

# Be Prepared

What to do when the lights go out



**Tips for  
power outage  
preparation  
at home**

*Clark  
Public  
Utilities* 

## What to do when the lights go out

You've settled in for the evening, curled up on the couch with a good book or your favorite TV show to entertain you. All of a sudden the lights flicker...then darkness.

A major inconvenience! We know how frustrating it is to be without power, and at Clark Public Utilities we're doing all we can to prevent outages throughout the year.

But it's impossible to prevent them all, so here's some information we hope will help you prepare for and deal safely with any future outages you experience.

### Reporting your outage

Before you call us, check to see if you're the only house in your neighborhood that's dark. If so, check your service panel or breaker box for tripped breakers or blown fuses.

Call the Clark Public Utilities PowerLine at **360-992-8000**. This is an automated phone system that allows you to report your outage and receive up-to-date information. If you call to report a downed power line or other life-threatening emergency, you'll be routed to one of our customer service representatives for immediate help. Outages can also be reported on our website at [www.clarkpublicutilities.com](http://www.clarkpublicutilities.com), or visit MyAccount to subscribe to text or email outage notifications. Leave one indoor and one outdoor light on so both you and our crews will know when your electricity has been restored. If your neighbors' lights come on and yours don't, call us again.

Information is also available via our online outage map at [www.clarkpublicutilities.com](http://www.clarkpublicutilities.com).



# What to do when the lights go out

## Staying safe, keeping warm, preventing danger



- **Turn off and unplug all sensitive electrical equipment**, including your refrigerator, washer and dryer, television, microwave and computer. Also turn down your furnace thermostat and turn off your water heater circuit breaker. These precautions will help reduce the demand for electricity when power is restored. If every appliance in your home comes on at once, the system may overload and your power may go out again. Sometimes there's a fluctuation in voltage when electricity is restored, so don't turn any equipment on again until lights have returned to their normal brightness. Double check all devices that create heat, including irons, toasters and stovetops, to make sure they've been turned off.
- **Keep freezer and refrigerator doors closed** and cover those appliances with blankets. Food will stay frozen in a full freezer for about two days, and for one day in a freezer that's half full. The thawing rate also depends on what kind of food is in the freezer (for example, meat will stay frozen longer than baked goods). You can use dry ice to keep food frozen. If you do so, be sure to:
  - Wear gloves when handling the dry ice
  - Place a layer of cardboard or newspaper between the dry ice and your food
  - Use 25 pounds of dry ice per 10 cubic feet of freezer space to keep food frozen two to four days

- **Foods react differently to lack of refrigeration.** Foods with ice crystals can be refrozen safely. If in doubt, throw it out. Certain refrigerated foods, including poultry, pork, fish, chopped meats and foods containing mayonnaise, spoil rapidly. Cooked and cured meats, cheeses and eggs will be safe to eat even after several days without refrigeration. Remember that in the winter it may be colder outside than in the refrigerator, so you can store foods requiring refrigeration outside in a container sturdy enough to keep animals out.
- **Don't burn charcoal briquettes indoors**, even in your fireplace.
- **Don't burn anything larger than candles** inside your home without providing outside ventilation. Fire, smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide poisoning pose a significant danger unless you take appropriate safety precautions.
- **Create a "warm room"** in your house. It should be on the side of the house away from prevailing winds and have as few windows as possible. Isolate the room from the rest of the house by keeping the doors closed or hanging bedding or heavy drapes over entryways.
- **Conserve body heat.** Put on extra clothing, including a hat. Two or three lightweight layers are warmer than one heavy layer. Also, avoid staying in one position too long. Exercise generates body heat.

## Preparing for an outage

- Weatherize your home to minimize heat loss. Call one of our energy counselors at 360-992-3355 if you'd like some tips on what you can do to keep heat inside your home.
- Prepare an "outage kit" that includes a flashlight, fresh batteries, matches, firewood and kindling, blankets, sleeping bags, a battery-operated radio, at least a three-day supply of drinking water (a gallon per person per day is recommended), a supply of non-perishable food (cereal, peanut butter, crackers, etc.) and a manual can opener. Check the Red Cross website for a full list of recommended emergency supplies.
- If you have a cooking device such as a camp stove that you can use in an emergency, keep a supply of foods that require little heat to cook, such as canned spaghetti or soups.

## Other helpful hints

- If your water pump is powered by electricity, an outage could restrict your water use. Save as much water as possible when you drain the system. Store the water in closed or covered containers, preferably where it will not freeze. Fill a bathtub with water for toilet flushing.
- Protect your electrical equipment with surge suppressors.
- If you have an automatic garage door, learn how to open it manually. It won't open electronically during an outage.
- If you use a landline phone, cordless handsets won't work when the power goes out, so have at least one corded phone in your home. For wireless devices like cell phones or tablets, have car chargers or portable power banks.
- If it's freezing outside, protect your pipes by opening cabinet doors under sinks and leaving a trickle of water running in faucets, if possible.
- Above all, please try to be patient! We're always working to restore electric service as quickly as we can.

## A warning about home generators

If you use a back-up power generator in your home or business, never plug it into a wall outlet without first disconnecting from Clark Public Utilities' electric system. If you don't take precautions, the power from your generator will flow backwards into our high-voltage system and may injure or kill our line repair crews, who presume they are working on a "dead" line. For more information on portable and permanent generators, visit our website or call 360-992-3000 with questions.



### **Downed power lines are DANGEROUS!**

Utility power lines that serve your home contain tens of thousands of volts — even if they've been knocked to the ground in a storm. Please stay safe around them.

- If you see a downed power line, call Clark Public Utilities at 360-992-3000 immediately.
- Assume all downed lines are "live" and dangerous, even if they aren't sparking.
- NEVER touch a power line with your hand or any other object.
- If a power line falls across your vehicle while you're inside, DO NOT GET OUT. Call 911 and wait for help to arrive.



Learn more at [clarkpublicutilities.com](http://clarkpublicutilities.com) or 360-992-3000

Find us online!

