



ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE TEAM

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



## STAYING SAFE DURING A POWER OUTAGE

*In Alberta, high winds, freezing rain, thunderstorms, and more can pose significant risks to and even damage power lines. When a power line is damaged, we may experience a power outage, which is a temporary loss of electricity. It's crucial to prepare for power outages to ensure they won't negatively impact your or your loved ones' safety.*

### How can I prepare for a power outage?

The first step is to identify where your community will post emergency updates.

Next, make sure you've got everything you need at home for the duration of an outage. Store enough water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene and food for every person and pet in your household.

If you use medical devices or other items that require a stable supply of power, make sure you have a back-up power source. Depending on your needs, this could be anything from a power bank to a professionally installed generator.

Finally, determine if a power outage could affect your mobility. If you normally use an elevator, develop a backup exit plan ahead of time. Improve your safety further by installing a carbon monoxide detector that can switch over to battery power.

While preparing, keep in mind that you may not have access to heat, water, lighting, air conditioning, and information during a power outage. Make sure you have alternatives to these resources. Similarly, plan for the possibility of local businesses staying closed during a severe power outage.

**Please note:** Subscribe to the [Alberta Electric System Operator \(AESO\)](#)'s real-time grid alert notifications, download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app for alerts, and monitor water advisories to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

If you have any questions  
please contact  
[wildfires@metis.org](mailto:wildfires@metis.org)



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## What should I do during a power outage?

If you lose power, determine if the power outage is local to your home or is widespread by checking your breaker or your utility provider's website to inform your next steps.

Here are a few safety tips for getting through a power outage:

- ∞ **Take steps to reduce the risk of starting a fire.** According to EPCOR's [Prepare for Power Outages](#) webpage, heat-producing appliances (e.g., computers, chargers, stoves, etc.) can cause a fire if they're plugged in when power is restored. They can also be damaged by power surges, so it's best to unplug them. Keep an eye on fire hazards.
- ∞ **Have lighting alternatives ready.** Use a battery-powered flashlight or LEDs for lighting.
- ∞ **Keep your food safe.** EPCOR recommends keeping fridges and [freezers closed as much as possible](#). A closed fridge will keep its contents cold for about four hours, and a full freezer will stay at a safe temperature for about 48 hours.
- ∞ **Avoid using household appliances that require water.** According to the Government of Alberta's [Power Outages](#) webpage, using appliances that need water or excessively flushing the toilet during an outage can cause sewer back-ups and flooding.
- ∞ **Know when to leave.** The Government of Alberta advises that you may need to evacuate if it is no longer safe to stay at your home during an outage. If you're experiencing a life-threatening emergency, call 911.

**Please note:** Before you travel, check [Alberta 511](#) for current road conditions and [WeatherCAN](#) for weather alerts to help you arrive at your destination safely.



Scan to view  
EPCOR's Prepare  
for Power Outages



Scan to view  
Government of  
Alberta's Power  
Outages



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## What are the risks?

Power outages can pose various hazards, including the risk of slips and falls due to a lack of light and loss of access to heat. Extreme temperatures can significantly affect vulnerable populations, including older adults, young children, and those with pre-existing health conditions. When staying indoors during freezing temperatures, moving to the lowest level of your building is advised, as this area tends to retain warmth more effectively. To ensure your comfort and safety, keep doors and blinds closed, and have extra blankets and warm clothing readily available.

For safe heating options, consider using a wood-burning fireplace, but be sure to extinguish it once power is restored. It's crucial to avoid using gas stoves or ovens as alternative heating methods, as these can produce harmful carbon monoxide and pose poisoning risks. Prioritize conserving the battery life on your cell phone for emergencies by disconnecting unnecessary appliances and electronics. To preserve food, keep refrigerator and freezer doors firmly closed. Following these guidelines can better protect yourself and your loved ones during power outages.

## What should I do after an outage?

Assess your home for potential hazards that might have been caused by the power outage, such as potential fire and electrical hazards. In the event of flooding, start by ensuring the power is disconnected before attempting to enter a flooded basement. It's crucial to keep yourself, children, and pets away from any affected areas for safety. Once you've assessed the situation, please avoid using any water-damaged appliances, electrical outlets, or fuse-breaker panels until a qualified electrician examines them. After this inspection, allow the electrical system to stabilize, waiting about 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting any appliances. Next, carefully check all food for signs of spoilage or damage; it's safest to throw it out when in doubt. Finally, remember that if power has been out for more than 24 hours, all refrigerated medications should be discarded unless otherwise stated on the label.

**Please note:** A fallen power line can cause outages and serious safety risks. Stay at least ten metres (33 feet) away and never touch it. Report the incident to 780-412-4500 or call 911 for help if you are experiencing an emergency.



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