

Planning for Long Term Power Outages

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Whether it be from a hurricane, severe storm, infrastructure damage, or any other cause, long term power outages are a very commonly overlooked area of preparedness in a home.

What exactly constitutes a long term power outage?

Well...that all is dependent on how widespread the outage is, the time of year, and your own personal situation. A two day power outage in the late fall that is localized to a few streets with no other significant impacts is MUCH different than a two day power outage in the middle of summer that effects an entire community. Other issues that can determine what may constitute a long term outage would be if you have any medical issues that require power. A person with no significant medical issues/medications may be able to handle a two day power outage with relative ease, while a person that is dependent on oxygen, feeding tubes, CPAP machines, etc., may be in a life or death situation.

How likely is a long term power outage?

Long term power outages (a day or more) are much more likely than you may think. For those that have lived in Florida for a significant amount of time are likely to remember at least one point in their life that they were out of power for more than a day. Significant hurricanes such as Michael, Charlie, Irma, and even lower level hurricanes such as Hermine has cause power outages of a week or longer. There have even been times in Florida that power has been out for over a MONTH! Additionally, rural areas are at a much higher risk of prolonged power outages after severe thunderstorms and other severe weather events due to heavy tree cover and other vegetation that may make power restoration take longer.

What can I do to prepare?

Start your preparedness by taking an inventory of your needs. Take stock of what you may need for an extended power outage. You can use a fictional 3 day power outage as your planning scenario

- **Lights and Electronics:** Figure out how many flashlights, batteries, portable cell phone chargers, battery backups, etc. that you will need to provide light and power to your cell phones. Remember: NEED and WANT are two different things. Start with what you need and then add in what you will want if you are financially able to do so
- **Medical Issues:** Do you have medical devices that need power? What about medications? Talk to your medical provider about how you can prepare your medical devices and medications for long term power outages. They will be able to provide specific guidance on what will be critical for life sustain functions. Make sure that you have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices.
- **Food:** A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (give or take). Use coolers and ice if possible to keep food cold. Additionally, you should keep enough non-perishable food and water available so that you can keep your freezers and refrigerators closed.
- **Heating/Cooling:** Probably the worst part of a prolonged power outage and the most difficult thing to prepare for. If you or your family is in medical danger due to the heat/cold, contact your local Emergency Management office to find out if there are available community locations that can be used as cooling/heating areas. If the power outage is more localized to your specific area, consider visiting public areas such as department stores or other large establishments for brief respites from the temperatures.
- **Generators:** If you have the financial ability to use a generator, make sure that you use it SAFELY. Visit our website at levydisaster.com/personal-preparedness.php for information on how to use a generator safely after a disaster.
- **Contact your power provider:** If your power goes out, don't just assume someone else has called to report it. Power companies rely a lot on residents reporting power outages to track and diagnose the issue. Find out the best way to report a power outage to your provider before the power goes out. Additional note: Many power companies have registries that allow you to register if you have medical conditions/devices that require power. Contact your local power provider for more information.
- **Sign up for Emergency Notifications:** Every County in Florida has a local Emergency Management office and almost every county has some sort of emergency notification system you can sign up for. Take the time to sign up for emergency notifications in your area so you can stay informed. Levy County residents and visitors can register by visiting our website at LevyDisaster.com
- **Check on your neighbor:** We can't always do things alone. Working together as a community is a force multiplier and will allow us all to recover faster and stronger

Stay Safe, Stay Informed

For more information, contact Levy County Emergency Management

Phone: 352-486-5213

Email: questions@levydisaster.com

Facebook: [facebook.com/lcdem](https://www.facebook.com/lcdem)

Twitter: @LevyCountyEM

Mobile App: Search "Levy County EM" in the Google and Apple App Store

BE PREPARED FOR A POWER OUTAGE

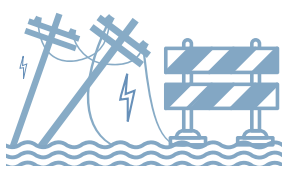
Extended power outages may impact the whole community and the economy.



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A power outage is when the electrical power goes out unexpectedly.



May disrupt communications, water, transportation



May close retail businesses, grocery stores, gas stations, ATMs, banks, and other services



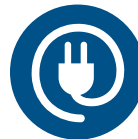
Can cause food spoilage, water contamination



Can prevent use of medical devices

PROTECT YOURSELF DURING A POWER OUTAGE

Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.



Disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.

Only use generators outdoors and away from windows.



Use alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or power-dependent medical devices.

Do not use a gas stove to heat your home.



If safe, go to an alternate location for heat or cooling.



Check on neighbors.

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A POWER OUTAGE THREATENS

Prepare NOW

Take an inventory now of the items you need that rely on electricity.

Talk to your medical provider about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity and refrigerated medicines. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures and get specific guidance for any medications that are critical for life.

Plan for batteries and other alternatives to meet your needs when the power goes out.

Sign up for local alerts and warning systems. Monitor weather reports.

Install carbon monoxide detectors with battery backup in central locations on every level of your home.

Determine whether your home phone will work in a power outage and how long battery backup will last.

Review the supplies that are available in case of no power. Have flashlights with extra batteries for every household member. Have enough nonperishable food and water.

Use a thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer so that you can know the temperature when the power is restored.

Keep mobile phones and other electric equipment charged and gas tanks full.

Survive DURING

Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. The refrigerator will keep food cold for **about four hours**. A full freezer will keep the temperature for **about 48 hours**. Use coolers with ice if necessary. Monitor temperatures with a thermometer.

Use food supplies that do not require refrigeration.

Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Generators, camp stoves, or charcoal grills should always be used outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows. Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.

Check on your neighbors. Older adults and young children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

Go to a community location with power if heat or cold is extreme.

Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment, or electronics. Power may return with momentary “surges” or “spikes” that can cause damage.

Be Safe AFTER

When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.

If the power is out for more than a day, discard any medication that should be refrigerated, unless the drug’s label says otherwise. If a life depends on the refrigerated drugs, consult a doctor or pharmacist and use medicine only until a new supply is available.



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Take an Active Role in Your Safety

Go to **Ready.gov** and search for **power outage**. Download the **FEMA app** to get more information about preparing for a **power outage**.