

How to Prepare for and Respond to Power Outages

Storms can happen at any time, in any season. There are several things you can do before, during and after a storm to minimize inconvenience and ensure your safety.

Before the storm

- Place your local utility company's power outage number on or near the phone.
- Place working flashlights throughout the house and be sure all family members know where they are.
- Have a battery-operated radio on hand for storm information.
- Have extra flashlight and radio batteries ready.
- Keep extra drinking water, a manual can opener and a supply of canned and dried foods on hand in case an outage lasts more than a few days.
- If you depend on electrically operated life support equipment, call your local utility company for information about planning for an emergency.

During the storm

- If your power does go out, first check to see if your neighbors have power or if you have power in other parts of your home. (You may have simply blown a fuse or tripped a breaker).
- If your neighborhood is without power, call your utility company to make sure they know about the outage or for updates on when service is expected to be restored.
- Turn off and unplug appliances that were on before the outage; unplug sensitive appliances such as VCR's, TV's, computers, stereos and microwaves.
- Leave a light switch on to alert you when the power is back on.
- Never burn charcoal indoors or use a gas range for heating. Both could give off toxic fumes.
- If it appears your house may be without heat for an extended period and the outside temperature is below freezing, drain your water pipes.
- Never touch any fallen lines or anything touching fallen wires. Report all fallen wires to your utility company.

After the Storm

- If service has been restored to your neighborhood and your home is still without power, call your utility company.
- If your home has flooded, check with an electrician before turning anything on.
- Gradually reconnect your appliances to avoid overloading circuits when power is restored.
- Replenish any supplies used during the storm.

Operating standby generators safely

If you have or are planning to have a standby generator in case of an outage, please observe the following safety guidelines:

- Have a licensed or qualified electrician install your generator.
- Make sure the generator has enough capacity to meet your needs.

- When operating the generator, the main circuit breaker must be in the “OFF” position.
- Generators should only be operated outdoors to ensure proper ventilation of carbon monoxide exhaust.
- Never operate a generator indoors regardless of the ventilation.

Understanding power outages and disturbances

Lightening, broken tree limbs, vehicles striking utility poles, equipment failure, and even small animals climbing on utility equipment can cause power outages. Split-second decreases or increases in voltage to our system cause power disturbances. A dip in voltage may cause lights to flicker, TV pictures to shrink, digital clocks to flash, and personal computers to lose data. Increases in voltage (called “spikes” for momentary increases and “surges” for longer ones) may affect sensitive programmable equipment such as VCR’s, microwave ovens and computers.

Protecting against momentary interruptions

Here are some tips to help minimize the consequences of momentary power interruptions.

- When purchasing a programmable appliance, make sure it has a battery-operated backup system that prevents power disruption.
- When working with a home computer, store information into permanent memory periodically throughout the day.

Protecting against power surges

- Small plug-in surge protectors can be bought at most electrical equipment suppliers and will provide protection from voltage spikes.
- Plug sensitive equipment into outlets as far away as possible from main breaker panels or fuse boxes. Such equipment should not be plugged into the same circuit as major appliances such as air conditioners, pumps, refrigerators or washing machines.
- Unplug sensitive equipment such as video recorders, satellite dishes and computers whenever there is the threat of a severe electrical storm. Also unplug phone lines to sensitive equipment or purchase phone line surge protectors.

Source: nationalgrid.com