How to Prepare for a Power Outage and Respond Safely

Home and Garden · about 28 minutes · 2026-11-06

Prepare for lost lighting, communications, refrigeration, water service, and power-dependent medical needs without creating fire, carbon-monoxide, or electrical hazards. These 24 steps cover an electrical-needs inventory, support and relocation plans, flashlights and charging, food and water, medical backup, utility reporting, surge precautions, refrigerator timing, downed lines, outdoor generator placement, CO alarms, safe connections, fuel, coolers, food disposal, health relocation, restoration, and restocking.

Things you will need

- Flashlights or battery lanterns for each household member and compatible spare batteries
- Charged, device-compatible power banks and a battery or hand-crank radio
- Nonperishable ready-to-eat food, safe water, and a manual can opener
- Refrigerator and freezer thermometers, coolers, and sufficient ice or frozen packs
- Paper contact, relocation, medical-device, and medication-specific backup plans
- Optional properly rated backup equipment, outdoor generator accessories, and CO alarms with battery backup

Assessing Needs and Building an Outage Plan

1. **List what needs electricity**
   Inventory every essential household need that depends on electricity.
2. **Plan support and relocation now**
   Create a support, communication, and relocation plan before an outage occurs.
3. **Stock light and stored power**
   Assemble flashlights, batteries, charged power banks, and a battery or hand-crank radio.
4. **Store food and water that need no power**
   Stock nonperishable food, safe drinking water, a manual can opener, coolers, and frozen packs for your household.
5. **Plan for powered medical needs**
   Arrange medical-device and refrigerated-medication plans with the relevant clinician, pharmacist, and equipment supplier.

Protecting the Household When Power Goes Out

6. **Confirm the outage and report it**
   Confirm the outage scope and report it through the utility's official channel.
7. **Unplug electronics against surge damage**
   Unplug sensitive electronics and unnecessary appliances to reduce surge and restart hazards.
8. **Log the start and keep doors shut**
   Record the outage start time and keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
9. **Light and heat the house safely**
   Use safe lighting and temperature strategies throughout the outage.

10. Stay back from downed lines

Stay far away from downed lines, damaged electrical equipment, and flooded areas.

Using Backup Power Without CO or Shock Hazards

11. Match backup power to device ratings

Choose backup power that matches the device's ratings and actual outage plan.

12. Run generators outdoors and away

Place a portable generator outdoors only and at least 20 feet from the home, windows, doors, and vents, with exhaust directed away from buildings.

13. Test carbon-monoxide alarms regularly

Install and maintain carbon-monoxide alarms with battery backup, and respond immediately to an alarm or possible poisoning symptoms.

14. Connect generators only via approved methods

Connect generator loads only by a method approved by the manufacturer and electrical code.

15. Cool the generator before refueling

Turn off and cool a portable generator before refueling, and store fuel only as its instructions and local rules allow.

Protecting Food, Water, and Health During an Extended Outage

16. Track fridge and freezer temperatures

Monitor refrigerator and freezer temperatures with appliance thermometers instead of relying on touch or odor.

17. Use a cooler for extra cold storage

Use a cooler with sufficient ice or frozen packs when an extended outage requires additional cold storage.

18. Discard food by time and temperature

Discard food according to elapsed time, measured temperature, and current food-specific official charts rather than tasting it.

19. Confirm drinking water with officials

Follow official drinking-water notices and use a known safe source for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, and preparing infant formula.

20. Leave when home is unsafe

Relocate when indoor conditions or essential medical needs cannot be managed safely at home.

Restoring Service and Reviewing the Plan

21. Reconnect equipment gradually after power returns

Restore appliances and electronics gradually after service is stable and equipment has been checked for damage.

22. Judge thawed food item by item

Evaluate frozen and refrigerated food separately after power returns.

23. Restock supplies and log the outage

Restock the supplies and records used during the outage.

24. Review the plan while it is fresh

Review the entire plan with household members and relevant providers after the immediate emergency ends.

Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Prepare-for-a-Power-Outage-and-Respond-Safely. Corrections: https://www.h