What To Do When The Lights Go Out

AEP Ohio is dedicated to providing you reliable electric service. However, despite our best efforts, storms, traffic accidents, animals, construction-related mishaps and equipment failures do cause power outages. Your telephone call is helpful to us in evaluating the scope of a power outage. We ask that you check the following list to determine whether the problem exists within your home before you call. Also, be sure to heed the safety warnings detailed below.

Outage Checklist

- Check all circuit breakers or fuses to help determine whether your service outage might be the result of a household problem.
- If you have standing water near electrical wiring or appliances call an electrician. Do not enter the flooded area, as there is a risk of electrical shock.
- Inspect the area outside your home near the electric meter. If the meter or any of the piping and wires on the wall of your home or office are gone or look damaged, call an electrician.
- If you have an outage, turn off all lights and appliances — including heating or air conditioning systems — to prevent circuit overload situations as power is restored. You should be extra cautious in making sure nothing is left cooking on kitchen ranges. One light can be left on, so you will know when power is restored.

Reporting a Power Outage

- Call the outage reporting number on your electric bill.
- Your call will be answered by a representative or connected to an automated outage reporting system. The system uses your home phone number to identify the outage location.
- Outages also can be reported online at ***www.AEP.com/lightsout*** if you have a laptop, wireless personal digital assistant or cell phone with Internet access that doesn't require electricity. You also can report hazardous conditions such as fallen wires, broken poles or sparking equipment.

Outage Safety Checklist

- Don't operate lanterns, heaters or fuel-fired cook stoves without adequate ventilation.
- Always refuel appliances outside, away from flames or sparks. Wipe up fuel spills immediately.
- Do not burn charcoal indoors, because it releases carbon monoxide.
- Don't allow children to carry candles or oil lamps in the house. A fall could spell disaster.

Treat all fallen wires as "live" power lines.

Never touch a fallen utility wire, no matter how harmless it looks. It can be difficult to distinguish between a power line and a cable or telephone line. All fallen lines should be considered energized and dangerous. And don't touch anything in contact with the line, such as trees, fences or puddles of water, because they can conduct electricity. Keep children and pets away from this potential hazard. Call us to report any fallen lines or equipment.

Outage Tips

Heat

During a winter outage, your house will stay warm for several hours. Your home will stay warmer if it is well insulated, has storm windows and windows are sealed.

Appliances

If you have an outage, turn off all lights and appliances — including heating or air conditioning systems — to prevent circuit overload situations as power is restored. You should be extra cautious in making sure nothing is left cooking on kitchen

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Prepare an Emergency Kit

To best prepare to face a power outage, we suggest that you assemble an emergency kit. Items you may wish to include are:

- Flashlights and fresh batteries
- Battery-powered radios or televisions
- Candles and matches or lighters
- Drinking/cooking water
- Portable heater (oil or gas)
- Camping equipment such as sleeping bags, camp stoves, lanterns
- Canned goods and manual can opener
- Manufacturers' instructions for opening power-operated doors

Can I report an outage online?

Yes. You can report an outage online, if you have a laptop or other battery-powered Internet-connected device. Visit our storm information site at ***www.AEP.com/lightsout*** for the latest storm updates.

Why can my home be the only one on the block without power?

Fuses or circuit breakers in your home could have tripped and halted power; tree limbs could have fallen on the line serving your home; fuses on the transformer that serves your home may have tripped or could be damaged, and the primary line feeding the transformer could be damaged.

Why would I lose electricity in only part of my house?

You could have tripped a circuit breaker, blown a fuse or have a broken connector or wire at one of the service leads to your house. Sometimes damage to these leads leaves only the 120-volt outlets (or some of them) working. In this case, larger appliances that need 240-volt service — such as water heaters, air conditioners and ovens — may be inoperable until repairs are made. It is safe to use the outlets you have available while you check with an electrician. However, if some of your lights are extremely bright or extremely dim, you should avoid using outlets connected to these circuits to avoid potential damage to equipment. If there is a problem with a service lead to your home, our crews will repair the wires when they arrive to restore service.

Why do I sometimes experience brief outages that call for resetting appliances?

Usually, these outages occur when a protective device, called a recloser, detects interference on the line. If interference is detected, the line will de-energize briefly to determine if the problem is prolonged or only temporary. If the problem is temporary, the line will re-energize quickly. If the problem is prolonged, the line will de-energize.

Backup generators

Some customers use backup, or standby, generators to provide power during outages. Please notify us if you are using a backup generator. Operating a generator poses a potential safety hazard for line workers and you.

The problem arises when power from the backup generators feed power onto distribution lines, which can electrocute personnel working on the lines. On the other hand, power from electric company lines can feed into the generator and cause a fire at your residence. To avoid these hazards, be sure to have your generator installed by an electrician, and be sure that it has a manual transfer switch to isolate the device from the power grid. Remember that appliances can be connected directly to the generator independent of the household wiring. Make sure that all manufacturers' instructions are followed and that only the recommended number of appliances is plugged into the generator. ■