

Power Failure

Allen County Public Health Preparations

Because of ongoing concerns about potential terrorist attacks, the U.S. government is working to improve overall preparation against terrorism. One aspect of this preparation is to learn more about what to do during the event of a power outage. This document focuses on common sense principles that will be useful in a power outage event.

If a public health emergency happens in our community, Allen County Public Health will be the local agency responsible for preparing and guiding medical response and public information efforts. During such an emergency, a critical role of the Public Health Department will be to work with other local first responders, such as fire and police. The Public Health Department will also coordinate response activities with state and federal agencies.

Allen County Public Health is providing this information from The American Red Cross to help you understand what response you may be asked to take in the event of a power outage.

How to prepare for a power outage

Food Preservation

- One or more coolers—Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers work well.
- Ice—Surrounding your food with ice in a cooler or in the refrigerator will keep food colder for a longer period of time during a prolonged blackout.
- A digital quick-response thermometer—With these thermometers you can quickly check the internal temperatures of food to ensure they are cold enough to use safely.

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. First use perishable food from the refrigerator. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold for about 4 hours.
- Then use food from the freezer. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Use your non-perishable foods and staples after using food from the refrigerator and freezer.
- If it looks like the power outage will continue beyond a day, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.
- Keep food in a dry, cool spot and keep it covered at all times.

Water Safety

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula. Breastfeeding is beneficial for your child, and it is optimal if water contamination is of concern. If you do not breastfeed, and if possible, use baby formula that does not need to have water added.
- 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.
- If you don't have clean, safe, bottled water and if boiling is not possible, you often can make water safer to

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drink by using a disinfectant, such as unscented household chlorine bleach, iodine, or chlorine dioxide tablets. These can kill most harmful organisms, such as viruses and bacteria. However, only chlorine dioxide tablets are effective in controlling more resistant organisms, such as the parasite *Cryptosporidium*.

Boiling is extremely effective in disinfecting water. Vigorous boiling **for one minute** kills bacteria, including disease-causing organisms and giardia cysts (which cause severe gastrointestinal illness). Any heat source, such as an electric or gas range, camp stove or wood fire can be used to boil water. Even microwave ovens can heat water to boiling. Tincture of iodine from a home medicine chest may be used to disinfect water. Follow these guidelines:

Volume of Water	Number of Drops* of Tincture of Iodine	
	Clean Water	Cloudy Water
One quart	5	10
One gallon	20	40
Mix water thoroughly and let stand for 30 minutes.		
*5 drops = 1/3 of 1/8 teaspoon 10 drops = 2/3 of 1/8 teaspoon 20 drops = 2/3 of 1/4 teaspoon 40 drops = 1/4 teaspoon plus 1/3 of 1/4 teaspoon		

A few drops of chlorine bleach can be added to a gallon of water in an emergency or on a camping trip. Use these measurements:

Available Chlorine in Bleach	Number of Drops* of Chlorine Bleach to Disinfect One Gallon of Water	
	Clean Water	Cloudy Water
5.25%	8	16
Mix water thoroughly and let stand for 30 minutes.		
*8 drops = 1/2 of 1/8 teaspoon 16 drops = 1/8 teaspoon		

Chlorine and iodine tablets are available in drug stores and camping or sporting goods stores. Follow the directions on the container. Store disinfected water in clean, covered containers. All water used for drinking, cooking, preparing beverages and brushing teeth should be disinfected. For more information on disinfection of water systems, call or visit your county Extension office and ask for Bulletin 765, Bacteria in Drinking Water.

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/aex-fact/0317.html>

Prepare a power outage emergency preparedness kit including:

- Water—one gallon per person, per day (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home) 1 case of water~3 gal of water
- Food—non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)
- Flashlight (Do not use candles during a power outage due to the extreme risk of fire.)
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and required medical items
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, deed/lease to home, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash
- Duct tape
- If someone in your home is dependent on electric-powered, life-sustaining equipment,

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remember to include backup power in your evacuation plan

- Keep a non-cordless telephone in your home. It is likely to work even when the power is out.
- Keep your car's gas tank full.

What to know about carbon monoxide

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating or cooking are [carbon monoxide poisoning](#), electric shock and fire.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door.
- Call for help from the fresh air location and remain there until emergency personnel arrive to assist you.

Do not touch any electrical power lines and keep your family and pets away from them. Report downed power lines to the appropriate officials in your area.

What should be thrown away

- Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures higher than 40° F (4° C) for 2 hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color or texture. When in

doubt, throw it out! For more information on what can be kept and what should be thrown out visit:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/emergency-preparedness/keeping-food-safe-during-an-emergency/ct_index

- Never taste food or rely on appearance or odor to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they have been at room temperature too long, bacteria causing food-borne illnesses can start growing quickly. Some types of bacteria produce toxins that cannot be destroyed by cooking.
- If food in the freezer is colder than 40° F and has ice crystals on it, you can refreeze it.
- If you are not sure food is cold enough, take its temperature with a food thermometer. Throw out any foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been exposed to temperatures higher than 40° F (4° C) for 2 hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture, or feels warm to touch.

For more information on how to prepare and respond to power outages visit

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/power-outage>

For more information on disinfecting water supplies visit <http://ohioline.osu.edu/aex-fact/0317.html>

If you have any questions about power outages please contact Allen County Public Health at 419-228-4457. Health Department staff members are available to answer your questions Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can also visit

www.allencountypublichealth.org. For information about putting together an Emergency Preparation Plan, visit the FEMA site at www.ready.gov. Also, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at www.emergency.cdc.gov for additional information.