

FACTS



WINTER POWER FAILURES

Winter power failures caused by adverse weather conditions can last from a few hours to several days or even longer. Loss of heat in the home can result in adverse living conditions and cause damage to walls, floors and plumbing.

The following are suggested measures to take in order to reduce the damage in case of a power failure during the winter months.

Alternate Heat

- If you have a wood-burning stove or fireplace make sure that the flue has been cleaned and that it is in good working condition. A build-up of creosote in the flue can cause a chimney fire.
- Keep a good supply of dry wood on hand.
- If you have a home generator, it is extremely important to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Direct installation of a generator to an existing electrical system should only be done by a qualified individual and approved by your local public utilities company (P.U.C.).
- During the Ice Storm of 1998, there were cases of carbon monoxide poisoning reported. Charcoal or gas barbecues, camping heaters or home generators must never be situated indoors since they produce carbon monoxide. It is important to remember that carbon monoxide is an odourless gas and can kill you before it is detected.

If There Is A Power Failure

- Check if your neighbors are affected as well.
- Notify your local P.U.C. office. Make sure that you have their number by your telephone.
- Turn off all of your appliances and electronic equipment and turn your thermostat down. If a power surge occurs it can damage your electrical units. This will also prevent possible fires.
- Leave one light on so that you know when power has been restored.
- Don't open your refrigerator or freezer unless it is necessary. A full freezer will keep foods frozen for 24 to 36 hours if the door is kept closed. Keep a bag of ice cubes in the freezer. If the cubes have not melted and refrozen into a solid block you can assume that the food is safe.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Use your battery-operated radio for local information and instructions.

— *Health & Environment Facts* —

If You Have To Leave Your Home (usually after 72 hours)

In order to prevent damage from occurring to your home take the following precautions:

- Turn off the main circuit breaker to the power supply box.
- Turn off the water where it enters your house. Protect the inlet pipe, meter or pump with blankets.
- Drain the indoor plumbing by opening the drain valve in the basement, opening all taps and flushing the toilet a few times. Add a small amount of antifreeze to the water left in the toilet bowl, sink and bath tub traps.
- Drain your hot water tank into the basement floor drain. If it is gas-fired then the pilot light should be turned off. Only a qualified person should re-ignite it.
- Unhook the washing machine hoses and drain the hoses.
- If you have a sump pump, be prepared for possible flooding in the basement and take appropriate action to protect your property.

When The Power Is Restored

- Do not enter a flooded basement unless you are sure that all power is turned off.
- If it is safe to enter the basement, switch on the main power box. Make sure that all electrical appliances and equipment are unplugged in case of a power surge.
- Turn up the thermostat and then reconnect the refrigerator and freezer. Wait 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting the appliances.
- Close the drain valve in the basement and turn on the water supply. Close the lowest valves first and allow the air to escape from the upper taps.
- Make sure that there is water in your hot water tank prior to turning it back on.
- Check your food supplies for signs of spoilage. Your local Public Health Unit can offer you advice.
- Restock your Emergency Survival Kit.

If someone depends on electrically powered life-sustaining equipment let your local P.U.C. and community emergency groups know.

Information provided by the Emergency Preparedness Canada