

# UTILITY DISRUPTIONS

Storms and emergencies can cause disruptions to power, water and gas supplies and telephone services leading to anxiety and confusion. It is important to stay calm and have an easily accessible list of utility service providers and trained professionals you can call for assistance. The following tips will help to prepare you and your family in the event of utility disruptions.

## Power Outages/Emergencies

### Before

- Prepare a family disaster plan and an emergency supplies kit. (see "General Preparedness" section)
- Make sure a "hardwired" phone is available in your home. Cordless phones do not work when the power is off.
- Store a battery operated radio with extra batteries.
- Consider using a battery operated lantern instead of candles and have a flashlight readily available.
- Know how to manually open an electric garage door.
- If your home is equipped with a generator, be sure a licensed electrician has installed it and that all safety features are in place.
- Devise a back-up plan if you or someone in your family uses electronic medical devices such as life-support or monitoring equipment in the event of prolonged outages.

### During

- Check to see if a fuse is blown or a circuit breaker has been tripped.
- Notify your electricity provider of the outage.
- Leave one light turned on so you'll know when your power returns.
- Turn off or unplug all sensitive electronic equipment such as computers, VCR, DVD, etc., and all appliances that will go on automatically to avoid overloads of the circuits.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. (see "Food Safety during Outages" section)
- Follow all important life-saving instructions if using a generator
- Stay indoors if possible and listen for updates via a battery-operated radio.
- If you must go outside avoid downed utility lines.
- Check on people with special needs.
- Consider relocating to a friend's or relative's home or a hotel if power will be out for an extended period of time.
- If an outage occurs during winter close the doors to unused rooms to conserve heat. Dress warmly.
- Exercise safety when using a fireplace for heat and light.
- Allow your faucets to drip steadily to avoid frozen pipes.
- During summer nights, open up windows to allow for ventilation and drink plenty of water.

### After

- Keep alert to emergency updates from local officials.

## Gas Outages/Emergencies

### Before

- Have a trained professional check all gas appliances and equipment annually by ensure all gas lines are securely fastened and no leaks are present.

### During

- If you smell gas, leave your location immediately.
- Do not turn off any lights or appliances and do not use the telephone in your home.
- Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's home.
- Do not smoke or light matches.

## Gas Outages/Emergencies

### After

- Listen to emergency services personnel for instructions about when it is safe to return to your home.
- If a faint odor is present, open windows to ventilate the area and notify emergency services personnel.

### Tips on Carbon Monoxide

- Install a carbon monoxide detection device in your home near heating units. Check with your local fire department for additional information.
- Have a professional clean and check your heating system annually and replace any worn or defective parts.
- Clean your chimney and flue annually to remove soot, leaves, etc.
- Do not use kerosene or propane heaters indoors as they may reduce oxygen levels in your home.
- Do not use your gas oven range to heat your home.
- Make sure your garage door is open before starting your vehicle to avoid carbon monoxide build-up.

**Symptoms:** include headaches, dizziness, nausea, chest pains, confusion, drowsiness, unconsciousness. If you suspect exposure, seek fresh air immediately and call a doctor.

## Water Service Outages/Emergencies

### Before

- Know where water shut off valves are located in your home.
- Have a professional plumber check all pipes for wear and tear, leaks, proper insulation and for clogs.
- Install water-saving fixtures in your home.
- Always practice water conservation in the event droughts are issued in the summertime.
- Report open or leaky fire hydrants to your local fire department.
- Be alert to your local media for any emergency updates or restrictions.

### During

- Listen for emergency updates, instructions and restrictions from local officials.
- If water is leaking near electrical fixtures notify your local fire department and do not touch anything electrical.
- Notify your water service provider if any discoloration in your water is evident.
- Avoid flooded streets and basements.

### After

- Listen to local officials for proper clean-up instructions and health alerts.

## Telephone Service Outages/Emergencies

### Before

- Prepare a communications plan with a pre-designated location to meet your family in the event of an outage to report your safety. (see "General Preparedness" section)
- Purchase a cell phone for emergency purposes.
- Keep a calling card and coins available for pay phones or other alternative means of communication.

### During

- Listen to your local media for emergency instructions if the outage is widespread.
- Use your cell phone only for emergency purposes.
- Borrow a friend's or neighbor's phone to report an outage.

### After

- Stay tuned to local emergency updates.
- Check all communication devices to ensure they are working properly.