

Your Home Outage Preparation Checklist



Before an outage

- Make sure BC Hydro has your current phone number so we can quickly match it to your customer account in case you need to call during an outage. This can be done online at www.bchydro.com/contact or by phoning **1 800 BCHYDRO (1 800 224-9376)**.
- Contact your regional health authority if you or someone you know has special needs during an outage (i.e., is dependent upon electronic life-support systems). If you rely on life-sustaining equipment, be prepared to be self-reliant by having adequate backup in the event of a power outage. If power is out for a longer period, it's important to have a contingency plan, such as moving to a hospital or area that has power.
- Draw up an emergency plan and share it with everyone in your household.
- Check emergency equipment periodically (flashlights, radios, generators, etc.) to make sure they are in working order.
- Protect sensitive electrical equipment (computers, DVD players, televisions, etc.) by installing surge suppressors or other power protection devices.
- Draw up a list of important local telephone numbers: police, fire, poison control centre. Include the BC Hydro phone number: **1 888 POWERON (1 888 769-3766)** for reporting an outage. Post the list near every telephone in your home.

During an outage

- Never go near or touch a fallen power line.** Treat it as though it is live. Stay at least three metres (10 feet) away at all times and do not attempt to remove debris surrounding the line.
- Determine whether the outage is limited to your home.** If your neighbour's power is still on, check your circuit breaker panel or fuse box. When operating a breaker, always face away from the panel. If your neighbour's power is off, call BC Hydro at **1 888 POWERON (1 888 769-3766)** to report the outage. You will be given an estimated time of restoration if known. Your call is valuable, as BC Hydro depends on customers' calls to help us to determine the cause and scope of the outage.
- Turn off electrical appliances.** Appliances or tools left on will start up automatically upon restoration of service; turning them off will prevent injury, damage or fire. If a power surge follows start-up, it could damage sensitive electronic equipment, such as computers, microwaves, and VCRs.
 - Power can be restored more easily by reducing the load on the electric system.
 - Make sure your range is turned off and all other heat-producing appliances, such as your iron, are unplugged. This will minimize the risk of fire when power is restored.

Basic Emergency Kit

Put together an **emergency kit** in case of a lengthy power outage or other natural event. Store the kit in a designated place known to everyone in your household so it is easy to find should the need arise. Basic supplies should include:

- Flashlight(s) in working order
- Battery-powered radio in working order
- Battery-powered clock
- Extra batteries
- Telephone with a cord, if you don't normally use one
 - A telephone with a cord will usually work without electricity, but a cordless one will not (the kind that sits in a recharger base)
- First aid kit, including extra prescription medicine if needed
- Non-perishable, ready-to-eat foods, such as canned meats, fruits and vegetables; granola bars, trail mix, crackers and spreads
- Bottled water: three-day supply (four litres per person per day: two for drinking and two for other uses)
- Manual can opener
- Warm clothing and blankets
- Supplies for those with special needs, if applicable, for example, infants, elderly or disabled persons
- Entertainment: games, cards, books

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- Look up outage information.** Use a laptop running on a battery or call someone with Internet access whose power is on, to access outage information by region at www.bchydro.com/outages.
- Never use a camp stove, barbecue, or propane or kerosene heater indoors.** A build-up of carbon monoxide gas in unventilated areas can be deadly.
- Use candles only with caution and in proper candle holders. Never leave burning candles unattended.** They are a potential fire hazard. Use flashlights instead.
- Turn off all lights except one inside your home and one outside.** Keeping one light on inside will indicate to you when restoration has occurred, and a light outside will assist BC Hydro crews in determining whether or not your power has been restored late into the night.
- Refrigerators and freezers.** Keep the doors of your refrigerator and freezer closed to keep your food as fresh as possible. If you must eat food that was refrigerated or frozen, check it carefully for signs of spoilage.
 - Frozen food – If your freezer is full, food will stay frozen for about two days. If it is less than half full, food will stay frozen for about one day. Cover the freezer with blankets, quilts or sleeping bags to further insulate the freezer and help food stay frozen longer.
 - Refrigerated food – To avoid losing the cold air in your refrigerator, don't open doors unnecessarily. Meat and fish spoil quickly at temperatures above 4° C (40° F). Other quick-spoiling foods include milk, custards, creamed foods and any foods containing mayonnaise or eggs. Cooked and cured meat will keep for several days in a closed refrigerator. Hard cheeses keep well, even at room temperature. Again, if in doubt, throw it out. You might also try placing bags of ice in the refrigerator, or place food on ice in a cooler or ice chest.
- Monitor radio.** Listen to the news radio stations in your local area to check for updates.
- Help children cope.** How you react to a power outage gives children clues on how to act. If you react with alarm, a child may become more scared. When talking with children about an outage, be sure to present a realistic picture about what has happened and the expected outcome. Your calming words and actions can provide reassurance. Encourage children to participate in games, arts, crafts and reading. Keep flashlights, note books, magazines, coloured paper and markers, and tape readily available. Plan games to play by flashlight, and what toys will keep them entertained and reassured.
- Anticipate traffic delays – Use extreme caution when driving. Intersections should be treated as four-way stops when traffic lights are out. Anticipate long traffic delays in areas where the power is out.

After an outage

- Occasionally, after restoration, even after your power has come back on, a momentary outage may occur as part of the restoration effort.
- Give the electrical system a chance to stabilize. Turn on the most essential appliances first, and wait 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting the others.
- Check to make sure your refrigerator and freezer are back on. Check all frozen foods to determine the extent of thawing. Check your freezer guide to determine whether food can be safely refrozen. If food still has ice crystals at the centre, it is safe to refreeze. Dispose of any food that is discoloured or smells spoiled. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Remember to reset your clocks, automatic timers, and alarms.
- Restock your emergency cupboard so the supplies will be there when they are needed again.
- Pull out your emergency kit once a year and make sure it still fits the needs of your household. Replace batteries with fresh ones.