

## **What to Do If the Power Goes Out in the Winter**

Any number of things can cause a power outage during the winter months. Most probably it is weather-related. If it is caused by the weather, the outage could be wide-spread or it could be localized.

First check to make sure you have not blown a circuit. Check the circuit breakers in your home's electrical panel.

If power is out in your entire neighborhood, call your local utility company to report the outage. The phone number should be on your electricity bill, or check the white pages in your phone book.

If power is out over a widespread area, it may take a longer time to restore power everywhere.

Here are some things to remember or to do...

**UNLESS** there is an emergency, do not call 9-1-1. That number should **ONLY** be used if there is an emergency, or if someone is injured or in danger.

If there are power lines down in your neighborhood, call 9-1-1 and call your utility company. **DO NOT GO NEAR DOWNED POWER LINES.**

Listen to your battery-powered radio or TV, especially for news at the top of each hour, to find out when the power might be restored.

Dress to stay warm - wear layers, including a sweater, sweatshirt or even a jacket. You lose heat through your hands and the top of your head. Wear gloves and a knit hat, not just a baseball cap.

Avoid opening your refrigerator and freezer as much as possible. Food inside should stay cold for hours if the door is left closed.

If you're cold, take a warm shower - to increase your body temperature. Your hot water tank, even if electric, will stay warm for a few hours.

Unplug some of your major appliances. When the power comes back on, all of those appliances can create a drain or power surge. This can harm sensitive equipment. To avoid a power surge when the electricity returns, turn off computers, TVs, stereos and other unnecessary electronic equipment at the power source. Leave a light on so you'll know when the power is restored.

If you have a generator, do not connect it to your home's power system unless it has been properly installed and disconnects you from the main power grid when it is operating. If you do not disconnect from the power grid, you can be sending electricity back down the lines; not just to your home. That could be deadly for power company workers.

**If you have a regular wood stove or fireplace, you can use it for heat. However, DO NOT USE kerosene heaters, BBQs, or any outdoor type heater inside. Such devices create poisonous gases such as carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas given off by combustion and could kill.**

**Check on your elderly neighbors or those who may have medical conditions or use medical machinery that operates on electricity. Make sure they are dressed appropriately warm. If someone needs to have machinery that operates on electricity, move her to a place where electricity is working.**

**If you have to go out, drive carefully. Remember that traffic signals may be out during a power outage. Consider each intersection to be a four-way stop and drive defensively.**