



Winter Power Outage Tips

Heat Your Home Safely

If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and remember these safety tips:

- Store a multipurpose, dry chemical fire extinguisher near the area to be heated.
- Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
- Ensure adequate ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater. Carbon Monoxide from any heater with an open flame can be deadly.
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use -- don't substitute.
- Use fireplaces, wood stoves, and other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside and do not leak flue gas into the indoor air space.
- Do not place a space heater near things that may catch on fire, such as drapes, furniture, or bedding.

Light and Cook Safely

If there is a power failure:

- Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns rather than candles, if possible.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors -- the fumes are deadly.
- If you must use a small, portable gas camp stove indoors, be sure to:
 - use adequate ventilation; and
 - cook several feet away from drapes, furniture, or other things that can catch on fire.

Conserve Heat

You may need fresh air coming in for your heater or for emergency cooking arrangements. But if you don't need extra ventilation, keep as much heat as possible inside your home. Avoid unnecessary opening of doors or windows. Close off unneeded rooms, stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors, and close draperies or cover windows with blankets at night.

Monitor Temperature

Infants less than one year old should never sleep in a cold room because (1) infants lose body heat more easily than adults; and (2) unlike adults, infants can't make enough body heat by shivering. Provide warm clothing and a blanket for infants and try to maintain a warm indoor temperature. If the temperature cannot be maintained, make temporary arrangements to stay elsewhere. In an emergency, you can keep an infant warm using your own body heat. If you must sleep, take precautions to prevent rolling on the baby. Pillows and other soft bedding can also present a risk of smothering; remove them from the area near the baby.

Older adults often make less body heat because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity. If you are more than 65 years of age, check the temperature in your home often during severely cold weather. Also, check on elderly friends and neighbors frequently to ensure that their homes are adequately heated.

Preventing Hypothermia

- The best way to prevent hypothermia is to stay warm. Room temperatures below 70 degrees could be dangerous. Following are ideas to keep warm:
- If room temperatures are cool, dress in layers of loose fitting clothes. Wool clothing is effective. Down and quilted clothing also provide good protection.
- Keep clothes dry and change long underwear or socks if they become damp or wet.
- Wear a windproof outer layer if you go outdoors.
- Wear a hat or cap if your body begins to cool. This will cause your body to send more warm blood to the hands and feet.
- When you sleep, use a hot water bottle, or electric blanket. Avoid electric heating pads; people have been burned from sleeping with them.
- Good nutrition is very important. Food provides the fuel your body needs to keep warm. Hot nourishing meals and warm drinks add heat to your body.

Keep a Water Supply

Extreme cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes rupture. When very cold temperatures are expected:

- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- Keep the indoor temperature warm.
- Improve the circulation of heated air near pipes. For example, open kitchen cabinet doors beneath the kitchen sink.

If your pipes do freeze, do not thaw them with a torch. Instead, thaw them slowly by directing the warm air from an electric hair dryer onto the pipes.

If you cannot thaw your pipes, or the pipes are ruptured, use bottled water or get water from a neighbor's home. As an emergency measure -- if no other water is available -- snow can be melted for water. Bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will kill most microorganisms or parasites that may be present, but won't remove chemical pollutants sometimes found in snow.

Eat and Drink Wisely

Eating well-balanced meals will help you stay warmer. Do not drink alcoholic beverages -- they cause your body to lose heat more rapidly. Instead, drink warm, sweet beverages such as hot chocolate or sweetened coffee or tea to help maintain your body temperature. If you have any dietary restrictions, ask your doctor.

Food Safety

For information on food safety in a power outage, please see our fact sheet, "Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency."

Emergency supplies list:

- an alternate way to heat your home during a power failure:
 - dry firewood for a fireplace or wood stove, or
 - kerosene for a kerosene heater
- furnace fuel (coal, propane, or oil)
- electric space heater
- blankets
- matches
- multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher
- first aid kit and instruction manual
- flashlight or battery-powered lantern
- battery-powered radio
- battery-powered clock or watch
- extra batteries
- non-electric can opener
- snow shovel
- rock salt
- special needs items (diapers, hearing aid batteries, etc.)

Winter Survival Kit For Your Home

Keep several days' supply of these items:

- **Food** that needs no cooking or refrigeration, such as bread, crackers, cereal, canned foods, and dried fruits. Remember baby food and formula if you have young children.
- **Water** stored in clean containers or purchased, bottled water -- in case your water pipes freeze and rupture -- 5 gallons per person.
- **Medicines** that any family member may need.

If your area is prone to long periods of cold temperatures, or if your home is isolated, stock additional amounts of food, water, and medicine.