

## Be Prepared: Winter Storms hit New Zealand

13 July 2017

### Severe Weather Warning Issued

The MetService has issued a severe weather warning for today as gale force winds and heavy rain bear down across the country. To stay up to date with weather information see here: [www.metservice.com](http://www.metservice.com)

### Power outages and what to do

Power outages have affected some parts of the country due to the storm from slips, winds lashing or trees falling onto lines.

Teams from lines companies will be gearing up to deal with any power outages caused by the storm as quickly as they can, and when it is safe to do so.

If you experience a power outage in your area, contact your electricity retailer or your local lines company. Visit the [Electricity Networks Association](#) to find the lines company for your area.

### Medically dependent on mains power electricity?

It is critical that anyone dependent on electricity to run critical medical support equipment has a back-up plan (such as batteries and nearby support) that can be put into action immediately for such occurrences as these outages caused by wild winter storms.

Whilst electricity retailers may make contact, it is important not to assume they will, because storms and earthquakes can also affect phone communication. Just as in other civil defence situations, people should have measures in place to ensure their own safety and well-being.

If a person ever feels their health is at risk due to a power outage, they should call their doctor, or emergency services or get to a hospital.

It is a good idea for neighbours or friends to contact people they know are medically dependent on mains power to check that they are okay, and that they have their back-up plan in place.

If you are medically dependent on electricity, or you are caring for someone that is, and you don't know what the emergency response plan is, then you should contact your doctor or other health care provider immediately.

### Steps you can take to be prepared and stay safe

Bad weather like this means that power cuts can happen. It is important to have a plan in place:

- keep a torch and spare batteries handy
- ensure that you have at least one telephone that does not rely on electricity for operation
- ensure that an alternate fuel is always available for cooking
- normal household appliances such as fridges and ovens may not work, and food could spoil faster. Eat perishable foods, for example bread and meat first, as they spoil faster than non-perishable food. Eat canned foods last. For more information on food safety and hygiene see [here](#)
- stay clear of fallen power lines or damaged electrical equipment and treat them as live **at all times**
- watch out for falling tree branches as these can cause damage to power lines
- avoid possible damage to electrical appliances (in the unlikely event there is a power surge when the power is restored) by switching off appliances at the wall
- if you have an electric garage door, prepare how you can gain entry to the garage another way so you have access to your vehicle
- tie down objects on your property that may be impacted by the predicted gale force winds (i.e. trampolines)
- take care if you are driving in the predicted weather and delay trips if possible. Do not drive through floodwaters
- if you are on tank water, ensure you have plenty of bottled water available
- if life or property is at risk, call 111.

The New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management's website has useful information on how to prepare emergency plans and kits

[www.getthru.govt.nz](http://www.getthru.govt.nz) and on Twitter [@NZGetThru](https://twitter.com/NZGetThru) for up to the minute information.