

Safety Tips for Emergency Lighting and Heating During Power Failures

In recent years very few people have frozen to death in their homes. However, many people have suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning, smoke inhalation or burns incurred through the inappropriate use of emergency devices.

When your power is out, you may be introducing potential hazards to your home so you must take extra precautions to make sure that everyone stays safe.

Candles

If you use candles, make sure you keep them away from all combustible materials. Never leave them unattended and place them out of reach of young children. Candles should be placed in solid, secure candle holders and protected by a glass chimney. Try to avoid walking with a lit candle or taking it into a closet to look for things. Use a flashlight. Never leave a child unattended in a room with a candle or oil lamp.

Oil lamps

Oil lamps or lanterns provide excellent light but can be a fire hazard if placed too close to combustibles. Keep oil lamps away from combustibles and out of the wind. Make sure they are kept in a secure place where they cannot be knocked over. Refill the lamps outdoors or away from combustibles and other people.

Before going to bed make sure that all candles and lamps are out.

Matches and lighters

Keep all matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Before the Power Comes Back On

Ontario Hydro recommends the following:

- Make sure that all stove elements and ovens are OFF and that nothing has been left on top of the stove.
- Unplug all small appliances and electronics, such as irons, toasters, toaster ovens, kettles, microwave ovens, curling irons, computers, stereos and video equipment.
- Make sure you unplug all motor-driven appliances and equipment, such as refrigerators, freezers and washing machines. When the power is restored, plug them back in one at a time, at 15 minute intervals.

Smoke Alarms

Test your smoke alarms. If a fire starts in your home while you are asleep, you want to know about it

Heating and Cooking

Think carefully before you bring a fuel-burning appliance into your home. Any device that burns fuel requires *oxygen* to provide complete combustion and *ventilation* to remove the products of combustion. Any device fueled by natural gas, propane, heating oil, kerosene, coal, charcoal, gasoline or wood produces carbon monoxide.

Use only portable space heaters that have been designed for indoor, residential use. Before using a portable heater, review the manufacturer's recommendations for usage and follow the instructions carefully. Only use the fuel for which the appliance was designed.

When using the heater, provide adequate ventilation by opening a window slightly. Before refueling, turn off the heater, wait for it to cool and take the heater outside to refill. Never use propane or charcoal barbecues indoors. They are designed for outdoor use only. It is preferable to eat a cold meal than die from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Keep all heaters at least 1M (3 feet) away from combustible materials including drapes, carpeting and furniture.

Turn portable space heaters off when you are not in the room and before you go to bed.

If you are using a wood stove, be careful with the ashes. Always empty ashes into a covered metal container and store them outside away from combustibles.

If you have not used your fireplace or woodstove for a long time, have it checked by a professional technician before using it. Your chimney may be blocked or damaged, which could cause a fire or a build-up of carbon monoxide inside the home.

Generators should not be brought inside the home for any reason.

Before going to bed, do a quick check of every room to make sure candles are out and heaters are off. Wear several layers of clothing to preserve body heat.

immediately. Some homes are equipped with electrically connected smoke alarms that may not work when the power is out. Make sure your home has a battery-operated smoke alarm on every level. It is a good idea to have a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Carbon Monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that can be deadly. This toxic gas is a by-product of the incomplete combustion of fuels such as natural gas, oil, gasoline or wood. Installing a carbon monoxide alarm near the sleeping areas of your home will alert you to the presence of this deadly gas. It is a good idea to invest in a battery operated alarm that will continue to work during power failures.

Safety Tips for Electrical Generators

If you are planning to use an emergency generator during the winter, here are some valuable safety tips to follow:

- Make sure that you have installed the generator as per the manufacturer's instructions. Hire a licensed and knowledgeable contractor to install the unit. This is essential to ensure proper and safe operation.
- Be sure to have the installation inspected by the [Electrical Safety Authority](#) .
- Portable generators should be carefully placed to ensure that fumes do not enter the home.
- Do not store fuel for the generator inside your home. Keep it in an approved container a safe distance away from your home.

Refuel the generator according to manufacturer's recommendations.

Courtesy of The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal

Home Escape Planning

Good fire safety planning includes knowing two ways out of your home. In a winter storm, your exits may become blocked by snow or fallen trees, or be frozen shut by ice. Try your exits to make sure they are accessible.

Inform everyone in your home about the fire safety rules they must follow. Conduct regular safety checks of each room and keep a watchful eye on children and older adults. Make sure everyone knows the fire escape plan.

If you are aware of someone living alone nearby, check with them to make sure they are safe.