

# Getting through a power outage

Easy · 15 min to read and prep · Free, plus a \$10 to \$30 kit if you don't have one

Keep the fridge and freezer shut: a closed fridge keeps food safe about 4 hours, a full freezer about 48 (24 if half full). Unplug electronics, use flashlights instead of candles, and never run a generator, grill or camp stove indoors or within 20 feet of a window. Stay 35 feet from downed lines. Afterward, throw out perishables that sat above 40°F for 2 hours.

## YOU'LL NEED

- |                                                                            |                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A flashlight for each person, and spare batteries | <input type="checkbox"/> A cooler, and somewhere to get ice                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A charged power bank                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Two weeks of nonperishable food and water, if you can store it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A fridge or appliance thermometer                 |                                                                                         |

## DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Check whether it's just you.** If neighbors still have lights, check your breaker panel for a tripped breaker.
- 2 **Keep the fridge and freezer closed.** An unopened fridge keeps food cold for about 4 hours.
- 3 **Unplug electronics and appliances.** Power can come back with surges or spikes that damage them.
- 4 **Use flashlights, not candles.** Candles are a fire risk.
- 5 **Keep fuel-burning equipment outside.** Generators, camp stoves and charcoal grills go outdoors only, at least 20 feet from windows, doors and attached garages.
- 6 **Charge your phone safely.** Use a power bank.
- 7 **Leave if it's too hot or too cold.** Go to a community location with power if the heat or cold is extreme.
- 8 **Stay away from downed power lines.** Stay at least 35 feet from fallen lines and anything they touch, and call 911.
- 9 **Sort the food when the power comes back.** Never taste food to decide whether it's safe.

**Watch out** Carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless, and it can kill people in their sleep before they notice symptoms. Watch for headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. If you suspect it, get everyone into fresh air right away and call 911.

**DAD NOTE** *Keep the fridge shut and the grill outside.*

Full lesson: [apkeys.com/your-place/preparing-for-emergencies/getting-through-a-power-outage/](https://apkeys.com/your-place/preparing-for-emergencies/getting-through-a-power-outage/)

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: Ready.gov (FEMA); FoodSafety.gov; American Red Cross; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.