

# Power Outage Safety Tips

## Terms to Know

- **Blackout:** Equipment failure which occurs when the supply of power is cut. Causes include excessive demand on the power grid, lightning storms, ice on power lines, equipment failure and any accident which brings down a power line.
- **Rolling Blackout:** Occurs when electrical power is turned off to selected areas to save power. Blackouts usually occur during peak energy usage times, between 4:00 and 7:00 pm, but they can happen any time. Blackouts may affect the same area more than once a day and they may exceed an hour's duration.

## Be Prepared

- If you use medication that requires refrigeration, most can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours without a problem - check with your physician or pharmacist.
- If you have space in your refrigerator or freezer, consider filling plastic containers with water, leaving an inch of space inside each one –this will help keep food cold if the power goes out.
- Plan to have an alternative cooking source, such as a camp stove or outdoor grill. Follow appropriate safety rules for its use outside the residence.
- Consider buying a generator and follow the rules for using it outside the residence. Before installing a generator, be sure to properly disconnect from your utility electrical service. If possible, have your generator installed by a qualified electrician.
- Have extra blankets, coats, hats, and gloves on hand to keep warm.
- If you have a computer, back up files and operating systems regularly. Turn off all computers, monitors, and other devices when they are not being used.
- If you have an electric garage door opener, locate the manual release level, and learn how to operate.
- If you have a telephone instrument or system that requires electricity to work, plan for alternate communication such as a standard telephone handset, cellular telephone, or radio.

## Act (During an Outage)

- Turn off major appliances to prevent damage from a possible surge when the power comes back on—keep one light turned on so you know when power returns.
- Call your utility provider to notify them of the outage.
- If you go outside, avoid all downed power lines and report them to your utility provider for repair. Assume all downed power lines have live electricity.
- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Use only flashlights for emergency lighting—candles pose the risk of fire.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors shut to keep food from spoiling. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Do not use a charcoal grill or generator indoors and do not use a gas stove for heat—they could give off harmful levels of carbon monoxide.

- In cold weather, stay warm by dressing in layers and minimizing time spent outdoors. Be aware of cold stress symptoms (i.e., hypothermia) and seek proper medical attention if symptoms appear.
- In hot weather, take steps to remain cool. Move to the lowest level of the house. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Drink plenty of water.
- If you are in a tall building, take the stairs and move to the lowest level of the building.
- If trapped in an elevator, wait for assistance. Do not attempt to force the doors open. Remain patient - there is plenty of air and the interior of the elevator is designed for passenger safety.
- Remember to provide fresh, cool water for your pets.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals will stop working during an outage, creating traffic congestion and dangerous driving conditions. If you must drive during a blackout, remember to obey the 4-way stop rule at intersections with non-functioning traffic signals.
- Remember that equipment such as automated teller machines (ATMs) and elevators may not be working.

<https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/power-outage-safety-tips>