

Preparing for Electrical Outages Before the Storm

(The following information is brought to you by the New Hampshire Public Service Company)

It takes at least two things to weather the adverse effects of a severe storm: preparation and patience. Not only can they make an uncomfortable situation tolerable, they may actually save your life.

By following these suggestions, you'll be as ready as anyone can be to handle the unexpected knocks of a nasty storm.

- **Check medications that require refrigeration.** Be sure you know if they will be affected by a prolonged interruption of power. You may want to talk with your pharmacist. You may also want to keep a small cooler handy.
- **Put refrigerator and freezer at coldest settings.** Do this a half day or so before the storm is scheduled to hit. Keep a blanket handy to throw over these appliances for added insulation, if need be. (Be sure to return the settings to their normal position as soon as the crisis has passed.)
- **Get extra ice.** Ice helps maintain cold temperatures in your freezer and refrigerator. Use plastic bags filled with ice (or water, if you have enough time to freeze it) in the freezer. Use block ice, if possible, in the refrigerator. And should the ice melt, you can drink the water.
- **Set aside water.** This is vital if you depend on a water pump that might be disabled during a storm. Sanitize and fill spare containers with water for drinking. Fill your bathtub with water for use in the toilet. A bucket of water poured in the toilet bowl is all that's needed for flushing.

If for any reason you don't have an adequate supply of water, and are unable to get enough from friends or neighbors, call your municipal officials (including town clerk, police or fire station) to ask about nearby water sources.

- **Be prepared to cook outside.** It's possible that your stove will be knocked out of operation, so you may wish to use your backyard grill for cooking. However, please beware! Do not bring the grill indoors. A grill without proper ventilation can be deadly. It is possible to use Sterno or a comparable fuel indoors to heat food.
- **Stock up on batteries and easy-to-prepare food.** Give yourself the greatest flexibility in meal preparation, and the greatest comfort once the sun goes down. Don't forget flashlights (one for each person in your family), batteries, and a manual can opener.
- **Prepare alternative sources of heat.** Even a gas or oil furnace needs electricity to operate, so if you have a fireplace or wood stove as an alternative heat source, be sure you have enough wood.

A portable electric generator can be a valuable backup source of power to operate your furnace and appliances. Just be sure you have it installed by a professional, and [click here](#) for important information on generating your own electricity.

In frigid weather, if your power is likely to be out for more than a few days, you may want to call your plumber and ask about draining your home's water pipes so they don't freeze and burst.

And if you have no alternative heat, you can call your local fire or police department or local Red Cross chapter to locate an emergency shelter, if needed.

- **Using a generator.** At minimum, you must take two steps to stay safe when using a generator.

First, never install a generator inside a home or any enclosed space—even if windows are wide open.

Generator exhaust contains carbon monoxide, a poison you cannot see or smell. Using a generator indoors can kill you within minutes.

Secondly, never try to power your house wiring by plugging a portable generator into a household outlet. This can feed electricity back into the power lines—enough to electrocute a line worker, or a neighbor on the same circuit.

The safe way to connect a generator to your existing wiring is to have a licensed electrical contractor install a transfer switch.

Using a generator improperly can be deadly to you and others. Please use the highest level of caution when operating a generator at your home.

- **Unplug sensitive equipment.** Voltage irregularities can occur for any number of reasons during or after a storm, especially if there has been damage on or near your home. The safest thing to do is to unplug any sensitive electrical devices (TV, VCR, stereo, microwave, computer, answering machine, garage door opener, etc.). Planning ahead, you may wish to consider surge suppressers. They can be purchased either for individual pieces of equipment, or for your entire house.
- **Fill your car's gas tank.** You never know where you may need to go. What's more, your automobile can be a place to get warm, as long as you keep it well ventilated and don't sleep while the motor is running.
- **Plan to live without everyday tools that need electricity.** Your garage door opener, for example. Be sure you know how to get the door open and shut manually.

And if you keep your cellar free from flooding by using an electric sump pump, be prepared to call your local fire department for help if you lose power for very long.

- **Keep a battery-operated radio handy.** Stay informed with the storm's progress, as well as safety tips and clean-up operations. Don't forget fresh batteries.
- **Remember: stay away from downed power lines.** Keep your distance from any downed power line.

Don't drive over downed lines, and if a downed line is in or near water, keep your distance from the water, even a little puddle.

And whether a power line is down or not, don't touch anything that might be in contact with it - like a tree limb, for example.

PSNH's Power Restoration Process

Our line crews work around-the-clock to restore service

In the case of a power outage, customers in emergency situations are reconnected first. Typically, this includes hospitals, nursing homes, police and fire stations, and customers on life support systems. Major circuits and lines serving the largest concentrations of people are repaired next.

Once major lines are repaired, lines feeding off these circuits can be repaired. Progress typically slows at this stage because power loss to individual residences can occur for a variety of reasons.