Your power just went out.

Take a breath. Most outages are back within a few hours. Here's how to keep your food safe, your phone alive, and everyone comfortable while you wait.

READ FIRST

If any of these happen, act first

! **A carbon monoxide alarm sounds.**
Get everyone outside right away and call 911. Don't go back in to open windows — CO can put you down before you notice anything, because you can't smell it at all.

! **You see a downed power line.**
Stay far back — at least a school bus length — and call 911. A line can be live without sparking or humming.

FREE, RIGHT NOW

Start with these — they cost nothing

- [ ] Keep the fridge and freezer shut
  every peek lets cold air out. Don't open them unless you have to.
- [ ] Switch phones to low-power mode
  dim the screen and close apps to stretch the battery for hours.
- [ ] Unplug big electronics
  a surge when power returns can damage TVs and computers. Leave one lamp on so you know when it is back.
- [ ] Fill a few jugs with water
  in case the outage drags on or affects your water pressure.
- [ ] Text instead of calling
  texts get through even when the network is busy.

UNDER 12 HOURS

Settle in and protect what you have

- [ ] Keep the fridge and freezer closed — every opening costs about 30 minutes of cold.
- [ ] Charge every phone and battery pack now, especially if the power is flickering.
- [ ] Fill the bathtub and a few jugs in case water pressure drops or your well pump is down.
- [ ] Text, don't call — short texts route through congested networks better than voice.
- [ ] Find your flashlights and headlamps before dark, while you can still see.
- [ ] Knock on the doors of older neighbors or anyone that lives alone.

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

12–48 HOURS

Stretch your food and power

- [ ] Move freezer food into coolers packed with ice — or outside if it is below freezing.
- [ ] Eat the fridge food first; it spoils before anything in the freezer.
- [ ] Charge devices from your car USB port or a power station — run the car outdoors only.
- [ ] Drop to one shared light and one shared device to stretch the power you have.
- [ ] Write down what is in the freezer so you can judge food safety later without opening it.
- [ ] If it is cold, gather everyone into one room and shut the doors to the rest of the house.

48 HOURS AND BEYOND

Make safe calls

- [ ] Throw out perishable food that has been above 40°F for more than two hours — when in doubt, toss it.
- [ ] If the house is getting dangerously hot or cold, plan to stay with family or at a public shelter.
- [ ] Refill water containers while you still have pressure, and ration what is stored.
- [ ] When power returns, plug major appliances back in one at a time to avoid tripping the line.
- [ ] Photograph spoiled food and any damage before cleanup — your insurance may ask for it.

KNOW THE LINE

When it’s more than an inconvenience

- **Call 911: Anyone has carbon monoxide symptoms — headache, dizziness, confusion, nausea.**
- **Call 911: A downed line is touching your car, your house, or standing water.**
- **Call 911: Someone's powered medical equipment has failed and they're in distress.**
- **Leave: The house is getting dangerously cold or hot for an infant, an older adult, or anyone fragile.**
- **Leave: You can't keep required medical equipment running and there's no restore estimate. Call your utility's medical line first if you're registered.**

WORTH KNOWING

Easy mistakes to avoid

- **Running the generator in the garage**
  Even with the door open, carbon monoxide builds in minutes. Outside only, at least 20 feet from windows and doors — per the CDC.
- **Opening the fridge to check on things**
  Every open costs you cold. Kept shut, a fridge holds safe temps for about 4 hours and a full freezer 24–48 hours — per USDA.
- **Heating the house with the gas oven**
  Ovens aren't vented for that, and the CO risk is real — per the CDC. Layers, one warm room, and closed doors work better than you'd think.

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- **Burning through every phone battery at once**
  Put one phone on low-power mode and make it the household's lifeline. Texts get through when calls won't, and they sip battery.

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