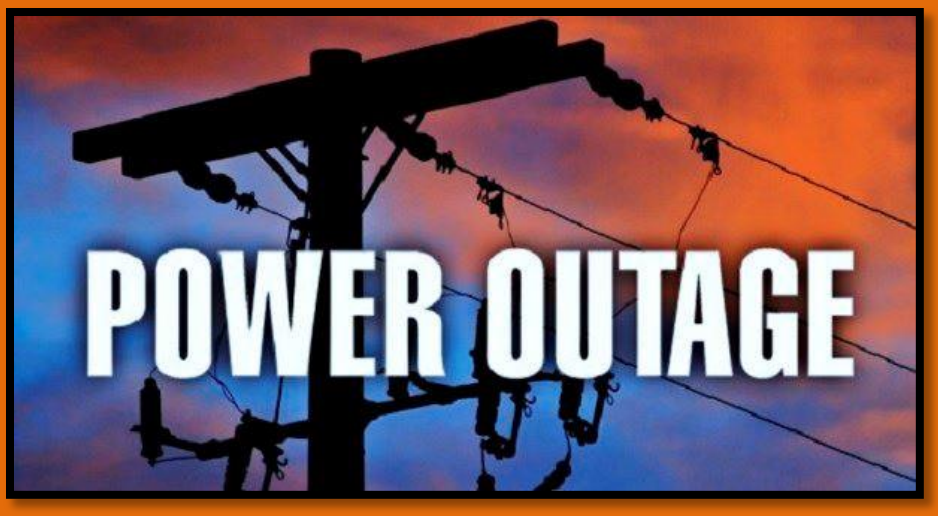
HOW TO BE PREPARED AT HOME

Power Outage



Before a Power Outage

- You can install a non-electric standby stove or heater. Choose heating units that are not dependent on an electric motor, electric fan, or some other electric device to function. It is important to adequately vent the stove or heater with the type of chimney flue specified for it. Never connect two heating units to the same chimney flue at the same time.
- If you have a wood-burning fireplace, have the chimney cleaned every fall in preparation for use and to eliminate creosote build-up which could ignite and cause a chimney fire.
- If the standby heating unit will use the normal house oil or gas supply, have it connected with shut-off valves by a certified tradesperson.
- Before considering the use of an emergency generator during a power outage, check with furnace, appliance and lighting fixture dealers or manufacturers regarding power requirements and proper operating procedures.

People with disabilities or others requiring assistance

Consider how you may be affected in a power outage, including:

- Your evacuation route - without elevator service (if applicable).
- Planning for a backup power supply for essential medical equipment.
- Keeping a flashlight and a cell phone handy to signal for help.
- Establishing a self-help network to assist and check on you during an emergency.
- Enrolling in a medical alert program that will signal for help if you are immobilized.
- Keeping a list of facilities that provide life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
- Keeping a list of medical conditions and treatment.
- If you live in an apartment, advise the property management that you may need assistance staying in your apartment or that you must be evacuated if there is a power outage. This will allow the property manager to plan and make the necessary arrangements on your behalf.

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During a Power Outage

- First, check whether the power outage is limited to your home. If your neighbours' power is still on, check your own circuit breaker panel or fuse box. If the problem is not a breaker or a fuse, check the service wires leading to the house. If they are obviously damaged or on the ground, stay at least 10 meters back and notify your electric supply authority. Keep the number along with other emergency numbers near your telephone.
- If your neighbours' power is also out, notify your electric supply authority.
- Turn off all tools, appliances and electronic equipment, and turn the thermostat(s) for the home heating system down to minimum to prevent damage from a power surge when power is restored. Also, power can be restored more easily when there is not a heavy load on the electrical system.
- Turn off all lights, except one inside and one outside, so that both you and hydro crews outside know that power has been restored.
- Don't open your freezer or fridge unless it is absolutely necessary. A full freezer will keep food frozen for 24 to 36 hours if the door remains closed.
- Never use charcoal or gas barbecues, camping heating equipment, or home generators indoors or in garages. They give off carbon monoxide. Because you can't smell or see it, carbon monoxide can cause health problems and is life-threatening.
- Use proper candle holders. Never leave lit candles unattended and keep out of reach of children. Always extinguish candles before going to bed.
- Listen to your battery-powered or wind-up radio for information on the outage and advice from authorities.
- Make sure your home has a working carbon monoxide detector. If it is hard-wired to the house's electrical supply, ensure it has a battery-powered back-up.

Use of home generators

Home generators are handy for backup electricity in case of an outage, but must only be used in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. A back-up generator may only be connected to your home's electrical system through an approved transfer panel and switch that has been installed by a qualified electrician. Never plug a generator into a wall outlet as serious injury can result when the current produced by the home generator is fed back into the electrical lines, and transformed to a higher voltage. This can endanger the lives of utility employees working to restore the power.

To operate a generator safely:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Ensure that the generator operates outdoors in well-ventilated conditions, well away from doors or windows, and never in your garage, to prevent exhaust gases from entering the house.
- Connect lights and appliances directly to the generator. If extension cords must be used, ensure they are properly rated, CSA-approved cords.

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If you have to evacuate

Evacuation is more likely during winter months, when plummeting temperatures can make a house inhabitable. If the house must be evacuated, protect it by taking the following precautions:

- Turn off the main breaker or switch of the circuit-breaker panel or power-supply box.
- Turn off the water main where it enters the house. Protect the valve, inlet pipe, and meter or pump with blankets or insulation material.
- Drain the water from your plumbing system. Starting at the top of the house, open all taps, and flush toilets several times. Go to the basement and open the drain valve. Drain your hot water tank by attaching a hose to the tank drain valve and running it to the basement floor drain.
- Note: If you drain a gas-fired water tank, the pilot light should be turned out - call the local gas supplier to re-light it.
- Unhook washing machine hoses and drain.
- Do not worry about small amounts of water trapped in horizontal pipes. Add a small amount of glycol or antifreeze to water left in the toilet bowl, and the sink and bathtub traps.
- If your house is protected from groundwater by a sump pump, clear valuables from the basement floor in case of flooding.

After a Power Outage

- Do not enter a flooded basement unless you are sure the power is disconnected.
- Do not use flooded appliances, electrical outlets, switch boxes or fuse-breaker panels until they have been checked and cleaned by a qualified electrician.
- Replace the furnace flue (if removed) and turn off the fuel to the standby heating unit.
- Switch on the main electric switch (before, check to ensure appliances, electric heaters, TVs, microwaves computers, etc. were unplugged to prevent damage from a power surge).
- Give the electrical system a chance to stabilize before reconnecting tools and appliances. Turn the heating-system thermostats up first, followed in a couple of minutes by reconnection of the fridge and freezer. Wait 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting all other tools and appliances.
- Close the drain valve in the basement.
- Turn on the water supply. Close lowest valves/taps first and allow air to escape from upper taps.
- Make sure that the hot water heater is filled before turning on the power to it.
- Check food supplies in refrigerators, freezers and cupboards for signs of spoilage. If a freezer door has been kept closed, food should stay frozen 24 to 36 hours, depending on the temperature. When food begins to defrost (usually after two days), it should be cooked; otherwise it should be thrown out.
- As a general precaution, keep a bag of ice cubes in the freezer. If you return home after a period of absence and the ice has melted and refrozen, there is a good chance that the food is spoiled. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Reset your clocks, automatic timers, and alarms.
- Restock your emergency kit so the supplies will be there when needed again.