

What You Need to Know After a Prolonged Power Outage

Preventing Illness from Food, Water, Heat or Carbon Monoxide
from the Florida Poison Information Center
www.PoisonCenterTampa.org 1-800-222-1222



Food Safety

If the power is out for less than 2 hours, food in the refrigerator and freezer will be safe to eat. While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold for longer. If the power is out for longer than 2 hours, follow these guidelines: (1) A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours, (2) For the Refrigerated section: Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice (3) Use a digital quick-response thermometer to check the temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Call the poison center 24/7 at 1-800-222-1222 for questions.

Safe Drinking Water

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, food or hands or to make ice or baby formula. If possible, use baby formula that does not need to have water added. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.
- Make sure bottled water came from a safe source. If you are unsure, boil or treat it before you use it. Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe.
- Boiling water is the preferred way to kill harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms.
- When boiling water is not practical, you can treat water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or unscented household chlorine bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite): If you use chlorine tablets or iodine tablets, follow the directions that come with the tablets. If you use household chlorine bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon (~0.75 mL) of bleach per gallon of water if the water is clear. For cloudy water, add 1/4 teaspoon (~1.50 mL) of bleach per gallon. Mix the solution thoroughly and let it stand for about 30 minutes before using it.

Extreme Heat

Be aware risk for heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and fainting. To avoid heat stress, you should:

- Drink a glass of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes and at least one gallon each day.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine. They both dehydrate the body.
- If you feel dizzy, weak, or overheated, go to a cool place. Sit or lie down, drink water, and wash your face with cool water. If you don't feel better soon, get medical help quickly.
- Work during cooler hours of the day when possible, or distribute the workload evenly throughout the day.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat illness. Body temperature may rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency care is not given.

Warning signs of heat stroke can include: red, hot, and dry Skin (no sweating), fast pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness Nausea confusion or unconsciousness. If you suspect someone has heat stroke, Immediately call for medical attention. Cool the person rapidly by immersing him/her cool water or a cool shower, or spraying or sponging him/her with cool water. Monitor body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101-102°F.



Avoid Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Portable Generators can produce high levels of CO very quickly. You cannot smell or see CO, so even if you do not smell exhaust fumes, you may be exposed. Call the poison center 24/7 at 1-800-222-1222 for questions.

If you start to feel sick, dizzy, weak, or have a bad headache while using a generator, get to fresh air immediately. If you have fainting, chest pain or difficulty breathing, get medical attention right away. Inform medical staff that CO poisoning is suspected. If the symptoms occurred while indoors, call the fire department to determine if it is safe to re-enter the building.

Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces, including homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO build-up in the home. Locate the unit outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors. Install battery-operated or plug-in CO alarms with battery back up in your home.