

GOING OFF GRID: UTILITY OUTAGES

OUTAGE CHECKLIST: HANDOUT



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Important Phone Numbers

- Electric company phone number/Web site: _____
- Natural gas company phone number/Web site: _____
- Water company phone number/Web site: _____
- Plumbing company phone number/Web site: _____
- Oil/gas heat service phone number/Web site: _____
- Telephone company phone number/Web site: _____
- For more information about outages and public shelters, listen to or contact: _____

If you use medical equipment that requires electricity to operate, register with your power company and health care provider to learn about alternatives.

Assess Your Neighborhood

- If there is a utility outage, who may need extra support because of their functional or medical needs?
- Does anyone in the neighborhood have special skills who can help others?

Electricity Outages

- Locate and label utility shutoff (see diagram at the end of this handout).
- Post instructions next to fuse box or circuit breaker.
- Are there enough flashlights on hand (at least one for each person in the house)? Are the batteries working? (Tip: Store batteries in the refrigerator for longer life.)
- Do not use candles. They are a fire hazard.
- Keep on hand ready-to-eat meals that don't require cooking or cooling.

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Electricity Outages (Continued)

- Freeze water in plastic water bottles or old milk containers, leaving about an inch at the top for frozen water to expand. When placed in a refrigerator and freezer, they will keep food cold for several hours.
- Know where to get dry ice to keep food cold as necessary.
- Are there cordless phones that need electricity to run? If so, what can be used as a backup? (Standard telephone with cord, cell phone, etc.)
- Find a new or used battery-operated radio to get updates on information, shelters, etc.
- Is there an alternate heating source? Make sure it is properly vented and in good working order. Make sure all chimneys are clean and all flues are operational. Do you have enough wood, pellets, or heating fuel?
- If heating system involves an electronic ignition or fan, know who to call for service/restarting assistance.
- If there is an electric garage door opener, where is the manual release? Post instructions on how to use it and practice!
- When possible, keep car gas tanks at least half full. Gas stations need electricity to power the pumps.

When the power goes out . . .

- Are all the pots and pans off the stove? Are the stove range and oven turned off?
- If you have a space heater, make sure it's at least 3 feet away from furniture or other flammable objects. Keep it unplugged when not in use.
- In cold weather, maximize heat coming from the sun. Open shades, curtains, or louvers so that sun may heat the glass. Close them when the sun is no longer shining directly to hold in the heat. In hot weather, minimize heat by closing shades, curtains, and louvers.

POST THIS PAGE IN YOUR HOME!

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Natural Gas Outages

- Locate and label gas shutoff valve(s). There may be more than one (see diagram at the end of this handout).
- Post shutoff instructions near the meter and make sure a nonsparking wrench is stored nearby.
- If your gas meter is located inside your home, you should only shut off gas flow when instructed to by local authorities.

Also see “Electricity Outages” above for more tips.

Water Outages

- Locate and label main water cutoff. Make sure any special tools needed are stored nearby. (Tip: The main water cutoff is usually on the outside wall of the house where the water meter is. With a well, the cutoff is usually on the well pump.)
- Have 3 days of drinking water stored (1 gallon of water per person per day).

If pipes may freeze . . .

- Wrap insulation, tape, newspapers, or rags around them.
- Store water in buckets or bathtubs to flush toilets.
- Leave water trickling out of the faucets.

If pipes do freeze . . .

- Remove any insulation or newspaper and wrap them in rags.
- Completely open all the faucets. If you can still heat water, pour hot water over the pipes, starting with where they are most cold. If you have electricity, try using a blow dryer.

If pipes burst . . .

- Know where circuit breakers and fuses are and how to shut off the power. See “Electricity Outages” above.
- Never enter a flooded basement or walk through standing water to shut off electrical supply because water conducts electricity.

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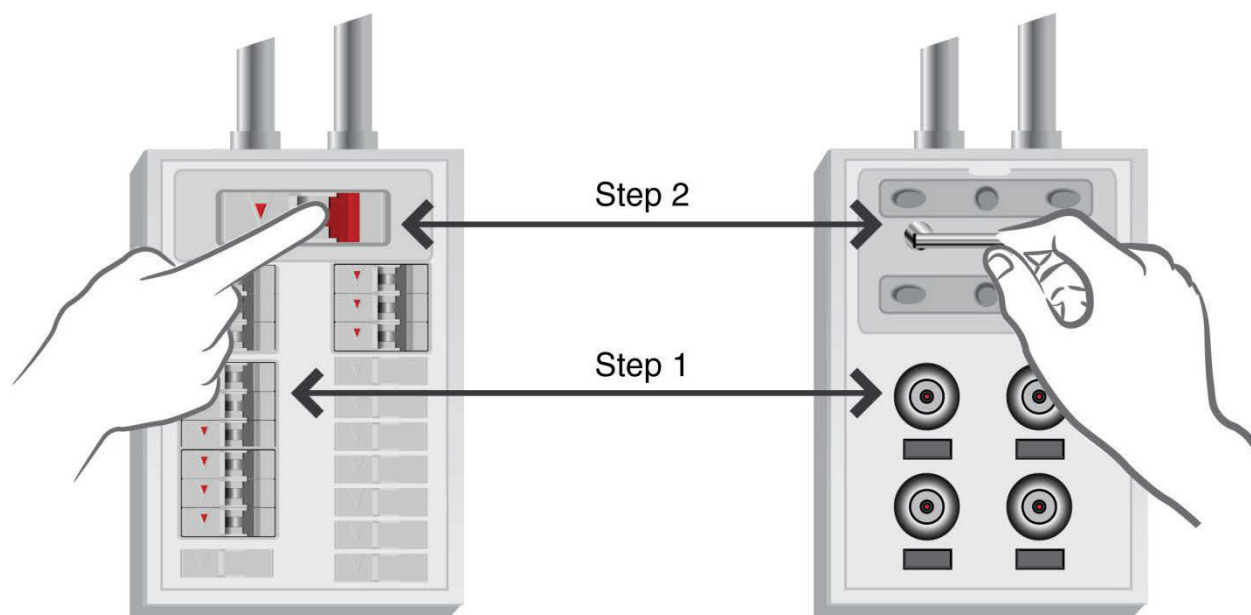
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Phone Outages

- Have on hand a backup way to communicate (cell phone, computer via cable connection, etc.).

Shutting Off Electricity

Unscrew individual fuses or switch off smaller breakers first, then pull the main switch or breaker. When restoring power, turn on main switch or breaker, then screw in smaller fuses or turn on smaller breakers, one at a time.



Circuit Breaker Box With Shutoff

Shutoff steps:

- Step 1: Shut off individual breakers.**
- Step 2: Shut off main breaker.**

Fuse Box With Shutoff

Shutoff steps:

- Step 1: Pull out individual fuses.**
- Step 2: Pull out main fuse.**

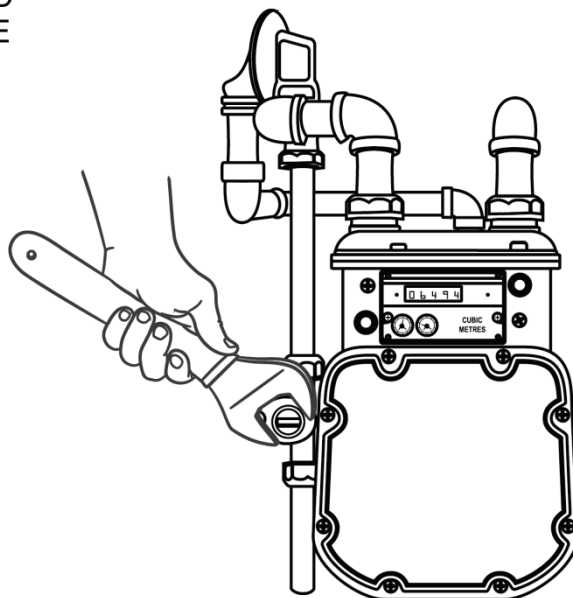
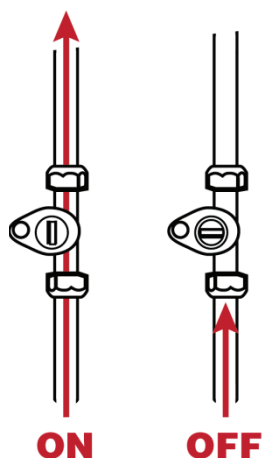
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GAS METER AND SHUT-OFF VALVE



Shutting Off Gas

The gas meter shutoff diagram indicates the shutoff valve location on the pipe that comes out of the ground. To turn off the valve, use a nonsparking wrench to turn the valve clockwise one-quarter turn. Remember that, in all cases, natural gas flow should only be turned on by a licensed technician.

Please note: Some gas meters have automatic shutoff valves that restrict the flow of gas during an earthquake or other emergency. These are installed by a licensed plumber, downstream of the utility point of delivery. If you are unsure whether your home has this shutoff device, contact your gas service company. If this shutoff device is closed, only a qualified professional should restore it.

Gas Meter in the Home

If you smell gas or see the dials on your meter showing gas is flowing even though appliances are turned off, you should evacuate the premises and call 911. Do not attempt to shut off the gas from inside the building if gas may be in the air.

Gas Meter Outside the Home

You should turn off the meter from outside the building if you smell gas or you see dials on the meter showing gas is flowing even though appliances are turned off. If there is a fire that you cannot extinguish, call 911 and turn off the gas only if it is safe to do so.