

# Power-Outage Prep Checklist

Pre-storm 24-12-6-hour sequence + during-outage operations. Keep on the refrigerator.

---

Power outages from severe weather are predictable hours in advance. The work to be ready is boring, mechanical, and best done before the storm warning becomes urgent. Run this sequence whenever forecasted winds exceed 50 mph (80 kph), an ice storm is forecast, or a public-safety power-shutoff is announced. Cross-reference with [energy/blackout-response.md](#) and [energy/generators.md](#).

## T-24 hours — Plan + provision

- Charge every device — phones, tablets, laptops, power banks, headlamps.
- Top off the fridge with cold water bottles (frozen items = thermal mass).
- Set the freezer to its coldest setting; consolidate items if half-empty.
- Fill the bathtub or large containers with water (~80-100 gallons / 300-380 L for sanitation).
- Buy / refresh treated gasoline for the generator if used (5-10 gallons / 19-38 L minimum).
- Test the generator on a real load for 15 minutes. Verify oil + fuel + spark plug.
- Confirm the rally point with household members. Confirm out-of-state contact.
- Cash on hand — ATMs and card readers fail in outages. Target 7-day household cash.
- Refill prescription medications if a refill window is approaching.

## T-12 hours — Mitigate + secure

- Move outdoor furniture, tools, and projectiles inside.
- Park vehicles away from large trees; consider garage if forecast is severe.
- Charge tools and start home battery storage at 100% if installed.
- Cook a hot meal — eat down the most-perishable fridge items first.
- Stage flashlights, headlamps, and battery lanterns in every room.
- Stage the cooler near the kitchen — pre-chilled with sealed ice packs.
- Print or screenshot route maps to the rally point (offline access).
- Charge wired weather radio if applicable; set to NOAA frequency.

## T-6 hours — Pre-positioning

- Set the generator outside, downwind, 20+ ft (6 m) from any window or door per CPSC Pub 468.
- Stage extension cords (12 AWG minimum, ≤50 ft / 15 m). NEVER backfeed through a wall outlet.
- Place water-purification supplies (filter + chlorine + iodine) in a known location.
- Test communications: text out-of-state contact; verify family check-in works.
- Identify a designated CO alarm location near sleeping areas (UL 2034 + battery backup).
- Place hard-copy emergency cards on the refrigerator (medical, communications, route plan).

## During outage — Operations

- Refrigerator: keep closed. A full fridge holds safe temps ~4 hours; freezer ~24-48 hours.
- Generator: run 1-2 hours every 6-8 hours to cycle the fridge/freezer; never run indoors.
- Heating: layer clothing first; use space heaters only on non-MSW generators per NEC 210.21.
- Cooking: outdoor stove only. Never use a grill or camp stove indoors.
- Lighting: headlamps free both hands; lanterns for area lighting; avoid candles where children are.
- Communication: check in with out-of-state contact every 12 hours via text (works when calls fail).
- Documentation: photograph any storm damage for insurance once safe to do so.

## Restoration — Sequenced load-up

- When power returns, leave most loads OFF for 15-30 minutes. Voltage stabilization period.
- First: lights only. Confirm steady voltage with a meter (110-125V US, 220-240V EU).
- Second: refrigerator and freezer.
- Third: HVAC and water heater (long warm-up cycles).
- Fourth: laundry / dishwasher / heavy appliances.
- LAST: sensitive electronics (computers, AV equipment, medical devices). Use surge-protected outlets.

Source authorities: CPSC Public Information 468 (generator siting), UL 2034 (CO alarm), NEC 70 Articles 210/240/702 (load + transfer + cord).  
Survipedia: [energy/generators.md](#), [energy/blackout-response.md](#), [energy/inverters.md](#).

