



How to Make a Power Outage Bearable

Power outages are more than just sitting in the dark. The refrigerator stops running and everything starts to defrost. If you live in the tropical climate, the air conditioning is the first to shut off and so are the ceiling fans. Out come the flashlights, and portable fans, and you just sit quietly, waiting for the power to return. Most power outages, caused by accidents that compromise power lines, are usually repaired in a day or two. In the case of winter storms, power outages can last for weeks.

Steps

- 1 Consider the type of emergencies your particular home is most likely to face.** A blizzard-prone area will be different from one in a tropical area that commonly faces hurricanes. Urban areas face different challenges than rural areas.
- 2 Cook perishable foods.** If the temperature rises, take anything out of the refrigerator that might spoil and prepare to cook it or consume it before it warms up. Eat perishables before spoilage can occur.
- 3 Have stable foods that don't require refrigeration.** Those that do not require cooking are even better.
 - Canned meats, fish, soups, vegetables, and juices will work, and can be kept for months at a time. Crackers, cookies and snacks for the kiddies are a necessity. Eat these items after the perishables are eaten or are unsafe to eat.
 - To make perishables last longer, avoid opening the fridge unless absolutely necessary. The air in the fridge will remain cold for a limited amount of time, even after the power goes out. But the more you expose it to room temperature, the faster it will warm up and the faster your food will spoil. You can also minimize heat gain by packing everything in the fridge tightly together.
- 4 Have a back-up method of heating food and water.** A camping stove is ideal (and be sure to know how to use it safely — see warnings). A barbecue grill will work quite well, but do not bring it into the house. (You don't want carbon monoxide poisoning.) A gas stove can often work if you have matches for ignition. Remember to have plenty of fuel on hand for your camp stove or barbecue in case your adventure lasts several days.
 - Water is actually more important than food, and if your water supply is pump-driven, it may give out in a power failure. Put aside many gallons or liters of drinking water. Fill your bathtub or pails with water for flushing the toilet, washing, and so on.
 - Read the article titled [How to Get Emergency Drinking Water from a Water Heater](#).
- 5 Have a back-up method for heating or cooling your home during a blackout, depending on your climate's needs.** Do you need to stock up on wood for the wood stove? You should consider buying portable fans, and cold water rinses to stay cool. If your home runs on natural gas or propane, install a gas fired fireplace that has its own thermopile electronic ignition. Should you get a gas-powered generator?
- 6 Prepare by equipping your house with automatic power failure safety lighting so that it does not go dark when the power goes out.** Many of the commercial style emergency lights look pretty bad on the wall of your kitchen or living room, and they typically only last 90 minutes - day or night.
 - Try to find power failure safety lights that sense darkness before going on. Otherwise the batteries will be dead before darkness comes.
 - New power failure safety lights just hitting the market deliver light for long periods of time because of the improvements in LED brightness and battery life.
 - Look for power failure safety lights on the web and find ones that you can install in any room of your home

without being an eyesore. Start with the kitchen and bathrooms - the two most used rooms of the house.

7 Power outages can mean 'get out of the house' during the day if it is safe to do so. Go to the mall, or take in a movie. Have a few good meals at a nearby diner or at a fast food restaurant.

- Unless you are snowbound, or ill, there is no reason to stay indoors and be uncomfortable. There's plenty of time for that when it gets too late to stay out.

8 If you can afford it, get a powerful Portable Power Outlet like ATOM or a Portable Power Generator. A few basic necessities can be plugged into these. Think lights, fans, laptops, cell-phones and radios. Don't expect to power your whole home off of one of these. Some portable power generators can even power your refrigerator.

9 Remember that there will be no TV, no light, and games that need reading will not be able to be played.

Turn on your flashlight only when you need to move about. You can make up your own games, sing songs, or practice the ancient art of talking with one another. Be playful if possible.

- Read a book to pass the time. Remember, this can only be done during the daylight hours. At night, the best thing is to go to sleep. Time passes faster when you sleep, especially when there is nothing else to do but wait.

10 Keep a battery powered camping "lantern" available. These will light a room better than a flashlight. Also, keep a "manual" can opener handy to open animal food cans as well as other preserves.

11 Keep a battery powered radio available to monitor local news and emergency developments. Cell phones will also lose their charge quickly, so having a battery powered cell phone charger is also a good idea.

Community Q&A

How do I sleep when the power is out?

wikiHow Contributor

If it's winter, get together as many blankets and sheets as possible. It's going to get really cold in your house. Then, simply ration them out to every member of your household. Stay aware of the temperature; if it gets too cold, you may have to huddle together. At other times of the year, this isn't such a problem. Use as many blankets and coverings as necessary and follow your usual routine. If it's hot, open the windows. If it's VERY hot, go to a friend or family member's house or a shelter.

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Tips

- *Don't* keep phoning the power company to find out how long you will remain without power. Once is really enough. The power company is most likely full of dedicated, trained individuals who know that your power is off, and are trying to fix the problem. Nagging them isn't somehow going to make the power go on any quicker, and can tie up phone lines in a true emergency.
- At the first notice of a loss of power, phone the power company to inform them. At times, you might be the first one to notice when others are at work, and if you do not alert them early, they will not start fixing whatever the cause might be.
- If your computer is connected to an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) / UPC battery backup, save everything, and shutdown your computer as soon as you can.
- Buy a few books for boredom. It'll kill some time and keep you entertained without needing electricity.
- Put luminescent stickers on flashlights. Have flashlights out where the stickers can "charge" when lights are on: bookshelf, next to the TV, the bed, and so on. When the power goes off, your flashlight's location will be obvious.
- Purchase and use "Self Powered Radios" and "Self Powered Flashlights" and glow sticks. Find these at the local supermarket (for the self powered lights and the glow sticks), and at the local home improvement store (for the self powered radios). These do not use batteries at all, and are safer to use than candles, and you'll be informed about what caused the failure, like some idiot who hit a pole, or an animal got into a transformer, shorting it out, or when power will be restored.
- When the power does fail and the lights go out leaving you in pitch black darkness, do not jump up immediately to find

your flash lights. Take a minute or two to let your eyes adjust to the darkness before moving. You'll be surprised how much better you can see and you won't be as likely to hurt yourself by walking into a table, wall, door, etc.

- Keep some board games like chess, checkers, or puzzles in the house...handy and keeps you and kids busy when no video or TV is available. Think of the ways in which people amused themselves before the invention of electricity.
- Remember that portable phones don't work during a blackout. Make sure you have at least one wired phone in the house. A cell phone will usually work, but keep a car charger handy in case your battery runs low.
- If you live in an area that has this problem chronically, it is a good idea to get a wind powered generator and solar panels, and a generator that uses "ecologic" fuel, such as "Bio-Diesel", a lot of 12v Deep Cycle batteries, power inverting devices, and make sure all of this is installed in a manner to AVOID killing line crews, and that you will have "Auxiliary Power" notification on your electrical service.

Warnings

- This guide refers to regular, few day long power outages only. This does not refer to hurricanes or tornadoes, or other storms that also cause power outages and tear down and destroy power lines. The preparation is more intense when power goes down because of storms and breakages. If this is the case, it may be time to evacuate the home.
- Exercise extreme caution when using a generator and ensure all extension cords are properly sized and UL listed. Generators can and do electrocute people.
- Candles, if used improperly, can cause fire. More than 140 people die each year from candle related home fires according to the National Fire Protection agency. Nearly one-third from using candles for lighting. **Candles are not recommended as light sources during power failures.** Flashlights are far safer.
- Barbecue grills and camp stoves can kill you from fires and carbon monoxide emissions. Use with extreme caution and never bring gas fired equipment into your house or garage.
- Gasoline powered generators kill people when used indoors or in attached garages that allow the fumes to flow into the home. Carbon monoxide is odorless and your carbon dioxide detectors will probably not work without electricity. **Never use a generator in your home, garage, or other closed environment!**

Things You'll Need

- Non-perishable food items
- Flashlights
- A gas stove, barbecue grill, or camping stove
- Ignition for the stove, such as matches or a lighter

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Did you try these steps?
Upload a picture for other readers to see.