



Power outages can occur from a variety of situations (e.g., natural disasters) and can last for prolonged periods of time. This can present unique challenges in the home for ensuring your families safety. Taking preparedness actions now can help keep your family safe and healthy.

Before a Power Outage

- **Prepare an emergency supply kit.**
 - Food, water and necessities for all members of the family to last 3 to 5 days
 - Non-perishable food or food that doesn't require refrigeration
 - Water: One gallon per person per day
 - Any medications needed for family members
 - First aid kit, battery powered radio, flashlight with extra batteries
 - Avoid using candles as they can be a fire hazard.
 - Sleeping bags or blankets, and extra clothing
 - Emergency contact numbers
 - Food thermometer
- **Family communication and evacuation plan.**
 - Know how you will contact each other if you are in separate locations or establish a location to meet.
 - Have an out-of-state relative or friend serve as the family contact person.
- **Protect electrical equipment.**
 - Install surge protectors and/or battery back-up systems for sensitive electronic equipment (e.g., computers).

During a Power Outage

- **Stay informed.**
 - Listen to your battery powered radio for situation developments.
- **Decide whether to stay or go.**
 - Depending on the amount of time you will be without power, it may be best to remain at home (e.g., temporary outage) or evacuate (e.g., power outage in winter with loss of home heat).
 - If driving to another location, proceed with caution and be alert to traffic lights that are not working.
- **Backup power.**
 - Use standby or backup power sources for emergency power. Only use generators in well-ventilated areas. Generators are a major cause of fatal carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Use battery-operated light sources (flashlights or glow sticks). Do not use candles due to the risk of fire.
 - Never use gas ovens, gas ranges, barbecues or propane heaters for indoor heating.

- **Protect electrical equipment.**
 - Surges or spikes can occur when the power returns; this can damage electrical equipment. Turn off and unplug any electrical equipment (e.g., electronics and appliances).
- **Turn off as many lights and other electrical items as possible.**
 - This helps to eliminate potential fire hazards and lessens the power draw when service is restored.
 - Keep one light turned on so you will know when the power is back on.
- **Keep your food supply safe.**
 - Keep your refrigerator and freezer closed as much as possible throughout the power outage.
 - If your freezer is completely full, the food inside it should be safe for up to 48 hours. If it is half-full, the food inside should be safe for up to 24 hours.
 - If you have been without power for over 48 hours, do not eat any of the food in your freezer.
 - NEVER taste a food to determine its safety!
 - Check the temperature of any and all food before you cook or eat it.
 - Throw away any food that has a temperature higher than 40°F or has been out for more than two hours.
 - If the food in your freezer still contains ice crystals or is 40°F or below, then the food is safe to cook and eat, or refreeze.
 - When in doubt, throw it out!

Water Safety

- **Water purification systems may not be fully functioning during power outages.**
 - Check with local authorities to be sure your water is safe to drink.
 - If your water is not considered safe, boil or treat any water used for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, brushing teeth, washing and preparing food, washing your hands, making ice, or preparing baby formula.
 - "Safe" water includes bottled, boiled, or treated water.
 - Contact your local public health department for water treatment directions.

Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010

