Winter Prep Guide for Emergencies

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What can go wrong?

- Home or neighborhood power outage
  - Do you have a generator? If “YES”
    - Do you run it periodically?
    - Always test before bad weather in case it doesn’t start due to bad fuel or dead battery (if electric start)
  - Have you changed oil and cleaned air filter per manufacturer’s recommendation (at least annually)?

Other backup battery power options

- Micro Power Bank (~ $80 for largest)
  - Lithium ion battery with USB connections for phone and tablet recharging (up to ~ 50,000 micro amp-hour rated; can recharge iphone ~ 8X, tablet ~ 5X)
- Mini
  - Small trunk size unit with integral charger, solar panel input, various outputs (USB, 120 VAC); different sized batteries. Typical: 3000 watt-hour battery and 2,400 watt output , ~ $1200. Example: Bluetti Elite 300 - https://www.bluettipower.com/products/elite-300-portable-power-station?variant=48309260058843

Other backup power options (con't)

- Small portable generator
  - 1000 watt – 5000 watt output, fueled with gasoline, propane, or both (~ $600 and up)
  - If extension cords are used, make sure they are rated for the electrical load; if they get "hot to the touch", they are not adequate.
- Whole house stationary generator
  - 5000 watt – 10,000+ watt output, auto start, noise enclosure, multi-fuel options. (~ $4,000 and up + installation)

Other related power failure aids

- Flashlights and spare batteries
- Candles/lanterns and matches or lighters
- Do you know how to report an outage and check outage status with PGE using cell phone? https://pgealerts.alerts.pge.com/
- Do you have a safe, alternate way to prepare meals if your stove is electric?

Encountering downed power line on the road when driving or walking

- Assume downed wires are “live” unless told otherwise by electric utility worker.
- Driving
  - Do not drive over or under downed wires; do not drive past warning tape or cones.
  - Do not step out of car if within 35 feet of downed wire. Stay put if not in danger.
- Walking
  - Do not walk near downed wires even if they appear to be “dead” and especially not if they are sparking.
  - Do not walk past warning tape. If electric utility workers or NET volunteers are stationed at downed wire, follow their instructions. Do not step into water near a downed wire.
  - Do not touch a fence that may be energized by the downed wire.

Tree falls on your house

- If area of house impacted by tree is unstable/unsafe, move away from that area to a safer part of the house
- If entire house is unsafe - evacuate
- If there is electrical arcing or a wire is down, use caution. Shut off house main electrical breaker.
- If there is a gas leak, shut off main gas valve (outdoors by meter; use gas meter wrench or large adjustable wrench) and

  move at least 350 ft. from house.
- Take photos, contact insurance company, call utilities, contact arborist, arrange for contractor to patch any penetrations until permanent repairs are made.
- Special home insurance may be needed if house is unoccupied more than 30 days (https://www.insurance.com/home-and-renters-insurance/coverage/empty-home-insurance.html
- Detailed explanation related to home damage: https://www.bobvila.com/exterior/what-to-do-if-a-tree-falls-on-your-house/





Pipes freeze

- Did you winterize your exterior faucets before winter?
  - In a pinch, a trickle flow from faucets will usually prevent freeze-up
- If there is heat in the house
  - Find the piping that has frozen and warm it gently – might be in crawl space or adjacent to an uninsulated outside wall pipe chase or vanity
  - Monitor in case piping has cracked and starts leaking once thawed out.
  - Know where the main water shut off valve is located
- If heat was off in the house
  - Follow "a", above, once heat is restored but there may be multiple pipe sections that developed leaks
- If you are going to leave your house due to lack of heat and electricity in freezing weather, consider turning off main water valve, either in the house or on the sidewalk



Outdoor water meter and shutoff valve



Lack of heat

- Was furnace serviced at beginning of heating season?
- Likely cause – power loss? If not, probably need to call service company (unless you know how to troubleshoot…)
- Backup fossil fuel heat: fire place or stove
  - Was chimney cleaned of creosote recently?
  - Open flames are unsafe as are unvented propane or kerosene heaters (risk of carbon monoxide poisoning)
- A “small” electric generator can be wired by an electrician to operate a furnace (800 – 1300 watts)

Lack of food on hand

- Stock up before the storm with some food not requiring refrigeration
- If roads are not drivable, use some of your emergency earthquake rations (replace later)
- A “small” electric generator can be connected to operate a refrigerator (~500 watts)
- Have a backup method for cooking but don’t use a gasoline, propane, or butane burning stove (e.g. Coleman) indoors

Car gets stuck in the snow

- Why were you driving without chains/cables or snow tires?
  - Put traction devices on before you get stuck
  - Practice when the weather is good
- Try to not abandon your vehicle on the roadway (e.g. SW 18th Place or SW Lancaster Rd.) blocking snow plows and others that can pass through
- Carry chains or cables in your vehicle during periods when snow / freezing rain is expected
- Easy to install/remove traction device: https://spikes-spider.com/
  - Videos: https://spikes-spider.com/pages/videos
- Good to have
  - Shovel and buckets or bags of sand
  - Warning reflectors or cones and flares
- If traveling in isolated areas
  - Bring food, water, and blankets

Encountering deeply flooded roadway

- Don’t drive into water that is deeper than 4 inches for a typical sedan (includes Toyota Prius hybrid) unless you have specific data for your vehicle.
- Vehicles okay for deeper water (reference – Google)
  - Ford F-150 -- 32 inches
  - Jeep Wrangler – 30 inches
  - Toyota Land Cruiser – 27 inches
  - Toyota RAV4 hybrid – 20 inches
  - Subaru Outback – 19 inches

Ice or snow on walkways, dangerous to walk

- In front one's home
  - Remove snow before it gets compacted into ice
  - Apply sand or salt (preferably calcium or magnesium chloride)
- Elsewhere
  - Use traction devices on shoes/boots e.g. Yaktrax or Crampons (Kahtoola Microspikes https://kahtoola.com/traction/microspikes-footwear-traction/)