

Advice for Persons with Disabilities Concerning Power Shortages and Blackouts

For persons who depend on respirators, home dialysis machines, or electrically powered assistive devices or lifts, an electrical outage can have life-threatening consequences," according to Michael Collins, of the State Independent Living Council.

The Council suggests that the following steps be taken by persons with disabilities or those who are in poor health or sensitive to extreme temperatures:

1) **Contact the local electrical utility company in advance about any specific needs regarding breathing machines or other life-sustaining devices that depend on electricity. If lack of electricity would create an immediate threat to life or safety, local public safety agencies should also be given advance notification. To expedite emergency response, house numbers should be readily visible from the street.**

2) **Establish a support network of friends and neighbors who can check on you periodically if the power is out.**

3) **Keep a flashlight equipped with fresh batteries within easy reach, so that there is some light immediately available. For people with limited reach or grasping ability, inexpensive battery-operated touch lamps are a good option.**

4) **Do not use candles for light or heat in an emergency, as they can be fire hazards.**

5) **Extra blankets or warm clothing should be stored within easy reach. Most homes will retain some heat for several hours during electrical outages; do not use barbeques, gas powered appliances or propane heaters as heat sources, as the result can be carbon monoxide poisoning.**

6) **For people using battery-powered mobility or breathing equipment, assure that batteries are fully charged each day.**

7) **Store supplies of medicine and drinking water so they will be readily accessible in the event that there is a power outage; some household water supplies can be disrupted during blackouts. Assemble a 10-day supply of prescription medications and durable medical goods and store them in a convenient location. A copy of emergency contact numbers and current prescriptions should be stored in the same location.**

8) **Cordless telephones may not work during a power outage, so consider keeping a standard phone plugged into a second phone jack. A cellular telephone is also a good backup option.**

9) **Monitoring radio stations during emergency situations can help in determining the extent and probable duration of any electrical outages. Assure that a battery-operated radio is available for this purpose, with at least one set of extra**



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batteries.

10) During Stage Three Alerts, monitor local television or radio news stations to determine if and where blackouts will occur. Check monthly electric utility bills to determine the applicable Power Block number, as that is usually how the blackout areas will be identified. If the Power Block number is not shown on the monthly bill, contact the local electric utility company to learn where that information is available.

11) When an electrical outage does occur, turn off all appliances, computers and lights--except for one that will indicate when power has been restored.

[SOURCE: California Independent Living Council]

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