



Be Prepared for Power Outages

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative's mission is to provide members with reliable service, day and night. Employees are constantly at work maintaining equipment, removing trees from rights of way and upgrading the cooperative's power system.

Despite our best efforts, severe and unusual weather can create problems and cause a prolonged power outage.

Snow and ice, high winds and lightning are a few examples of natural conditions that can seriously damage power equipment in a large area.

Even with crews working around the clock, repairs are time consuming, difficult and often dangerous.

We have developed a list of suggestions that can help you during the long hours of an outage.

Take a Proactive Approach

Put together an emergency kit that is easily accessible in case of a lengthy power outage or other natural event. Supplies should include:

- Access to a flashlight, radio and fresh batteries. Always keep the batteries separate until you are ready to use them.
- Candles and matches. Be sure not to leave burning candles unattended.

Report Outages

To report a power outage, call OTEC at 1-866-430-4265.

For more information about preparing for an outage, visit www.otecc.com/outages.aspx.



- Bottled drinking water. Store at least 1 gallon per person per day. If a storm is forecast, fill the bathtub with water so bathroom facilities can be used by pouring a bucket of water down the toilet to create a vacuum flush.

- If you have a fireplace or wood stove, keep kindling and dry firewood on hand.

- Wear extra layers of clothing and cover your head with a hat. Have sleeping bags and blankets handy.

- Easy-to-prepare food items. Purchase items that do not require much cooking: canned or instant soups, stews or chili, packaged freeze-dried meals, and

protein or breakfast bars are good to have on hand.

- Gas camp stoves, lanterns or barbecues. Never use a camp stove or barbecue indoors! Be sure to use any lanterns on a flat, stable and nonflammable surface. Have extra fuel for cooking outdoors.
- An ample supply of essential prescription medications and over-the-counter drugs. During a storm, road travel might not be possible for several days.
- First-aid kit. Make sure all of the supplies are filled. If you have a medical condition, always have a backup plan at a moment's notice.
- Games. Board games and cards are fun and handy to pass the time.

What to Do When Power Goes Off

If the lights go off, know what steps to take to be comfortable, safe and help OTEC restore service quickly.

- Check your electrical panel. Look for tripped breakers or blown fuses. Try to reset the breakers by switching them "off" then "on."
- To report an outage, call at 1-866-430-4265. OTEC is a member of the Cooperative Response Center. CRC is a 24/7 customer contact service center in Minnesota. A CRC representative will take your message and immediately convey the information to OTEC for follow-up.
- Turn off major appliances. The water heater and heating system breakers need to be turned off to avoid overloading your circuits when the power is restored. Unplug any voltage-sensitive equipment.
- Install surge protectors to protect voltage-sensitive equipment. You can buy high-quality surge protection devices from a variety of retailers and local electricians.
- Switch on an outside light. This can assist our crews in determining whether or not your power has been restored late into the night.
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer

doors closed. Food in a refrigerator will last 12 to 24 hours if the doors are kept closed. A full freezer can last 24 to 48 hours. Helpful hint: You can drape a sleeping bag over your refrigerator or freezer for added insulation in case of an extended power outage.

- Listen to radio reports. Keep either a battery-operated or battery-free (hand crank) radio on hand for emergencies. During an extended outage, listen to local radio stations for updates and information.

Good Tips to Remember

- Let the repair crews do their job. It is tempting to stop crews and ask questions about when the power is going to be restored, but this only delays restoration. While the crews want to be helpful, they also want to restore your power quickly so they can get home to their families, too.
- Be a good neighbor. Severe storms usually increase the number of accidents and medical problems. This increases the response time for service agencies. Organize people in your area to check on each other and lend assistance in emergencies.
- If not used correctly, portable generators can electrocute workers on the lines. Plug appliances into the generator. Do not connect household breaker circuits to the generator without a OTEC-approved transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician.
- Emergency water sources. Runoff from rooftops can be collected and used for washing, but do not drink it. A water heater can supply drinking water. Be sure the breaker is off before you drain it, and be sure to fill it before turning the breaker back on.
- Keep the freezer full. Milk jugs filled with water and placed in a half-full freezer can supply water and ice in an emergency. It also will keep the freezer colder longer if it is full. Buy dry ice to help prevent spoilage. ■



Never wire a portable generator directly into your electrical panel.

Always use a portable generator in a well-ventilated area, never indoors or near an open window because carbon monoxide fumes can drift inside a home.