



**What to do Before and After the Power Goes off.
Preparing for that unlikely outage.**

Electric service is extremely reliable. Power outages don't happen often and usually don't last long. However, it helps to know what to do when they happen. By taking the right steps you can lessen the inconvenience and discomfort for yourself and your family.

There are several reasons for the occasional power failure. It can be something as minor as lightning striking the lines, a tree falling across wires, or a car crashing into a power pole. But sometimes the problem is more severe, causing widespread power outages that can last from hours to days. The outage can be caused by severe thunderstorms or tornadoes that snap power poles and tangle lines. The most troublesome causes are snow and ice. A blizzard or an ice storm can cause damage that is widespread and difficult to repair. These outages are the most serious because they can leave your home and family vulnerable to the freezing cold.

Whatever the cause, you and your family can better cope with an emergency if you know what to do. This page was prepared to give you helpful advice on ways to lessen the inconvenience of a power failure. **Print this page on your computer's printer, or pick up a copy of the booklet from our office. Keep it in a handy spot so you can find it quickly, day or night.**

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE, CALL MED AT (615) 893-5514

Be Prepared

After the power goes off is no time to discover that the flashlight batteries are dead and that there isn't a candle in the house. If you plan ahead, you will be ready for an emergency. A few simple steps, taken now, can make the power outage far less trying for you and your family.

- **Emergency Kit**
Include a battery powered radio, flashlight, a supply of batteries for both, candles, matches, and a can opener.
- **Food and Water**
Enough should be kept on hand for several days (check expiration dates periodically). Plan on a quart of drinking water per person per day. Have on hand a picnic cooler for use later to store perishables.
- **First-Aid Kit**
Include bandages, disinfectant, aspirin, plus a supply of medications that must be taken regularly (check expiration dates periodically).
- **Baby Supplies**
Keep a supply of baby food, canned milk, formula, and disposable diapers on hand, if you have small children.
- **Backup Heat**
Plan alternate methods of heating your home. All fuel should be stored properly in approved safety containers and wood kept in a dry place.

If you heat with natural gas, check to see whether your system requires electricity to operate. If so, plan another way to heat your home in an outage.

- **Fire Prevention**
Have handy a UL listed fire extinguisher labeled for class A, B, and C fires, suitable for use on ordinary combustibles, flammable liquids, and electrical fires. Be sure all family members know how to use it.

When the Power Goes off -- Don't Panic.

Remember that people lived without electricity for many years and did quite nicely. If you planned ahead -- put your plan into operation. If you didn't, just follow these simple steps and you will be able to handle the emergency.

- **In the Dark**
If it's nighttime, locate those candles or kerosene lamps and light them. You will be able to see what you're doing, and circumstances will seem less threatening.
- **Neighbors**
Look to see if their lights are off. If not, the problem might be confined to your home.
- **Telephone**
Try it. It may be working because the telephone system is operated on a separate electrical circuit.
- **Fuses and Breakers**
Check them. If they are okay and your telephone is working, call Murfreesboro Electric Department. Give your address and phone number and tell us how long the power has been off.
- **Warning**
Stay away from downed power lines. Make sure that no one, especially children, goes near them. Even lines that look harmless can be very dangerous. Just note the location and call Murfreesboro Electric Department immediately.
- **Electric Appliances**
Turn off all the ones that were on, especially heat pumps, air-conditioners, and electric heating. That will prevent Murfreesboro Electric's system from being overloaded one power is restored. Leave a light on so you'll know when service is back on.
- **Information**
Turn on your battery-operated portable radio to WGNS AM 1450 and listen for messages from your electric company. If possible, call your neighbors and find out if they have information about the emergency.

Keeping Warm

Winter outages make keeping warm a problem, but it can be done. The thing to remember is to keep as much heat as is available from getting away. There is residual heat in your home, your body is a natural source of heat, and the sun is a wonderful solar heater. In combination, these can get you through in comparative comfort.

- **Warm Room**
Choose a small, well-insulated room with few windows as your emergency living quarters. Block this room off and put cardboard and blankets over the windows at night to minimize heat loss.
- **Clothes**
Wrap up in warm clothing. Put on several thin layers instead of one or two big bulky garments. Thermal underwear is good. Don't forget to wear a hat. As much as 80% of a person's body heat can be lost without one.
- **Stay Close**
When it is extremely cold, the whole family (pets, too) should group in one room where all drafts have been sealed to benefit from the combined body heat.
- **Eat Something**
The body burns food to produce calories, which keeps you warm. Open those cans of food that need no cooking and make sure everyone eats something. If frozen food starts to thaw in very cold weather put it outside in a shaded spot away from animals.
- **Bedtime**
Layer blankets or quilts over you. Wear plenty of clothes plus a hat. Remember that the human body gives off heat. Sleep with two or three people together under the blankets or in zipped-together sleeping bags.
- **Sunlight**
In the daytime, use the warming rays of the sun to keep you comfortable. Open the draperies to get the warmth into your home. Sit out in the sun in a spot away from any wind. You'll be surprised how quickly you heat up.

Heaters and Generators

A backup heating source can be a wonderful solution to keeping warm in winter. There are drawbacks, however. There can be danger involved so it is imperative that you learn how to operate it safely before an emergency occurs and always keep your fire extinguisher handy. The tips that follow are only reminders. Be sure that you follow manufacturers' directions exactly so you can enjoy the benefits without the hazards.

- **Fireplaces**

Never use one without a screen, be sure your chimney is free of the flammable creosote that builds up from wood smoke, handle ashes carefully, and never allow children to play unattended near the fireplace or any other heating source.

- **Wood / Coal Stoves**

More efficient than fireplaces but they must be properly installed and connected to a suitable chimney or flue. Check local building and fire regulations for installation requirements.

- **Fuel Burning Heaters**

Use only as directed and only in areas with proper ventilation. Suffocation can occur when fuel burning heaters are used improperly or in poorly ventilated areas.

- **Portable Generators**

Locate the generator in a well ventilated area, preferably outside your home. Gasoline powered generators can produce carbon monoxide, which can be deadly. Plug appliances directly into the generator. Use extension cords if necessary, but do not exceed the recommended wattage noted on the generator. *Never connect the generator to your home's main wiring circuit. Disconnect your home from the power system before hooking up a generator. Failure to do so can cause electricity to flow backwards into the power lines, endangering neighbors and the linemen who are working to restore power. If in doubt, contact a licensed electrician or Murfreesboro Electric Department.*

Keeping Cool

When a power outage occurs during the steamy days of summer, our first thoughts are usually about air-conditioning and refrigeration. The good news is that there are things you can do to be surprisingly comfortable despite the apparent hardships. Many of these methods you already know, and the others are really just good common sense.

- **Dress Cool**
Wear lightweight, loose-fitting cotton clothing; if you're in the sun, wear light-colored clothing and a protective hat.
- **Draperies**
Keep them closed on the sunny side of the house during the day.
- **Windows**
Open them at nights or on mild days for natural ventilation.
- **Baths**
Take them frequently with tepid water to lower body temperature.
- **Fluids**
Drink small amounts of water and fruit juices often.
- **Chores**
Keep strenuous activity to a minimum. If a job doesn't have to be done, don't do it. If you must, do them during the cooler parts of the day.
- **Refrigerator**
Keep it and the freezer closed as much as possible. If thawing begins, put in dry or wet ice if you can get it. A picnic cooler is handy to store ice and food for short periods of time.
- **Cooking**
It can be done in the fireplace, over the barbecue grill, or on the camping stove. Use the grill and stove outdoors to avoid danger of toxic fumes and possible fire.

Food and Water

Food and water are vital to your well-being. That's why, despite the inconvenience of a power outage, it is important to take steps to ensure an adequate supply. Food can be simple and meals kept light. Water is used so often in everyday life that we forget the many ways that it can be conserved. These tips can help you get through an outage and keep healthy.

- **Spoilage**
Refrigerators and freezers will keep food for a while without power. Wrapping the appliance with blankets and opening doors as little as possible will help.
- **Supplies**
Now is the time to use the emergency rations you stored or the canned goods you already had on hand. Soup, chili, and stew, for example, are easy to fix. If cooking is impossible, these foods will still supply nourishment if eaten cold.
- **Cooking**
Fireplaces, wood or coal stoves, and camp stoves can be used for cooking. Be sure to ventilate properly and never use charcoal indoors.
- **Water**
A supply is needed for washing, cooking, and drinking. Fill plastic jugs, pots, bathtubs, and sinks in case the water supply is cut off. Remember that water for drinking is most important, so eliminate other uses if necessary.
- **Sanitation**
Flush as little as possible. If the water supply fails, you can flush by pouring stored water into the bowl. A portable camper's toilet also may be used.
- **Water Pipes**
Frozen pipes can cut off the water supply or even burst, causing damage to your home. Let faucets drip. If pipes freeze, shut off the main water supply and open faucets completely.

The Elderly

Emergencies, such as power outages, can be particularly difficult for older people. Often their eyesight and coordination are impaired, making them susceptible to falls and other injuries. They are also unable to withstand extremes of heat or cold as well as younger people. For those reasons, it is important to check often on older friends, neighbors, and relatives during any emergency.

Hypothermia

This condition occurs when exposure to cold causes a person's body to lose heat faster than it can be replaced. The result is a dangerous drop in internal body temperature, which is serious, especially for the elderly and for infants.

Symptoms. The first signs of hypothermia include: shivering; slurred speech; confusion; weakness; fatigue; drowsiness; and shallow breathing. In severe cases, the person may lose consciousness, and death can result.

First Aid. If you suspect hypothermia, call a doctor or ambulance because prompt medical care is essential. Until help arrives, cover the victim with warm blankets. Do not rub or massage the skin; handle the victim as gently and as little as possible.

Hyperthermia

This condition occurs when the body becomes overheated. Prolonged exposure to extremely hot weather or high temperatures can result in heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and sun strokes. The danger is particularly great when the humidity is high, and the temperature exceeds 90 degrees.

Symptoms. The first signs of hyperthermia include: high body temperature and flushed skin; weakness, heavy perspiration and nausea; dizziness, fatigue, and faintness; sharp pains in the arms and stomach area; headache, rapid pulse, and loss of consciousness.

First Aid. Don't attempt it. If one or more symptoms of hyperthermia are present -- don't delay. Seek medical attention immediately!

When the Power is Back On

You made it. Coming through an emergency gives us all a sense of satisfaction. More than that, most of us have had the wonderful experience of seeing friends, neighbors, even strangers come together to help in any way they can. We also discover what a powerful force for comfort and convenience that electricity is in our everyday lives. Nice to have it back, isn't it?

- **Appliances**

You will be anxious to get appliances up and running, but take it easy. If everybody switched on the air conditioning or heating systems at once, the power lines could be overloaded, causing another outage.

- **Heat Pumps**

In winter, don't reset the thermostat to the "ON" position as soon as the power comes back on because the electric heat pump performs its job by circulating a refrigerant gas.

When the power has been off for a while, the unit's refrigerant cools and changes to a liquid, which tends to collect in the compressor. If the unit is put into operation in this state, possible mechanical damage can result.

Follow this rule after a power outage in the winter: If the power has been off more than three hours, place the system switch in the emergency heat position. This will quickly bring your home to a normal temperature. Leave the switch in the emergency heat position for 24 hours.

At the end of 24 hours, set the thermostat for heat pump operation. This will restart your unit in the heat pump mode.