

Power Outage Safety Tips

Power outages are short- or long-term loss of electric power.

What Is a Power Outage?

Wet snow, freezing rain, high winds, **hurricanes**, **tornadoes**, **thunderstorms**, **winter storms**, and **earthquake** can cause a power outage. A power outage can sometimes last for days or weeks, depending on the damage caused by a disaster.

Prepare?

As a community, we depend on electricity for heating and air conditioning as well as food, drinking water, medical care, communication, and other needs. Power outages can be dangerous during **extreme cold** temperatures or **extreme heat**. Power outages can also be dangerous for those who rely on electricity for medical devices. Preparing for power outages can help minimize the impact and keep you and your family safe.

What to do Before a Power Outage

- **Be informed** by receiving alerts, warnings, and public safety information before, during, and after emergencies. Download the **Massachusetts Alerts app**.
 - Enroll in your community's local notification system to receive calls, texts, or emails on your cellphone. Contact your local public safety officials to enroll.
 - Sign up for text or email alerts from your utility providers for outage updates.
- Create and review your **family emergency plan**.

- Assemble an **emergency kit**. Make sure you have alternate charging methods (such as auto, solar, or crank chargers) for cellphones and other devices that require power.
- **Prepare your home:**
 - Ensure that your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working and have fresh batteries.
 - Consider purchasing a generator to provide power during an outage. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and learn how to use it safely before an outage.
 - Ensure that you have sufficient heating fuel. Consider safe backup heating options such as fireplaces or woodstoves.
 - Know how to operate the manual release lever for your electric garage door opener.
 - Have a landline phone with a corded receiver.
- If you have life-support devices, such as home dialysis or breathing machines, or other medical equipment or supplies, that depend on electricity:
 - Talk to your health care provider about how to use them during a power outage;
 - Contact your local electric company and equipment suppliers about your power needs. Some utility companies will put you on a "priority reconnection service" list;
 - Let the fire department know that you are dependent on life-support devices; and
 - If you have medication that requires refrigeration, check with your pharmacist for guidance on proper storage during an extended outage.

If an impending storm is expected to cause power outages, consider these additional tips to prepare:

- Fully charge your cellphone, laptop, and other electronic devices.
- If you have a water supply (such as a well-water pump system) that could be affected by a power outage, fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. The water in the bathtub should be used for

sanitation purposes only. You can pour a bucket of this water directly into the toilet bowl to flush it.

- Keep your car's gas tank full. Pumps at gas stations may not work during a power outage.
- Set your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings to keep food cold (but remember to reset them back to normal once power is restored).

What to do During a Power Outage

- Continue to monitor the media for emergency information.
- Follow instructions from public safety officials.
- Call 9-1-1 to report emergencies including:
 - Downed power lines; or
 - If you are dependent on equipment that requires electricity and need medical assistance.
- **Call 2-1-1** to obtain shelter locations and other disaster information.
- Check current power outages in Massachusetts: **Power Outage Map**.
- Call your utility company to report power outages and get restoration information. Do not call 9-1-1 to report an outage or to ask about power restoration.
 - **National Grid** 1-800-465-1212
 - **Eversource (formerly NSTAR)** 1-800-592-2000
 - **Eversource (formerly WMECO)** 877-659-6326
 - **Unitil (FG&E)** 888-301-7700
 - Customers served by a municipal utility should locate their utility providers' phone numbers.
- Stay away from downed utility wires. Always assume a downed power line is live.
- If a traffic light is out, treat the intersection as a four-way stop.
- Take recommended safety precautions when using space heaters, a fireplace, or a woodstove to heat your home. Keep a fire extinguisher handy.

- Use generators and grills outside because their fumes contain carbon monoxide. Make sure your carbon monoxide detectors are working as it is a silent, odorless, killer. See more **Generator Safety Tips**.
- If possible, use flashlights instead of candles. If you must use candles, place them in safe holders away from anything that could catch fire. Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- During hot weather, use ice to help keep food cold. During cold weather, keep food cold outside in a secure location safe from animals.
- If phone lines are down, use social media or texting to let others know you are okay.
- Unplug sensitive electronics to avoid power surges when power is restored.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours.
- Be a good neighbor. Check on family, friends, and neighbors, especially the elderly, those who live alone, those with medical conditions, and those who may need additional assistance.

What to do After a Power Outage

- Never attempt to touch or move wires and keep children and pets away from downed lines. Downed or hanging electrical wires can be hidden by trees or debris, and could be live.
- Throw away any refrigerated food that was exposed to temperatures above 40 °F for more than two hours or has an unusual odor, color, or texture. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Contact your doctor if you're concerned that medications have spoiled.