



The Power in Being Prepared

Each year, our nation sets aside September as National Preparedness Month. It's a time to focus on what emergencies could happen and how we can be prepared so as to reduce the impact to our lives. Being a rural electric utility, we know the importance of electrical power and how to use it safely. Yet, what should we do when we don't have this power and what safety concerns could arise? Check out this information from www.ready.gov.

BEFORE A POWER OUTAGE

To prepare for a power outage you should do the following:

- Follow energy conservation measures to keep the use of electricity as low as possible.
- Fill plastic containers with water and place them in the refrigerator and freezer if there's room. Leave about an inch of space inside each one, because water expands as it freezes. This chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold during a temporary power outage, by displacing air that can warm up quickly with water or ice that keeps cold for several hours without additional refrigeration.
- Be aware that most medication that requires refrigeration can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours without a problem. If unsure, check with your physician or pharmacist.
- Keep your car tank at least half full because gas stations rely on electricity to power their pumps.
- Know where the manual release lever of your electric garage door opener is located and how to operate it. Garage doors can be heavy, so know you may need help to lift it.
- Keep a key to your house with you if you regularly use the garage as the primary means of entering your home, in case the garage door will not open.

DURING A POWER OUTAGE

- Use only flashlights for emergency lighting. NEVER use candles during a power outage due to extreme risk of fire.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to keep your food as fresh as possible.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment (like air conditioners) or electronics in use when the power went out. Power may return with momentary "surges" or "spikes" that can damage computers as well as motors in appliances like the air conditioner, refrigerator, washer or furnace.
- Make sure you know how to operate a generator SAFELY.
 - Do not run a generator inside a home or garage.
 - Do not connect a generator to a home's electrical system.
- Leave on one light so that you'll know when your power returns.
- Do not call 9-1-1 for information—call only to report a life-threatening emergency. Use the phone for life-threatening emergencies only.
- Take steps to remain cool if it is hot outside. In intense heat when the power may be off for a long time, consider going to a movie theater, shopping mall or "cooling shelter" that may be open in your community. If you remain at home, move to the lowest level of your home, since cool air falls. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Put on layers of warm clothing if it is cold outside. Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors. Never use your oven as a source of heat. If the power may be out for a prolonged period, plan to go to another location (the home of a relative or friend, or a public facility).
- Provide plenty of fresh, cool water for your pets.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals will stop working during an outage, creating traffic congestion.
- Remember that equipment such as automated teller machines (ATMs) and elevators may not work during a power outage.