

Preparedness Alert

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Be prepared for electrical outages

Events ranging from summer and winter storms to squirrels getting into electrical boxes can cause electrical outages. Because of the high probability of an electrical outage, and the problems associated with one, it is particularly important to prepare for this hazard.

Before an outage

- Check flashlights and battery-powered portable radios to ensure that they are working, and you have extra batteries.
- 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 hot or cold air out.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside to provide insulation.
- 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.
- If you know an outage is coming, 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 your electric garage door.

During an outage

In winter

- Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing, rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.

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- 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.
- 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 summer

- Move to the lowest level of your home, as cool air falls. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty. If the heat is intense and the power may be off for a long time, consider going someplace cool, like a movie theater, shopping mall or a “cooling shelter” that may be opened in your community.
- Never burn charcoal indoors for cooking. Charcoal releases carbon monoxide, which can cause illness or death.
- Have a battery-operated radio or television to listen to local new stations for current information on power restoration efforts.
- If possible, use only battery-powered light sources for emergency lighting instead of candles. Matches, lighters and candles are fire hazards.

After an outage

- 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, microwave oven, computer, cordless telephone, answering machine and garage door opener.
- 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. Never attempt to touch or moved downed lines.
- Check with/help neighbors.
- Continue to stay off streets.
- 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 you have medical needs

- Keep an easy-to-find, updated list of any medications you take. Make sure to keep track of which of these medications need refrigeration, and have a plan to keep them cool without electricity.

General preparedness

- Have a disaster supply kit ready in case of any emergency, including a power outage.
- Make sure your disaster supply kit contains food items that are non-perishable and that do not need to be cooked.
- Make sure you have appropriate clothing, including shoes, for the weather and physical environment where you are located.
- Don't forget to pack extra batteries in your disaster supply kit for items such as radios and flashlights.
- Make sure you have some cash on hand. ATM machines and credit cards will not work without electricity.





Water safety

- Make sure your power company knows that you have medical needs requiring electricity. Power companies maintain priority restoration lists for those customers with medical needs.
- If you are diabetic, make sure that you have a supply of snacks handy to maintain your blood sugar.
- Make sure to have a backup power option if you use a breathing apparatus that requires electricity. Many of these systems have battery backup options available.

For more information

- General preparedness information – www.readycolorado.com
- Tufts University power outage information - <http://emergency.tufts.edu/weather/winter-power-outage-tips/>
- Ohio summer power outage information - <http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov/SpringSummerPowerOutages.aspx>
- CDC power outage information - <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/needtoknow.asp#be>

- A power outage can affect water purification and pumping systems. Make sure you have a water backup plan.
- A good rule of thumb is to have one gallon per person per day of clean drinking water on hand – at least enough to last for three days.
- If you know that a power outage is a possibility beforehand, fill your bathtub with water to use for cleaning and other non-drinking purposes.
- To purify water, add 1/8 teaspoon unscented household bleach to one gallon of clear water, or ¼ teaspoon to one gallon of cloudy water. Let the water stand for 30 minutes before drinking.