



72-Hour Blackout Ready

A household preparedness guide for when the power goes out

Start with what matters

Prepare water, shelf-stable food, medication plans, light, communication, warmth or cooling, and a simple way to check on one another.

Keep it human

A blackout can be unsettling. Make a plan that fits your household, your neighbors, and the people who may need extra support.

USE THIS GUIDE FOR PREPARATION, NOT PANIC

In an immediate, life-threatening emergency, call 911. Follow local emergency alerts and the guidance of your medical provider for individual health needs.

Begin with a simple 10-minute check

THE GOAL

A good blackout plan does not require a perfectly stocked closet. It gives every person in the household enough water, food, light, information, medication support, and connection to get through **three days** without depending on stores, ATMs, fuel pumps, or a working refrigerator.

Your 72-hour baseline

3 days of water, food, medication, light, and connection

Ready.gov recommends **one gallon of water per person per day** for drinking and sanitation. Build upward from that baseline for pets, hot weather, illness, and hygiene needs. [1]

Do this today

- ☐ Find your flashlights and test them.
- ☐ Charge phones and power banks.
- ☐ Write down key phone numbers.
- ☐ Choose one person to check on.

Water is the first supply to count

Store water where it is easy to reach. Rotate it regularly, keep it separate from chemicals, and add more if someone in your household has medical needs, if you care for an infant, or if you have pets.

MINIMUM: 1 GALLON / PERSON / DAY

HOUSEHOLD	72-HOUR WATER	CHECK
1 person	3 gal	☐
2 people	6 gal	☐
3 people	9 gal	☐
4 people	12 gal	☐
5 people	15 gal	☐
6 people	18 gal	☐

Put the plan where everyone can find it

Make the kit visible

Keep your blackout supplies in one or two clearly labeled, easy-to-carry bins or bags. Tell every member of the household where they are. Add a handwritten note with your address, key contacts, and any device or medication instructions that someone else would need to follow.

Why three days? An extended outage can disrupt communication, water, transportation, stores, banks, and medical services. A household kit helps you stay steady while services recover. [2]

Pack the 72-hour supply kit

KEEP IT SIMPLE • KEEP IT TOGETHER • ROTATE IT

Choose foods your household will actually eat. Favor ready-to-eat or easily prepared items, and include a manual can opener if you use canned foods. Check expiration dates, refill prescriptions, and replace batteries at least once a year. [1]

Food & water

- ☐ Water: 3 gallons per person for 72 hours, plus pet water.
- ☐ Nonperishable food for 3 days.
- ☐ Manual can opener, cups, utensils, and paper towels.
- ☐ Cooler, ice, frozen gel packs, and appliance thermometers.
- ☐ Food for infants or dietary needs.

Light, power & information

- ☐ Flashlight or battery lantern for each household member.
- ☐ Extra batteries stored with the device they fit.
- ☐ Battery-powered or hand-crank radio; NOAA Weather Radio if available.
- ☐ Charged power banks and phone charging cables.
- ☐ Paper map, cash, and local emergency contacts.

Health & hygiene

- ☐ First-aid kit and a list of medications, allergies, and providers.
- ☐ Prescription medicines and health supplies for more than 72 hours when possible.
- ☐ Soap, sanitizer, wipes, garbage bags, and toilet paper.
- ☐ Prescription glasses, contacts, and backup mobility supplies.
- ☐ Battery-backup carbon monoxide alarm on every level.

Comfort & household needs

- ☐ Warm layers, blankets, sturdy shoes, and rain gear.
- ☐ Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, and comfort items.
- ☐ Pet food, leash/carrier, bowls, medications, and extra water.
- ☐ Books, games, or calming activities for children.
- ☐ Important documents in a waterproof pouch.

MEDICAL & REFRIGERATED MEDICINES

If anyone relies on electricity for a medical device or needs refrigerated medicine, plan **before** an outage. Ask the provider or pharmacist about backup power, safe temperatures, and when to seek help. Keep instructions and phone numbers with the kit. [2]

When the power goes out

STAY CALM • PROTECT PEOPLE • CONSERVE POWER

Start with safety and communication. Use your phone battery carefully, listen for official alerts, and connect with people who may need a check-in. If temperatures become unsafe, use a community location with power or follow local guidance. [2]

FIRST 15 MINUTES

- ☐ Confirm the outage.
- ☐ Unplug sensitive electronics.
- ☐ Use flashlights, not open flame.
- ☐ Charge only what is necessary.

FIRST HOUR

- ☐ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- ☐ Text key contacts: "We are safe."
- ☐ Check on neighbors or family who may need support.
- ☐ Listen to official updates.

NEXT 72 HOURS

- ☐ Use nonperishable food first.
- ☐ Track water and battery use.
- ☐ Follow medication/device plan.
- ☐ Rest, communicate, and reassess.

Food safety: remember the 4 / 24 / 48 rule

SPACE	SAFE FOR	TARGET TEMP.	WHAT TO DO
Refrigerator	About 4 hours	40°F or below	Keep the door closed. If power has been out 4 hours, move perishables to a cooler with ice if available.
Full freezer	About 48 hours	0°F or below	Keep the door closed. A full freezer holds cold longer than a half-full freezer.
Half-full freezer	About 24 hours	0°F or below	Use ice or a cold source if food must be moved.

CDC guidance: After 4 hours without power or a cold source, discard refrigerated perishables such as meat, fish, cut produce, eggs, milk, and leftovers. Never taste food to decide if it is safe. When in doubt, throw it out. [3]

Carbon monoxide can be deadly

KEEP FUEL-BURNING EQUIPMENT OUTSIDE

Generators, camp stoves, and charcoal grills must be used **outdoors** and at least **20 feet away** from windows, doors, and attached garages. Never use a gas stove or oven to heat a home. Use working battery-backup carbon monoxide alarms on every level. [2]

Build a people-first household plan

WRITE IT DOWN • SHARE IT • PRACTICE IT

During a blackout, a simple plan reduces uncertainty. Decide who checks on whom, where you will go if temperatures are unsafe, and what to do if a medical device or medicine needs power. Keep one printed copy with the kit and give one to a trusted person outside the home.

Household details

HOME ADDRESS

OUT-OF-AREA CONTACT

LOCAL EMERGENCY / UTILITY NUMBER

COMMUNITY LOCATION WITH POWER / WARMING OR COOLING CENTER

Check-in plan

FIRST PERSON WE WILL CALL OR TEXT

PERSON OR HOUSEHOLD WE WILL CHECK ON

MEETING PLACE IF WE MUST LEAVE HOME

HOW WE WILL RECEIVE OFFICIAL ALERTS

Medical and accessibility plan

Power-dependent device or refrigerated medicine:

Backup location or contact:

Provider / pharmacy / backup-power instructions:

Transportation plan:

The care circle

A small action matters

A call, a text, a warm meal, or a safe place to charge a phone can make a difficult moment easier. Ask before the outage: "If the power goes out, how can I help?"

Use clear messages

Try: "The power is out here. We are safe. We have supplies for now. I will check in again at [time]." Clear, low-pressure communication helps everyone know what to expect.

IF YOU NEED URGENT HELP

For an immediate, life-threatening emergency, call 911. For non-emergency support, follow local public-health, emergency-management, and utility communications. This guide is a planning resource and is not medical advice.

After power returns

RESET • RESTOCK • LEARN

Once service is restored, turn appliances and electronics back on gradually. Replace used water, food, batteries, and health supplies. Make a note of anything that was difficult so the kit and plan are stronger next time.

Food & home

- ☐ Check refrigerator and freezer temperatures.
- ☐ Discard food that may be unsafe.
- ☐ Restock ice, water, and nonperishable food.
- ☐ Reset clocks, test smoke and CO alarms.

People & planning

- ☐ Let key contacts know the household is okay.
- ☐ Check in on neighbors and family.
- ☐ Recharge power banks and replace batteries.
- ☐ Update the plan with what you learned.

Keep this guide with your kit



NERA Cares

NERA Cares centers preventative care, crisis intervention, trauma-informed support, and community connection. This guide brings that caring approach to everyday household preparedness.

NERA CARES WEBSITE • 414-678-9553 • admin@meracares.com

Sources & follow-on guidance

[1] Ready.gov, "Build A Kit." [ready.gov/kit](https://www.ready.gov/kit)

[2] Ready.gov, "Power Outages." [ready.gov/power-outages](https://www.ready.gov/power-outages)

[3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Keep Food Safe After a Disaster or Emergency." [cdc.gov/food-safety](https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety)

Preparation is care in action.

Store this guide, revisit it each season, and share it with someone you care about.