

Safety Sense



In the Dark

We have all lived through a power outage (or 2, or 3, or...) at some point in our life. The outages usually result from severe weather that was expected, so we can be somewhat prepared if we lose power. When the lights go out, we'll run to grab flashlights, batteries, and power chargers for our devices, then check the local power company app for any insight into a timeline for the power to be restored. Our hope is always that the outage will be short-lived, but there are those occasions when a power outage lasts 24 hours or, heaven forbid, a few days. Regardless of how long the power outage, if you have created an outage response plan for your home and/or business – which you should have – you'll be ready to deal with the challenges that lay ahead.

Whether you're prepared in advance or not, these safety tips from FEMA can help protect you and your loved ones during a power outage:

- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours. A full freezer will stay a safe temperature for about 48 hours. Do not store food outside during cold weather.
- Set up and use generators outside and at least 20 feet away from building openings like windows, doors and garages. This helps you avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Stay fire safe and never use a gas stovetop, oven, grill or dryer to heat your home, and always use fireplaces, portable heaters and wood-burning stoves safely.
- Don't leave a vehicle running inside a garage, even if the garage door is open. If you use your vehicle as a source of power or warmth, make sure to run it in a well-ventilated place outside.
- If it's hot out and air conditioning is not available, take cool showers or baths. Also reach out to the health department to ask where air-conditioned shelters are located or spend some time at a shopping mall or public library – even for just a few hours.
- Make sure you have a plan for refrigerating medicines and powering medical devices. If the power is out for a day or more, throw away medications that require refrigeration unless the label instructs otherwise.
- Have flashlights, lanterns and other battery-powered lights handy. Try not to use candles, but, if you do, don't let them burn down and remember to blow them out before going to bed.
- Unplug appliances, equipment and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.
- Have your mobile phones and electronic equipment charged if you have any indication in advance that a storm is headed your way, so you'll be prepared before a power outage hits.
- Pay attention to water advisories. Boil water or use bottled water, if needed.

Make sure you develop (and practice) an outage response plan for your home and work and follow these tips so you're not stuck sitting in the dark during your next power outage.

