



# Power Outages

Power outages can cause a number of safety concerns;  
knowing the following information can help.



City of Bellingham  
Office of Emergency  
Management  
1800 Broadway,  
Bellingham 98225  
360-778-8440  
[www.cob.org](http://www.cob.org)



Whatcom County  
Division of Emergency  
Management  
311 Grand Ave,  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
360-676-6681  
Incident Hotline: 360-  
738-4551  
<http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/dem/events/events.jsp>



Whatcom County  
Health Department  
509 Girard Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
360-676-6724

  
Washington State Department of  
**Health**  
PO Box 47890  
Olympia, WA 98504-  
7890  
360-236-4027  
(800) 525-0127  
[www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)

## Before a power outage

- Register life-sustaining and medical equipment with your utility company.
- Consider buying a generator. When installing a generator, follow the instructions carefully. Keep your generator outside and run a cord inside. Don't connect your generator to main service panels — it's dangerous! Be sure to place a carbon monoxide detector indoors.
- Make sure your disaster preparedness kit contains light sticks, flashlights, a battery-powered radio with extra batteries and a wind-up clock.
- Have a corded telephone available — cordless phones will not work when the power is out.
- Have a safe alternative heat source and supply of fuel. Never burn charcoal or use a generator indoors.
- If you own an electric garage door opener, know how to open the door without power.

## During a power outage

- Turn off lights and electrical appliances except for the refrigerator and freezer.
- Even if it is dark, turn light switches and buttons on lamps or appliances to the "off" position.
- Unplug computers and other sensitive equipment to protect them from possible surges when the power is restored.
- Leave one lamp on so you will know when power is restored. Wait at least 15 minutes after power is restored before turning on other appliances.
- Conserve water, especially if you use well water.
- Never use gas ovens, gas ranges, barbecues or portable or propane heaters for indoor heating—they use oxygen and create carbon monoxide that can cause suffocation.

- Candles can cause a fire. It's far better to use battery-operated flashlights or glow sticks for lighting.
- Using a kerosene heater, gas lantern or stove inside the house can be dangerous. Maintain proper ventilation at all times to avoid a build up of toxic fumes, and be sure to have a carbon monoxide detector.
- Stay away from downed power lines and sagging trees with broken limbs.

## Keep food safe

- Use and store food carefully to prevent foodborne illness when power outages make refrigeration unavailable.
- Use foods first that can spoil most rapidly.
- Keep doors to refrigerators and freezers closed. Your refrigerator's freezer will keep food frozen for up to a day. A separate fully-loaded freezer will keep food frozen for two days.
- Use an ice chest packed with ice or snow to keep food cold. Buy dry ice to save frozen food. Do not handle dry ice with your bare hands. Use blocks or bags of ice to save refrigerator foods.
- Use caution if storing food outside during winter to keep it cold. The outside temperature varies, especially in the sun. Frozen food may thaw and refrigerator food may become warm enough to grow bacteria. Food stored outside must be secured from contamination by animals.
- **If in doubt, throw it out.** Throw out meat, seafood, dairy products and cooked food that does not feel cold.
- Never taste suspect food. Even if food looks and smells fine, illness-causing bacteria may be present.