

What to do before, during, and after a major power disruption

Before an Outage

- 1 Build a basic outage kit**
Flashlights, batteries, a battery or hand-crank radio, a portable phone charger/power bank, and at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable food and water (Ready.gov standard).
- 2 Know your medical needs**
If anyone in your household depends on powered medical equipment, register with your utility's medical-priority program and plan a backup power source in advance.
- 3 Protect sensitive electronics**
Use surge protectors on computers and appliances to guard against damage from power fluctuations during grid instability.
- 4 Keep a written contact list**
Cell towers can be affected during major outages — keep emergency numbers written down, not just stored on a phone that may lose charge.

During an Outage

- 1 Report the outage**
Report to your utility by phone or app so crews can map the affected area — don't assume someone else already has.
- 2 Use generators safely, outdoors only**
Never run a generator indoors, in a garage, or near windows — carbon monoxide from generators is a leading cause of outage-related deaths (CDC).

3**Keep refrigerators/freezers closed**

A closed fridge keeps food safe for about 4 hours; a full freezer for about 48 hours (USDA guidance) — minimize how often you open the doors.

4**Unplug major appliances**

Unplug or switch off major appliances to prevent damage from a power surge when service is restored, leaving one light on to signal when power returns.

After an Outage

1**Check food safety**

Discard any perishable food that has been above 40°F for more than 2 hours (USDA guidance) — when in doubt, throw it out.

2**Restore power to devices gradually**

Wait a few minutes before plugging major appliances back in to avoid overloading the restored circuit.

3**Report ongoing hazards**

Report downed power lines to your utility and emergency services immediately — always treat them as live.