

What to do if your power goes off

An emergency response plan for people medically dependent on power

A power cut can be scary at the best of times. For New Zealanders dependent on power for medical equipment, life support, or medicine, losing electricity can be extremely serious.

If that describes you, it's vital to have an emergency plan for when the power goes out. Here are some steps to work through.

Have an emergency response plan

Your power supply could be interrupted at any time. Power cuts can leave you without electricity for several hours. Some outages can last for several days or, for major disasters, weeks or months.

You need to prepare for these events so you can remain safe and well even when power is off for a long time.

On the next page is a checklist of steps you should take to make a plan. Your plan will likely need extra actions specific to your situation.

Make sure everyone who needs it has a copy of your plan. The people you rely on, like family, friends, your GP, or others in your community, need to understand how to help you in an emergency.

Review your plan at least once a month to make sure you understand it and that it still works for you. If you make changes, tell the people involved.

Talk to your doctor or health provider about your emergency response plan. Ask them for help filling in any specific actions you'll need to take to ensure you stay safe and well.

Know how your equipment will (or won't) work in a power cut

You need to know how to operate your equipment, including how to keep it working during a power cut and what to do when the power comes back on.

Your equipment may have a back-up electricity supply like a generator or battery, sometimes called an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS). You need to know how long the backup supply lasts and have a plan if it fails to work during a power cut.

You should be able to answer these three questions:

1. Does your equipment need a power supply to operate?
2. Can your equipment continue to operate during a power cut?
3. For how long will you remain safe and well if you can't use your equipment?

Tell your electricity retailer (power company) about your situation

Tell your electricity retailer that you or someone living at your property has medical equipment that must operate all the time to keep you safe and well. They may ask for information to confirm your situation. If you're not responsible for paying the electricity bill, ask the person who is to contact the electricity retailer with your details.

Your electricity retailer needs to know about your situation to reduce the risk of disconnecting your power supply. Your retailer will also be able to assist you more easily if a power cut occurs.

For more information on planning how to survive in an emergency, go to [GetThru \(getthru.govt.nz\)](http://getthru.govt.nz) and consider downloading apps from the MetService, Red Cross's "Hazard App", and from news services like RNZ, TVNZ, Stuff, and others.

Emergency plan checklist

On the next page is a template for an emergency response plan you can refer to in a power cut. It's very important for you to share a copy with people you rely on, like family, friends, your GP, or others in your community. Your plan will likely need extra actions specific to your situation, but the template will help you get started.

Here are things you should do to make your plan, and some other things you should do as soon as possible to ensure your plan works smoothly. Check off each item as you complete it.

Things you should write down in your plan

Support people ☐

The name and phone numbers of two people willing to come over to help if the power goes out ☐

Power company ☐

The name and phone number of your power company to contact when your power goes out ☐

Medical contact ☐

The name, address, and phone number of your medical contact (like your GP) ☐

Your hospital's phone number ☐

What you'll do if you can't reach your medical contact (if they're not available 24 hours a day) ☐

Emergency contact ☐

What to do if you can't get in touch with emergency services ☐

Medicine and medical accessories ☐

Where your medicine and medical accessories are stored ☐

Can you find these items in the dark in a power cut? ☐

Where you'll go that has power if you can't get power back to your home ☐

It may be to family, a neighbour, or the hospital. How will you get yourself, your medical equipment, and your medication there?

How will you get information about a power cut in case of a natural disaster or national emergency? ☐

Check this once your plan is complete and stored where it's easy to reach. Well done! ☐

Things you should do as soon as possible

Call your power company beforehand to make sure they know you're medically dependent on electricity ☐

Put safety items in a grab bag and keep them in reach or stored in a place you can easily access in an emergency ☐

Your grab bag should include things like a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, a battery-operated radio, water, batteries for the flashlight and radio, and a power bank battery and charging cable for your mobile phone.

Know how to get your equipment running again when power returns (keep instructions in a place you can easily access) ☐

Things to keep in mind

Don't rely on alarms alerting someone to come and help you—they might not know your power is out.

Don't rely on the internet or a landline phone to contact people—they might not work in a power cut.

If you have a backup power supply, make sure you know how to operate it.

Think about what you'll do if your backup power supply or batteries run out.

If your batteries are rechargeable, check regularly to make sure they're charged.

Think about how you'll keep your mobile phone charged in a power cut. USB power banks lose their charge over time so check it regularly to make sure it's fully charged.

My power cut emergency plan

Support people

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

Power company

Company:

Phone:

Medical contact

Name:

Phone:

Hospital's number:

If I can't reach my medical contact, I will:

Emergency contact

In an emergency, dial 111.

If I can't reach emergency services, I will:

Medicine and medical accessories

My medicine and medical accessories are stored here:

Where I'll go if the power stays off

You might need to take extra actions specific to your situation—note them here. You could also note where to get information in case of a natural disaster or a national emergency, like a radio station, website, or app.