks when in public spaces. Masks should not be worn by children under 2 years old, people who have trouble breathing, and people who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove them.
  - Try to bring items that can help protect you and others in the cooling or warming center from COVID-19, such as two masks for each person age two or older in the household, [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, and cleaning materials.
  - Review the CDC's guidelines for "[Going to a Public Disaster Shelter During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)"
- Be a good neighbor. Check on the welfare of others while keeping a safe distance.

- Sign up for [email updates](#) about coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Follow the [latest guidelines](#) from the CDC and your local authorities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A POWER OUTAGE THREATENS:

### Prepare NOW

- Take an inventory of the items you need that rely on electricity.
- Talk to your medical provider about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity and refrigerated medicines. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures and get specific guidance for any medications that are critical for life.
- Plan for batteries and other alternatives to meet your needs when the power goes out.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors with battery backup in central locations on every level of your home.
- Determine whether your home phone will work in a power outage and how long battery backup will last.
- Review the supplies that are available in case of a power outage. Have flashlights with extra batteries for every household member. Have enough nonperishable food and water. Be sure to include [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60 percent alcohol to use in case you are unable to wash your hands with soap and water.
  - Include non-perishable foods, cleaning supplies, and water for several days, in case services are cut off in your area. If you are able to, set aside items like soap, [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, disinfecting wipes, and general household cleaning supplies that you can use to disinfect surfaces you touch regularly. After a power outage, you may not have access to these supplies for days or even weeks.
  - Being prepared allows you to avoid unnecessary excursions and to address minor medical issues at home, alleviating the burden on urgent care centers and hospitals.
  - Remember that not everyone can afford to respond by stocking up on necessities. For those who can afford it, making essential purchases and slowly building up supplies in advance will allow for longer time periods between shopping trips. This helps to protect those who are unable to procure essentials in advance of the pandemic and must shop more frequently. In addition, consider avoiding WIC-labeled products so that those who rely on these products can access them.
- Use a thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer so that you can know the temperature when the power is restored. Throw out food if the temperature is 40 degrees or higher.
- Keep mobile phones and other electric equipment charged and car and generator gas tanks full.

## Survive DURING

- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours. Use coolers with ice if necessary. Monitor temperatures with a thermometer.
- Maintain food supplies that do not require refrigeration.
- Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Generators, camp stoves or charcoal grills should always be used outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows. Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.
- Check on your neighbors. Older adults and young children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.
- Go to a community location with power if heat or cold is extreme.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment or electronics. Power may return with momentary surges or spikes that can cause damage.

## Be Safe AFTER

- When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- If the power is out for more than a day, discard any medication that should be refrigerated, unless the drug's label says otherwise. Consult your doctor or pharmacist immediately for a new supply.
- Continue taking steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, such as washing your hands often and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.
- Engage virtually with your community through video and phone calls. Know that it's normal to feel anxious or stressed. Take care of your body and talk to someone if you are feeling upset. Many people may already feel fear and anxiety about the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). The threat of a power outage can add additional stress. Follow CDC guidance for [managing stress during a traumatic event](#) and [managing stress during COVID-19](#).

### OTHER TIPS:

- Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices.
  - Reach out to your medical provider to obtain information on:
    - Alternative storage methods that can be used for medication and necessary precautions to take to keep it safe.
    - Alternative methods to keep power-dependent medical devices operational during power outages.

- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
  - The refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours.
  - A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours.
  - Use coolers with ice if necessary.
  - Monitor temperatures with a thermometer (food is safe if it is kept at 40F or below)
- Maintain food supplies that do not require refrigeration.
- Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
  - Use a generator, but **ONLY** outdoors and away from windows.
  - Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.
  - Generators, camp stoves or charcoal grills should always be used outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows.
- Check on your neighbors. Older adults and young children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.
  - Have extra sets of cold-weather clothing on hand.
  - Air activated Hand/Foot warmers
- Go to a community location with power if heat or cold is extreme.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment or electronics. Power may return with momentary surges or spikes that can cause damage.