It's been more than 48 hours.

Short outages are an annoyance. Long ones are a different problem — food, water, heat, and patience all start to run thin. Here's what changes after day two, and how to keep your household steady.

READ FIRST

If any of these happen, act first

! **Anything with a flame or an engine is running indoors.**
Generators, charcoal grills, and camp stoves stay outside — every year, day two of a long outage is when carbon monoxide deaths spike, per the CDC. If a CO alarm sounds, everyone out, then 911.

! **Someone's getting confused or slurring words in a cold house.**
Those are hypothermia signs — per the CDC — and they're easy to mistake for tiredness. Warm them gradually and call 911 if they don't come around fast.

FREE, RIGHT NOW

Start with these — they cost nothing

- [ ] Consolidate your cold food
  pack it into one full freezer or coolers with ice so it stays cold longer.
- [ ] Set one room as your base
  a single "warm room" or "cool room" is easier to keep livable than the whole house.
- [ ] Ration your phone use
  keep one device on at a time for updates and save the rest for emergencies.
- [ ] Check on neighbors daily
  pool food, water, and tools where it helps. Long outages are easier together.
- [ ] Keep a simple routine
  regular meals and a set bedtime keep kids calmer and the days from blurring together.

RIGHT NOW (PAST 48 HRS)

Take stock

- [ ] Walk through and count exactly what food, water, fuel, and battery power you have left.
- [ ] Decide what to eat first — anything thawing or already warm goes before shelf-stable food.
- [ ] Fully charge one phone and set it aside as your emergency line; power the rest down.
- [ ] Check pipes if it's freezing: let faucets drip and open the cabinet doors under sinks.
- [ ] Pool notes with neighbors — who has a generator, who needs checking on, what is open nearby.

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

DAYS 3–4

Shift to the long haul

- [ ] Switch to shelf-stable food that needs no cooking or refrigeration.
- [ ] Refill water containers and treat questionable water by boiling or filtering.
- [ ] Run a generator only outdoors, 20+ feet from the house, and ration the fuel you have.
- [ ] Heat or cool one room and keep everyone in it; close the doors to the rest of the house.
- [ ] Document spoiled food and any damage with photos as you go, for insurance.

DAY 5 AND BEYOND

Reassess your home

- [ ] Be honest about livability — if the house can't stay safe, relocate to family or a shelter.
- [ ] A high-capacity power station can keep a fridge, medical gear, and a heater fan running for days.
- [ ] Keep checking official updates for an honest restore estimate, not rumors.
- [ ] Watch the vulnerable closely; days of cold or heat strain add up quietly.
- [ ] When power returns, restart appliances one at a time and check the freezer before trusting it.

KNOW THE LINE

When it’s more than an inconvenience

- **Call 911: Carbon monoxide symptoms — headache, dizziness, nausea — in anyone, or an alarm you can't explain.**
- **Call 911: Hypothermia signs: confusion, slurred speech, intense shivering that suddenly stops.**
- **Call 911: A medical device situation you can no longer manage at home.**
- **Leave: A multi-day winter outage where you can't keep at least one room safely warm — call 211 or your county's emergency line for shelter and warming center locations.**
- **Leave: Anyone medically fragile once the home's conditions or their supplies can't hold — relocate them early, not at the breaking point.**

WORTH KNOWING

Easy mistakes to avoid

- **Getting casual about fuel on day three**
  Fatigue makes shortcuts tempting — the generator creeps closer to the door, the grill comes inside “just this once.” The CO rules don't relax because you're tired.
- **Running the generator around the clock**
  The fridge only needs a few hours of power at a time to stay cold. Cycling the generator stretches your fuel for days instead of hours.
- **Playing it safe-ish with day-old food**
  After the fridge window passes, “it smells fine” isn't a test. When in doubt, throw it out — per USDA. Food poisoning during an outage is a genuinely bad combination.

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- **Not checking on the neighbors**
  The people that struggle most in a long outage are often one door away — older folks, anyone alone, anyone on medical equipment. Knock on day one, then keep knocking.

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