

Prepare for a Power Outage

Severe Winter Weather, including heavy wet snow, sleet, freezing rain and high winds, has the potential to cause power outages throughout the area. The weight of a one-half inch build-up can be enough to snap tree limbs, causing them to fall and bring down power lines disrupting electrical service.

Before an Outage

- Check flashlights and battery-powered portable radios to ensure that they are working, and you have extra batteries. A radio is an important source of weather and emergency information during a storm.
- Have sufficient heating fuel, as regular sources may be cut off. Have emergency heating equipment and fuel (a gas fireplace, wood burning stove or fireplace) so you can keep at least one room livable. Be sure the room is well ventilated.
- Make sure your home is properly insulated. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows to keep cold air out.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside to provide insulation.
- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.
- Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
- Know how to shut off water valves.
- If your water supply could be affected (a well-water pump system), fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. Water in the bathtub should be used for sanitation purposes only, not as drinking water.
- Pouring a pail of water from the tub directly into the bowl can flush a toilet.
- Set your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings (remember to reset them back to normal once power is restored). During an outage, do not open the refrigerator or freezer door. Food can stay cold in a full refrigerator for up to 24 hours and in a well-packed freezer for 48 hours (24 hours if it is half-packed).
- Review the process for manually operating an electric garage door.
- Make sure you always have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency supply kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water, non-perishable food and a manual can opener.

During an Outage

- Dress for the season, wearing several layers of loose fitting, lightweight; warm clothing, rather than one layer of heavy clothing
- Mittens are better than gloves.
- Wear a hat; most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in the extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia: uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If symptoms are detected, get the victim to a warm location, remove any wet clothing, warm the center of the body first and give warm, non-alcoholic beverages, if the victim is conscious. Get medical help, as soon as possible.
- Snowdrifts can be used as a makeshift freezer for food. (Be aware of attracting animals).
- Snow can be melted for an additional water source.
- In order to protect against possible voltage irregularities that can occur when power is restored, you should unplug all sensitive electronic equipment, including TVs, stereo, VCR, microwave oven, computer, cordless telephone, answering machine and garage door opener.

After an Outage

- Be extra cautious if you go outside to inspect for damage after a storm. Downed or hanging electrical wires can be hidden by snowdrifts, trees or debris, and could be live.
- Do not touch anything power lines are touching, such as tree branches or fences. Always assume a downed line is a live line. Call your utility company to report any outage-related problem.
- If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.
- Check with/help neighbors.

Source: Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)



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