Household outage practice

Communication, water, food and alerts

Try these drills before services go down. The steps work on paper. In the digital copy, select Watch video to play a lesson or the producer name for its companion resource.

1 ## Reconnect when phones are down

Watch video

FEMA

Have each person name the meeting place and find the contact number with their phone put away.

2 ## Store a supply of drinking water

Watch video

Regional Water Providers Consortium

Pick a food-grade container you can lift when full. Find a cool storage spot and write down the fill date.

3 ## Know what a boil-water advisory means

Watch video

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Find where your water utility posts advisories. If officials report chemical contamination, follow their instructions and use a different safe supply.

4 ## Make a plan for the fridge and freezer

Watch video

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Locate a cooler and check where the fridge and freezer thermometers sit. Save the FDA's food guidance before losing service.

5 ## Program a weather radio for local alerts

Watch video

National Weather Service Nashville

Use your own radio's manual and county code. Tune the local broadcast and confirm you can recognize an alert during the scheduled test.

Keep a household reminder

Where will we find our contact card, drinking water and local updates if our phones stop working?

Extended outage practice

Backup power, sanitation and neighborhood communication

Choose a drill that fits your household, then try it with someone you trust. Keep medical plans and private contact details on your own copy.

6 ## Choose a safe spot for a portable generator

Watch video

Texas Department of Insurance · State Fire Marshal's Office

With the generator off, measure a spot outdoors at least 20 feet from homes, with exhaust directed away from doors, windows and vents. If there's no safe spot, plan another power source.

7 ## Plan backup power for medical equipment

Watch video

Larimer County Government

Ask the equipment supplier about approved backup power and runtime at your prescribed settings. Write down whom to call, where you could go and how you would get there.

8 ## Prepare a toilet for a sewer outage

Watch video

Oregon Department of Emergency Management

Practice the layout with clean, empty supplies. Identify a handwashing station and where your local sanitation agency will post waste-disposal instructions.

9 ## Relay a message accurately without cell service

Watch video

Northern Colorado Amateur Radio Club

With a partner, read a fictional welfare message aloud and compare their written copy word for word. This tabletop drill takes two pencils and no radio.

10 ## Set up a neighborhood information point

Watch video

Seattle Emergency Hubs

Try a paper board with a fictional request and offer. Add a time and source to each update, and decide who will check it. Confirm any real meeting place locally.

Write down the next step

What do we need to confirm with our provider, our utility or our neighbors, and when will we check?