

A 12-month rotation of power-outage preparedness tasks (FEMA / Ready.gov / CDC / USDA guidance)

January — Cold-Weather & Baseline Check

1**Test every battery-powered device**

Flashlights, radios, and carbon monoxide/smoke detectors — replace batteries on a fixed annual schedule (Ready.gov standard) rather than waiting for a low-battery chirp.

2**Verify your generator, outdoors only**

If you own a portable generator, run it briefly to confirm it starts, and re-confirm it is sited at least 20 feet from windows/doors/vents — never in a garage (CDC carbon monoxide guidance).

February — Winter Storm Readiness

1**Insulate exposed pipes**

Grid-down winter outages often bring frozen pipes; insulate exposed lines before a storm, not during one.

2**Confirm your medical-equipment backup plan**

If anyone in the household depends on powered medical equipment, re-verify utility medical-priority registration and battery/backup runtime.

March — Financial & Document Prep

1**Keep some cash on hand**

Card readers and ATMs can fail during extended outages — Ready.gov recommends keeping a small reserve of cash accessible at home.

2

Back up key documents

Photograph or scan ID, insurance, and medical documents in case of extended displacement.

April — Water & Food Rotation

1

Rotate stored water

Replace stored emergency water (1 gallon per person, per day, 3-day minimum per FEMA/Ready.gov) if it's been longer than 6 months since it was last refreshed.

2

Rotate non-perishable food stock

Check expiration dates on your 3-day food supply and rotate out anything nearing its date.

May — Severe Weather Season Prep

1

Review your outage kit

Confirm flashlights, radio, phone power bank, and first-aid kit are all in one grab-and-go location.

2

Sign up for utility outage alerts

Register for text/app outage and restoration alerts directly from your electric utility.

June — Hurricane/Heat Season Begins

1

Plan for extended summer outages

In hurricane-prone or high-heat regions, plan a cooling-center or relocation option in case AC is out for days, especially for elderly or medically vulnerable household members.

2

Fuel and maintain a generator, if owned

Store fuel safely per manufacturer guidance and confirm the generator's maintenance schedule is current.

July — Mid-Year Communications Check

1**Update your written contact list**

Cell towers and networks can be affected during major grid incidents — keep emergency numbers written down, not just stored on a phone.

2**Test a battery or hand-crank radio**

Confirm it picks up local emergency broadcast stations before you need it.

August — Heat & Refrigeration Check

1**Know your refrigerator/freezer outage windows**

A closed fridge keeps food safe about 4 hours; a full freezer about 48 hours (USDA guidance).

2**Check surge protection**

Confirm computers and major appliances are on surge protectors ahead of storm-season grid instability.

September — Fall Storm Prep

1**Re-check smoke/CO detector batteries**

A second annual battery check, ahead of increased indoor heating/generator use in fall and winter.

2**Review your evacuation/shelter-in-place plan**

Confirm every household member knows the plan for a multi-day outage tied to a storm.

October — Annual Document & Kit Refresh

1**Refresh your grab-and-go kit**

Swap in fresh batteries, check expiration on any stored medications, and confirm chargers/cables still work.

2

Re-verify your utility's medical-priority and alert registrations

Confirm registrations from earlier in the year are still active ahead of winter.

November — Pre-Winter Final Check

1

Confirm heating backup options

If your primary heat source needs electricity, confirm a safe backup plan (never a generator or grill indoors) before winter arrives.

2

Rotate stored water and food a final time

One more rotation check before the highest-outage-risk months.

December — Holiday Travel & Family Plan

1

Share the plan with visiting family

If hosting family for the holidays, brief them on the outage kit location and shutoff valve/breaker locations.

2

Report ongoing hazards immediately

Always treat downed power lines as live and report them to the utility and emergency services immediately.