do 1 thing

SMALL STEPS TOWARD BEING PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

# Power

**THE GOAL:** *Be able to safely meet your basic needs during an electrical outage.*

*We count on electricity for heat, food, and medical needs. Many gas appliances even need electricity to run. A power outage is an emergency that often follows another emergency—like a hurricane, tornado, or winter storm. That makes it even more important to be prepared in advance.*

**CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH TO BECOME BETTER PREPARED:**

## ❒ Acquire and learn how to safely use a portable generator.

Using a properly connected generator of adequate size during a power outage will reduce or almost eliminate the impact a power outage has on your life. Before you buy a generator, talk to an electrician about the size and type you need. Think about what you want your generator to run. Generators can be used to keep food cool, provide lights and electricity for phones and television, power furnace blowers and pumps.

*Always run generators outside. Never use a generator inside a house, in a basement, or garage. Never use a cord from a generator to backfeed a circuit in your house.*

The best way to use a portable generator is to connect it to your home using a transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician. This will keep the power from overloading the wiring in your home. It will also keep the power from your generator from traveling back into the power lines, which can injure or kill people working on power lines, or can unexpectedly re-energize downed power lines near your home. You may also connect equipment directly to the outlets on the generator, but be sure that any extension cords are of the proper length and gauge to handle the power requirements.

## ❒ Have flashlights ready in an easily accessible place and check batteries in flashlights and radios.

When the lights go out, the safest way to provide emergency lighting is with flashlights or battery-powered lanterns. Keep flashlights with fresh batteries in several places throughout your home and check them for proper operation regularly. Always keep a supply of extra batteries. Think about buying a rechargeable flashlight. Batteries might be hard to find in a disaster.

### Power Outage Safety

- Discard food if the temperature in your refrigerator exceeds 40 degrees for more than 2 hours.
- Stay away from downed power lines and anything they are in contact with such as fences or buildings.
- Never drive over downed power lines; they may be energized.
- Never use charcoal or gas grills inside a structure. You may be overcome by carbon monoxide.
- If you must use candles, be sure to use them safely. Never leave candles burning unattended.

## ❒ Create a power outage plan – decide what you can do before, during and after a power outage to minimize the effect on your household.

**BEFORE THE POWER GOES OUT:**

- Fill empty space in freezer with containers of water. Frozen water will displace air and keep food cold longer. Remember to leave space in containers for ice to expand.
- Have at least one phone with a handset cord in your home. Many cordless phones will not work in a power outage.
- If you have an automatic garage door opener, learn how to use the manual release and open your garage door manually.
- Try to keep your car's gas tank at least half full. Many gas stations will not be in operation during a power outage. Fill up your tank if a major storm is predicted.
- Make sure you have a car or lighter plug cord for your cell phone.
- If you use special healthcare equipment like oxygen generators or dialysis equipment, notify your power company.

**AFTER THE POWER GOES OUT:**

- Unplug major appliances and electronics. When the power comes back on, there may be power spikes that can damage large appliances or delicate electronics.
- Do not open refrigerators or freezers any more than necessary. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for approximately 4 hours, an unopened freezer will keep food frozen for approximately 24 hours.
- Use a battery-powered radio to stay informed.