



## Emergency Planning

**PREVENTING INJURY TO YOUR FAMILY**

**REDUCING POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO YOUR HOME**

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# The Electrical System In Your Home

## When there is a Major Power Outage

There is a danger of a **Power Surge** when power is restored, it can cause serious damage. Fire or damage to electrical appliances is possible. The other potential is that if every user is immediately drawing full power, the whole utility system can be put down again.

This hazard can be reduced when you;

- Turn off the power at the main Circuit Breaker (the big one).
- With older electrical systems there will be a lever switch on the outside of the panel box.
- Then turn off the majority, if not all, circuit breakers - or if a fuse panel, unscrew each individual fuse.
- When you come to turn them back on, turn on the main breaker/lever first, then turn on the circuit breakers or fuses one at a time. Turn on low draw circuits first (lighting circuits). If everything seems normal then continue to turn on the others.
- If something is not normal (the lights seem dim or excessively bright, you detect a hot, electrical smell, or there is a noise coming from the panel), turn off main breaker or lever **immediately** and call a professional.

## During an Electrical Storm

There is danger that a lightning strike near your home can induce a surge of power into your home. This power surge can cause damage to electronic equipment and appliances. Radios, TVs, Computes, and Telephone Systems are all susceptible.

To reduce this hazard:

- Unplug these from their wall outlet to protect them from damage.
- Turn off all power at the main circuit breaker - this may be the easiest solution until the storm has past.

## Using a Generator as an Alternative Power Source

A backup power generator can be an alternative, but, if used improperly they can cause property damage and injury.

Portable generators are not designed for 24hr. use. To use them properly be sure to read the manual, and:

- Limit use to 2-3 hrs. at a time.
- CHECK THE OIL every time you shut down the engine.
- Do not let snow or ice build up around the unit, and don't let it stand in the water. All these situations can block air to the engine or suck water into it.

The Hazards presented by the use of a generator can be reduced by:

- Not using gas powered generators inside a building where people will be.
- Never trying to alter the wiring of a generator, its plugs, fuses or connections.
- Using as short an extension cord as possible to power the device.
- Avoiding use of multiple extension cords, each plug connection saps power.
- Not connecting directly to electronic devices, always use a "line conditioner" between the generator and the devices you want powered e.g. the computer, TV, or some telephone systems.

- Not overloading the generator, if you try to run too many things you may not have enough current. Electric motors (the sump pump, the furnace), and compressors (the fridge, the freezer) need a lot of power to startup, when underpowered they burnout.
- Not connecting a generator directly to your electrical panel. This can only be done by electricians utilizing appropriate equipment. Getting this done in advance (having your home generator ready) is the best solution.

## Other General Hints

### **Food Freezer**

When power is out,

- Leave your freezer closed. The contents will remain frozen for another 24 – 48 hrs.
- Covering the freezer with a blanket, quilt or comforter will extend the period the contents will remain frozen.
- If the outside temperature is below freezing, move the freezer contents outside. A garage, garden shed or porch could be used. The best alternative may be the trunk of your car.
- The food in your freezer is still safe to use if it's temperature does not exceed +4 degrees centigrade.
- You can safely refreeze food if you can still see ice crystals in the containers or the package core is still frozen.

### **Downed Power Lines**

- Do not touch or try to move downed power lines. Call the Utility company.
- Do not try to remove trees, limbs, or branches from power lines. Call the Utility company or a professional.
- Your Electrical Power (Utility) supplier is not responsible for damage to electrical wiring from your home to their pole. If the damage is between your home and the hydro line on the street or road, it would be wise to call an Electrical Contractor.

### **Sump Pumps/ Water in the Basement**

- When the power is out check your sump regularly.
- If water influx is slow, you may be able to stay ahead of it with a bucket and moving water from the sump to a regular household drain, such as a laundry tub or toilet.
- If you cannot stay ahead of the water, turn off the circuit breakers to any floor level plugs or electric heaters that may come in contact with, or become covered by, water.
- With the electricity off, remove whatever personal contents that is practical or raise wooden legged and upholstered furniture off the floor. The water may split the wood when it dries.
- If there is any chance that any electric circuit in the basement may be in the water and not turned off, do not go in the water, call a Professional.

Most local hardware or building suppliers carry battery powered sump pumps; they are a low cost alternative to generators. Good ones remain charged by being left permanently plugged in to your normal home electrical system.

A manual bilge pump you would purchase to use for a boat, could also make the process easier.

## Safe Drinking Water

If you have concerns about the safe conditions of your drinking water;

- Boil water at a high boil for 12 minutes. Boil in small amounts as it takes less time and energy. Keep it cool at +4 – 7 degrees centigrade.
- As a second choice, add 10 drops of liquid chlorine bleach to 4 liters of water, let stand for two hours with top off the container. Use a broad mouth container to better allow chlorine to evaporate off.

## Secondary/Supplement heating

Secondary heating devices are not, and were not, intended for use 24 hrs per day, or as the principal heating source for your home.

- Most **fireplaces** are not made to be a heat source for an entire home. Overloading them or using them “hot” for extended periods of time can increase the likelihood of an unfriendly fire (burning the house).
- If you have a **gas range**, don’t try and heat your home or even your kitchen with it. You are likely to cause the buildup of deadly **carbon monoxide** gas in your home. It is a painless death, you won’t even know it is happening.
- **Kerosene heaters** are also a potential source of carbon monoxide gas.
- Do not use a **gas or charcoal barbecue** inside your home, use them for cooking, but do it outside.

## Carbon Monoxide Gas Detectors

Most homeowners who use gas heating in their home already have a CO detector. Most have probably bought the type that plugs into an outlet in the home and, most who have multilevel homes have one on each level.

An extended power outage is the one time when a battery powered CO Detector is an absolute necessity.

## Household Intrusion, Fire, Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Systems

These use your home’s electrical system for power. Most will have a small battery backup, which will allow them to remain functional for a short period of time (4-12 hours). When the battery runs out it is probable that the connection to central alarm service responders will be lost. There is very little you can do about this other than be prepared and aware.

## What About your Phone?

Yes your home land line, will still work BUT..your Bell home phone is supplemented with an extensive battery backup system so it will continue to work. That being said, **the use of your phone should be restricted to emergency use only**. If it were to be used by each Bell customer as an entertainment device we all would be left without service in a much-reduced period of time. **That could cost lives!**

Current digital, cordless, home phones may not work when household power is down. It would be wise for each home to keep an old style phone in reserve. These phones plug directly into the Bell wall jack in your home and when so connected will, be supplied with sufficient power to allow the emergency call you may need to make.

## Aquariums

If the power is off, do not feed the fish for a few days, without the filters and airators you will want the fish less active. Insulate the tank with blankets and put it on the floor to expose surface area.

## **Trees and Shrubs**

Don't attempt to remove ice from tree branches or shrubs, when the sun comes out it will do a marvelous job, and the majority of branches will remain undamaged. If after some sunshine there are still some branches stuck in the snow or ice, they may need some help being freed up so they can stand back up. If you are left with damaged trees and dangling branches, don't try and do the work alone, get some help, you'll be amazed at how inexpensive some of our community professionals will be to do this work for you.

## **Reducing Potential Damage To Your Home**

### **If you have to leave your home:**

During the heating season, or you fear inside temperature will fall below freezing, here are a few things to remember:

#### **Plumbing**

If water freezes in your plumbing system, it will burst your pipes and may break your appliances.

#### ***If you live in town***

- shut off the water by closing the valve where the main supply enters the home, insulate the valve and pipe behind the valve with blankets, towels or insulation to prevent freezing and bursting.

#### ***If you live in the country***

- shut of the power to your pressure pump.

#### ***Then in both cases:***

- Turn off circuit breaker that feeds the hot water heater.
- Open all taps in the house, this will relieve pressure and contribute to draining the piping system.
- Drain the Hot Water Heating Tank (there is a valve or tap at the bottom of the tank that is threaded to attach to a garden hose to run outside the house or to a basement drain.
- Flush all toilets to empty tanks, and if possible pour anti-freeze into the bowl. In the alternative a plunger can be used to force the remaining water out (this however may cause another problem, that being sewer gas seeping back into the house).

These measures are reasonable first aid, it this does not guarantee all water out of all pipes, if a Professional is available, call them.

#### **Hot Water Heating**

- A Professional should drain the system.

#### **Electrical**

- Turn off your electrical system, by turning off the main circuit breaker.
- See also Hints in the section The Electrical System in Your Home.

Lock your doors, let a neighbor know you are leaving, or call the police department, and if you have a burglar alarm, notify your Alarm Company.

# Emergency Preparedness

## A Kit to have ready at Home

- ❑ A portable radio with two sets of fresh batteries
- ❑ A battery operated CO Detector with a fresh battery
- ❑ A flashlight with fresh batteries
- ❑ A supply of slow burning (dripless) candles and non-flammable holders
- ❑ A couple of coal oil lamps and a supply of lamp oil
- ❑ A supply of dry matches
- ❑ A whistle
- ❑ A manual bottle/can opener
- ❑ A reference card or sheet with Emergency Phone Numbers
- ❑ A copy of this “Hints Sheet”
- ❑ A complete First Aid Kit
- ❑ A phone that does not require plugging into your home electrical system

## If you have reason to believe a disaster is coming

- ❑ Get some cash at the bank. Banking machines; banks cards etc. may not be working if the power is or has been out for an extended period of time.
- ❑ Fill the car with gas on the way home.
- ❑ Get fresh gas for the generator.
- ❑ Check out the Emergency Kit.
- ❑ Stock up on canned and/or dry goods.
- ❑ Does your family have sufficient supply of medications?
- ❑ At least a three day supply of drinking water, one liter per adult per day.
- ❑ Check with your neighbors, are they all well, are they home, are their children alone?
- ❑ Will you need the camp stove? If so do you have fuel? Remember only use it outside!
- ❑ Where is the fire extinguisher?

## Waiting it out

- ❑ Conserve heat.
- ❑ If it is freezing rain, check outside periodically to make sure that snow pack is sloped away from your home. This will prevent water damming and insure water drains away from house.
- ❑ Remember the dangers that come with the use of open flames, candles, oil lamps, etc. Keep away from loose clothing, curtains newspapers and other flammables.
- ❑ Check the sump pump.
- ❑ This is a great opportunity to pass along coping skills to your children.
- ❑ Get out the board games and cards.
- ❑ Establish a routine that involves everyone in the home.
- ❑ Check on your neighbors.
- ❑ Think about what do to with pets in case the family needs to vacate or go to a shelter

## Going to a Shelter

- ❑ If you are encouraged, or need, to go to a shelter, inquire to determine what you have/need to take with you.
- ❑ Identification for you and your children
- ❑ Personal medications, hearing aid batteries

- ❑ Personal toiletries, e.g. washcloth, towel, bar soap, TP, tooth brush and paste
- ❑ Your warmest footwear, gloves and outerwear, do not forget a hat.
- ❑ A pillow?
- ❑ A blanket?
- ❑ A chair?
- ❑ A sleeping bag?
- ❑ Games?
- ❑ A change of clothes?
- ❑ Cell Phone and charger

Lock your doors, let a neighbor know you are leaving or call the police department and if you have a burglar alarm, notify your Alarm Company.