

Weathering the Storm

Simple Ways to Stay Safe During a Power Outage

Severe weather can cause outages and disruptions. High winds, hurricanes, wildfires, extreme heat, and flooding all have one thing in common: being prepared ahead of time makes everything easier. A little planning helps keep your family safe, warm (or cool), and connected until things return to normal.

Top 10 Things to Have on Hand for Any Power Outage

Backup heat or climate support

In cold climates, options like a wood stove, propane heater, or fireplace can keep a home livable. In hot climates, consider battery-powered fans, reflective window coverings, and knowing where local cooling centers are located.

Flashlights or headlamps

Choose rechargeable lights when possible or stock extra batteries. Avoid candles, which cause a surprising number of house fires during outages.

Portable power banks

Keep phones charged for emergency communication. For longer outages, consider solar or hand-crank models that don't rely on your home's power supply.

Battery-powered or hand-crank radio

Weather and emergency updates can change quickly during storms, wildfires, or flooding. A radio keeps you informed even when cell service is spotty.

Non-perishable food

Stock canned goods, protein bars, and simple meals that don't require refrigeration. And don't forget the manual can opener!

Water supply

Keep a three-day supply of at least one gallon of water per person per day, more if you'll be doing physical labor such as shoveling or cleanup. And don't forget your pets!

Warm clothing and blankets

Even in warm climates, indoor temperatures can drop quickly without power. Layers, hats, and cold-rated sleeping bags go a long way.



First-aid kit and essential medications

In addition to first aid supplies, include prescription medications, backups of critical medical supplies, and emergency contact information. Tailor the kit to anyone in your household with special needs.

Backup lighting for whole rooms

Rechargeable lanterns can light up shared spaces and prevent trips or falls; this is especially helpful for kids, older adults, and pets. Many models double as power banks.

Emergency plan and printed contact list

Keep a paper copy of important phone numbers, meeting locations, utility contacts, and local shelter info. If your phone dies or your cloud contacts are inaccessible, this becomes invaluable.

Additional Tips to Prepare Before a Storm or Outage

- **Keep vehicles at least half-full of gas.** Gas stations often close during outages or lose their pumps.
- **Unplug electronics** to protect them from power surges when electricity returns.
- **Do a quick household “power-outage drill.”** Test flashlights, charge power banks, confirm emergency supplies, and run your generator safely if you have one.
- **Charge everything in advance** – phones, tablets, rechargeable lights, portable fans, medical devices.
- **Secure outdoor items** (furniture, grills, decorations) that could blow away or cause damage.
- **Stock basic comfort items** like snacks, games, books, pet supplies. Morale matters during long outages.
- **Know local resources** such as warming/cooling centers, shelters, and neighborhood check-in groups.
- **Check on neighbors**, especially older adults or anyone who relies on electricity for medical equipment.

A bit of preparation goes a long way. Whether you’re getting ready for a blizzard, a heat wave, or a windstorm, taking a few minutes now can make a big difference in how comfortably and safely you weather the next outage.