Your phone and internet are down.

When the towers go quiet, it's easy to feel cut off. But there are still simple ways to reach everyone at home and get real information. Here's how to stay connected when the network isn't.

READ FIRST

If any of these happen, act first

! **You have a real emergency and calls won't connect.**
Try a text — per the FCC, texts often get through on a congested network when voice can't. And 911 will use ANY carrier's signal your phone can find, even without service of your own.

FREE, RIGHT NOW

Start with these — they cost nothing

- [ ] Write down key numbers
  on paper. If your phone dies or resets, your contacts go with it.
- [ ] Agree on a meeting spot
  and pick an out-of-town relative everyone can call as a relay when local lines are jammed.
- [ ] Try text before calling
  a short text often slips through when a voice call will not connect.
- [ ] Save offline maps and documents
  download maps of your area and keep PDF copies of IDs and insurance on your phone.
- [ ] Keep a radio handy
  a battery or hand-crank weather radio gives you official updates with no network at all.

UNDER 12 HOURS

Switch to what still works

- [ ] Put your phone in low-power mode immediately to protect the charge you have.
- [ ] Send short texts, not calls — they use less bandwidth and keep retrying on their own.
- [ ] Tune a battery or hand-crank radio to your local NOAA or emergency station.
- [ ] Text your out-of-town contact that you're okay and where you are.
- [ ] Tell everyone in the house the plan in case service stays down through the night.

12–48 HOURS

Connect the old-fashioned way

- [ ] If you can't reach someone, go to your agreed meeting spot at the agreed time.
- [ ] Keep one phone charged and powered down between quick checks for service.

General guidance for household planning — not professional advice. In an emergency, follow your local authorities and call 911.

- [ ] Route messages through your out-of-town relay, who can often text when local lines cannot.
- [ ] Check the radio at set times for official updates instead of refreshing a dead phone.
- [ ] Write down anything important you'd normally trust your phone to remember.

48 HOURS AND BEYOND

Stay reachable and informed

- [ ] Keep a phone and the radio powered from a battery pack or power station.
- [ ] Lean on your paper copies of IDs, insurance, and contacts while systems are down.
- [ ] Check in at your meeting spot on a set schedule so no one waits and worries.
- [ ] Be patient when service flickers back — send texts first, and don't jam it with calls.
- [ ] Once you're reconnected, confirm everyone's status and update the plan for next time.

KNOW THE LINE

When it’s more than an inconvenience

- **Call 911: Life-safety emergencies only, same as always — the network being down doesn't change what 911 is for.**
- **Call 911: If a call won't connect, try text-to-911 — it works in many counties now, though not all, per the FCC. Location first, then the emergency.**

WORTH KNOWING

Easy mistakes to avoid

- **Hammering redial on a jammed network**
  Every retry adds to the congestion that's blocking you. Send one text, wait, and try again in a few minutes — per FCC guidance.
- **Watching the outage coverage on your last 40%**
  Video is the fastest way to drain the one battery that matters. Low-power mode, screen down, texts only — the news will still be there.
- **Keeping every number in a phone that might die**
  Write the numbers that matter on a card in your wallet — your out-of-area contact first. Paper doesn't need a charger.
- **Betting everything on one channel**
  When cell fails, something else usually works: a battery AM/FM radio for news in, a neighbor's different carrier for word out. Two channels beat one perfect plan.

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