

What to Do During a Power Outage

Power outages can happen at any time with little or no warning lasting minutes, hours, or even days.



Disconnect: Turn off or disconnect any appliances, equipment or electronics you were using when the power went out. When power comes back on, it may come back with momentary “surges” or “spikes” that can damage equipment such as computers and motors in appliances like air conditioners, refrigerators, washers, sump pumps, or furnaces. Leave on a light so that you will know when your power returns.

Refrigeration: Leave the doors of your refrigerator and freezer closed to keep your food as fresh as possible. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if is unopened. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is only half full) if the door remains closed. Buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time.

Updates and emergencies: Use the phone for emergencies only. Listening to a local AM station on a portable radio can provide the latest information. Do not call 9-1-1 for information, only call to report an emergency. www.dteenergy.com/map/outage is a handy website for reporting and monitoring outage updates.

Travel: Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals will stop working during an outage, creating traffic congestion. If a traffic signal is not working, treat intersection as a four way stop.

Climate: If it is hot outside, take steps to remain cool. Move to the lowest level of your home, as cool air falls. Wear lightweight or cotton, light-colored clothing. Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty. If the heat is intense and the power may be off for a long time, consider going to a movie theater, shopping mall, or “cooling shelter” that may be opened to your community. Remember to provide plenty of fresh, cool water for your pets.

If it is cold outside, put on layers of warm clothing. *Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors or use your oven as a source of heat.* If the power is going to be out for a prolonged period, plan to go to another location (relative, friend, or public facility) that has heat to keep you warm.

Preparing for a Power Outage

Lots of ice: If you have space in your freezer, keep frozen containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers in case the power goes out.

Surge protectors: If you use a computer, keep files and operating systems backed up regularly. Get a high quality surge protector for all of your computer equipment. If you use the computer a lot, such as for a home business, consider purchasing and installing an uninterruptable power supply (UPS). It is the power surge and not the outage that causes most of the damage to electronics and appliances.

Electric garage door: If you have an electric garage door opener, find out where the manual release lever is located and learn how to operate it. Sometimes garage doors can be heavy, so get help to lift it. If you

regularly use the garage as the primary means of entering your home upon return from work, be sure to keep a key to your house with you, in case the garage door will not open.

Landline phone: If you have a telephone that requires electricity to work (such as a cordless phone or answering machine), a backup communication device such as, a standard (landline) telephone handset or a cell phone would be a good idea.

Fuel: Keep your car fuel tank at least half full when anticipating severe weather because gas stations rely on electricity to power their pumps.

Using a Generator

If you are using a generator, keep the generator outdoors – never operate it inside, including the basement or garage. Do NOT hook it up to your homes wiring. The safest thing to do is to connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a cord from the generator to a point on the permanent wiring system (or your home); this can cause *backfeeding* of power to your home and is unsafe.



Using a Fireplace

If you plan to use a fireplace or wood stove for emergency heating, have your chimney or flue inspected each year. Ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector, or find one in the yellow pages of your telephone directory under “chimney cleaning.” Also, if you’ll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated. Test them monthly, and replace batteries twice yearly.



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov

THE RED CROSS www.redcross.org