



Weathering the storm



PowerHouse

Presented by



Dangerous Midwestern storms can brew up quickly, at any time of year, leaving little time for preparation. At Alliant Energy, caring for your comfort means making sure your family can “weather” a storm safely and with as little inconvenience as possible.

In this brochure, you’ll learn more about:

- Preparing for storms and outages
- Getting through short-term power outages
- Surviving a prolonged power outage
- Using portable heaters and generators safely
- Safety tips for storm clean-up



Be prepared

The best way to weather a storm is to have a safety plan in place ahead of time. Keep an emergency kit handy, and make sure everyone in the family knows where it's located. Keep a minimum of these items in your kit:

- A battery-operated flashlight, clock and radio
- A few packages of batteries
- A first aid kit and manual
- A small fire extinguisher
- If you have room, add pillows and blankets
- If you have kids, keep a stash of “rainy-day” books, activities and games to keep them busy



If you use a cordless phone at home, keep in mind that it won't work during an outage – the base unit needs electricity to pick up the signals from the handset. Always keep a cellular or corded phone in your home. Don't forget to post emergency numbers near the phone, and keep a copy in your emergency kit as well.

Many homeowners don't carry a house key, instead depending on their garage door opener for access to their home. But a garage door opener also won't work during an outage. Make sure you know how to operate your garage door manually in case your car is inside when the power goes out.

Be prepared - continued

Surge suppressors are a great investment to protect your electronics and appliances. A lightning strike or downed power line can send a damaging surge of electricity through your home.

To learn more about protecting your electronics, be sure to read the PowerHouse brochure on "Power Quality."

A wood-burning fireplace is a great way to keep warm during a winter power outage, but it's important to keep it in good working order. Clean out the firebox often, make sure the damper operates correctly, and have the chimney cleaned and inspected by a professional on a regular basis.

If anyone in your family depends on electrical medical equipment, call our 24-hour Customer Service Center – we'll note it on your account.

It's also a good idea to know how to shut off the power to your house using the main fuse or breaker at the service panel, and how to shut off water and gas supply lines. If a severe storm hits, your local disaster officials may instruct you to shut off the utilities to avoid further damage or injuries.

If you know a big storm is approaching, gather up other necessities like medications and baby supplies, as well as food items that don't require cooking or refrigeration (granola bars or crackers and peanut butter, for example). Don't forget the drinking water – the American Red Cross recommends reserving about three gallons per person.

Restoring power

If a storm or other event causes a major power outage, electric companies follow a series of steps to make sure they get as many customers back on line as quickly and safely as possible.

1. Make sure police and fire departments and hospitals have power.
2. Check generation facilities to determine if the original power source is still working.
3. Repair transmission lines that carry electricity from the generating stations to the substations.
4. Repair substations that take high-voltage power from the transmission lines and reduce the voltage for home use.
5. Repair distribution lines that carry the electricity from substations to your neighborhood.
6. Repair tap lines that serve pockets of 20-300 homes.
7. Reconnect lines to individual customers - the most difficult and time-consuming step.



If the power goes out

If a power outage occurs, give your electric company a call right away. Don't assume that someone else has already phoned, and don't worry that they're too busy — every call helps determine the location and extent of an outage. Be sure to let them know if you see downed power lines or any damaged utility equipment.

When a storm involves high winds, lightning, heavy snow or ice, turn off and unplug as many appliances as possible (including the air conditioner during a summer storm). This will prevent damage from a power surge when service is restored. After the storm has passed, plug in and turn them on one at a time.

Avoid using candles during power outages — the risk of fire is too great. If you must use candles, place them on a stable surface away from combustible materials, and keep a close eye on children and pets. Never leave a candle burning when you go to bed or leave the house.

If flooding is occurring or predicted, do not use any electrical devices, and turn off the main circuit breaker or remove the primary fuse cartridge — but only if you can reach it without touching water.



During a lightning storm, remember your mother's advice to stay off the phone. It's not a myth — a power surge can travel through phone lines as well as electrical wires.

Prolonged outages

If Mother Nature packs a punch, it might be several hours or even more than a day before utility crews can restore power to every customer. You can survive a long-term loss of power more comfortably by keeping the following tips in mind.

Never try to heat a room with a gas stove, oven or fireplace. Using a natural gas, propane or oil-fired appliance improperly can deplete oxygen from a room, causing asphyxiation, or produce carbon monoxide fumes. The same holds true for using charcoal or propane grills indoors. These deadly circumstances can occur suddenly, with few or no warning signs or symptoms. Instead, layer yourself with extra sweaters, socks and blankets.

If you use a wood-burning fireplace, crack open a window on the opposite side of the room to allow for adequate air circulation. Operating a fireplace in an enclosed room could cause carbon monoxide problems.

Avoid opening the refrigerator or freezer door. Refrigerated food will stay cold up to six hours; frozen food will keep for about two days if the door is not opened. If the outage is prolonged, pack refrigerated items in a styrofoam or insulated cooler surrounded by ice. When the power comes back on, use a thermometer to check the internal temperature of the food – if it's less than 40 degrees, it's safe to keep. If frozen foods still have ice crystals, they can safely be refrozen.



Portable heaters and generators

A kerosene or propane heater or even a portable generator can come in handy when the power goes out. But these devices must be used with extreme caution. Before using this type of equipment, check your local safety codes and read the manufacturer's directions carefully – as a homeowner, you are responsible for the safe installation and use of the equipment, and you can be held liable for any injuries or damage.

The most important safety rule in running a portable generator or space heater is to make sure the area is well ventilated. If air isn't circulating, deadly carbon monoxide fumes can quickly build up.

A space heater should be placed at least three feet away from any other objects, especially fabrics like upholstered furniture, carpet and curtains. Never set the heater on a raised surface like a workbench, chair or table – it should sit only on an uncarpeted floor.

Make sure your heater has an automatic tip-over switch that shuts the unit off if it's accidentally bumped. To prevent bumps from happening, keep the heater far away from traffic and play areas in your home. If you'll be

Always read the manufacturer's directions carefully before using a portable heater or generator, and never leave it unattended. Your family's safety depends on it.



using the heater in a basement or garage, check the area for flammable materials, including paper, cardboard, paint and other chemicals.

Always use the correct type of fuel for your heater, and keep an extra supply stored safely away. Attempting to use kerosene in a propane heater, or vice versa, can be extremely dangerous. Before refueling the unit, unplug it, let it cool, and then take it outside to refill. Keep a close eye on the heater while it's running, and be sure to shut it off before you go to bed or leave the house. Never run a portable heater for longer than the manufacturer recommends.

Never attempt to hook a portable generator to your home's service panel – it should only be used to power individual appliances. Be sure to check the wattage of the appliances you'll be connecting, to ensure that the electrical load doesn't exceed the manufacturer's rating.

Try to avoid using extension cords with your generator; if you must use them, make sure it's the correct size. Using an ordinary extension cord on a large appliance can cause it to overheat, leading to damage to the appliance or even a fire.



After the storm

When the storm has passed and power has been restored, it's safe to plug in and turn on your appliances – but do them one-by-one, to avoid overloading a circuit.

When you venture outside, check the area for downed power lines. If you see one, notify your electric company immediately. Don't allow anyone to touch or drive over a power line – even an experienced line mechanic can't tell if a line is energized just by looking at it. Always assume a downed line is dangerous, even if it's not jumping or sparking.

Clearing broken tree branches also calls for extreme caution. Downed or damaged power lines can send electrical currents through tree branches and metal fences, so survey the area carefully — especially if you'll be using a pruning pole, ax or chainsaw.



If your home is flooded, never enter standing water unless you're absolutely sure the main power has been shut off.

If a severe storm like a tornado causes major damage in your area, please do not interfere with the work of emergency crews. Downed power lines are extremely dangerous, and our crews, along with law enforcement and medical teams, need to reach storm sites quickly to prevent further injury and damage. Curious bystanders and heavy "sightseeing" traffic can seriously hamper efforts to help victims.

If you'd like to assist with recovery and clean-up efforts, it's best to contact your local Red Cross or civil defense office to see where your help is needed the most.



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