



## CAHF'S READY, SET, GO!

# POWER OUTAGES



### GET READY! Have A Facility "Action Plan" for Power Outages.

#### Does your staff know how their roles and responsibilities may change during a power outage?

A "power outage" refers to those times when regular electric service has been interrupted by damage to power lines or power stations due to storms, floods, land slides, earthquakes, extreme cold/heat, high winds, etc. During a disaster situation, electric power can be out for days or weeks. It is important to plan ahead for the possibility of losing electric power. Know where the flashlight and other emergency supplies are kept. In order to prepare for this type of emergency:

- Conduct a "hazard hunt" for items that could pose a danger if power is out. Look for items that protrude outward, or items that could be tripped over.
- Who is the decision maker during the outage?
- Do you have any residents that could be at risk if there is a power outage?
- Discuss with staff about how a power outage might affect your facility and the care you provide.
- Include possible evacuation sites into your disaster plan, in the event of a prolonged outage during extreme weather.

#### Does your plan address?

- Power outages during **Hot** and **Cold** weather temperatures;
- Prolonged outages;
- Preservation of medications;
- Meals (Nonperishable foods and/or preparation and serving); and
- Adequate supply of fuel for generators, emergency lighting, etc.

### GET SET! Are you and your staff really ready?

- Talk to your utility company about being an "essential service" for high priority restoration of power during an outage.
- Keep flash lights and extra batteries in an established, easy to find place.
- Have at least one hard wired phone. Remember, cordless phones rely on power to work.
- Keep a battery-powered radio with fresh batteries (to listen to news broadcasts).
- Have a car charger and/or an extra battery for your cell phone at your facility-in an easy to reach place.
- Conduct "Power Outage" drills, to include "what if" scenarios," regularly with staff.
- Discuss "what to do during an outage" with residents (Day and night time occurrences).

### GO!

- **REMAIN CALM.** Retrieve flash lights/activate generator.
- Turn off/unplug computers and other non-essential voltage sensitive equipment.
- This prevents circuit overloading/surge when power is restored.
- Ascertain whether the outage is confined to your facility or includes your community.
- Use radio to listen to local news for emergency instructions.

# Additional Resources for Power Outages:



## Food Safety

If the power is out for longer than 2-hours, follow the guidelines below:

- For the Freezer section: A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24-hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48-hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
- For the Refrigerated section: Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. *Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.*
- Use a digital quick-response thermometer to check the temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

The following provide additional information on preparing for emergencies and determining if your food is safe after a power outage

- Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency, USDA:  
[www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets) (see index for proper factsheet)
- Food Safety Office, CDC, comprehensive food safety information: [www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)

## Safe Drinking Water

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula. If possible, use baby formula that does not need to have water added. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.
- If you use bottled water, be sure it came from a safe source. If you do not know that the water came from a safe source, you should boil or treat it before you use it. Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe.
- Boiling water, when practical is the preferred way to kill harmful bacteria and parasites.
- Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1-minute will kill most organisms.
- When boiling water is not possible, you can treat water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or unscented household chlorine bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite). If you use chlorine tablets or iodine tablets, follow the directions that come with the tablets.
- If you use household chlorine bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon (~0.75 mL) of bleach per gallon of water if the water is clear. For cloudy water, add 1/4 teaspoon (~1.50 mL) of bleach per gallon. Mix the solution thoroughly and let it stand for about 30 minutes before using it. *Note: Treating water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or liquid bleach will not kill parasitic organisms.*
- Use a bleach solution to rinse water containers before re-using them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution. For example, fire truck storage tanks and previously used cans or bottles may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.

## First Aid for Electrical Shock

If you believe someone has been electrocuted, take the following steps:

- Look first. Don't touch. The person may still be in contact with the electrical source. Touching the person may pass the current through you.
- Call or have someone else call 911 for emergency medical help.
- Turn off the source of electricity, if possible, move the source away from you and the affected person using a non-conducting object made of cardboard, plastic or wood.
- Once the person is free of the source of electricity, check the person's breathing and pulse. If either has stopped or seems dangerously slow or shallow, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately.
- If the person is faint or pale or shows other signs of shock, lay the person down with the head slightly lower than the trunk of his or her body and the legs elevated.
- Don't touch burns, break blisters, or remove burned clothing. Electrical shock may cause burns inside the body, so be sure the person is taken to a doctor.

## Avoid Carbon Monoxide

For important information about the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning during a power outage, see "Carbon Monoxide Poisoning":

[www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.asp) and "Questions and Answers About Carbon Monoxide Poisoning": [www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm)

## Safety During Power Recovery

As power returns after an outage, people may be at risk of electrical or traumatic injuries as power lines are re-energized and equipment is reactivated. Be aware of those risks and take protective steps if you are in contact with or in proximity to power lines, electrical components, and the moving parts of heavy machinery. More information on electrical safety is available in our fact sheet on "Safety in Power Outages":

[www.bt.cdc.gov/poweroutage/workersafety.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/poweroutage/workersafety.asp) or at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/electrical/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/electrical/)

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We, at CAHF appreciate your thoughts and would like to ask for any disaster related suggestions or "Positive Practices" that you may have. Our goal is to use "Lessons Learned" and "Successful Applications" to help educate other facilities within our Long-Term Care Community.

**Let's work as a T.E.A.M. - Together Everyone Achieves More!**

What disaster or event would you like CAHF's Disaster Preparedness Program to use for a "Ready, Set, Go" Disaster Planning Topic? Contact us at (916) 441-6400.