

Be prepared for a

WINTER WEATHER EMERGENCY

www.cityofmnhk.com/winter

PREPARATION

The first step in preparing for an energy emergency is to make a plan. The most common energy emergency we face in Manhattan is an electrical outage. Imagine that an intense winter storm is forecasted for our area. What will you do if the electricity is off for several days? Don't wait for the storm to hit before making plans. Plan ahead and be prepared.

If your home has electric heat, failure would be caused by lack of power. Don't forget that most other systems depend on electricity, too. Hot-air systems, including pellet stoves, rely on a fan for air circulation, hot-water systems with zone valves, circulator pumps, and most thermostats require electricity.

The following items should be considered when making a plan:

- How long could the emergency last?
- How cold is it expected to get?
- What are alternative heat sources?
- How long will the alternative heat sources last?
- Select a method for temporary heat.
- Choose a room or a portion of the home to provide heat to.

RESOURCES

Consider the resources you now have in your home for handling an emergency. Because no two homes are the same, homeowners should assess their own situation and prepare accordingly.

- Could your heating system, with simple alteration or through manual operation, continue to heat all or part of your home?
- What other heating devices are used or stored in your home or garage? A list may include a fireplace; a wood, gas or oil stove or space heater; a camping stove or heater; a gas-fired hot water heater or portable electric heater.
- List fuels available in your home or within reasonable distance. Which of them could be used in the above list of devices? Possible alternative fuels include oil or kerosene; firewood, lumber scraps, or campstove fuel.

CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARDS

The Manhattan Fire Department recommends having a battery-powered carbon monoxide detector to keep you safe during a power outage.

The use of gas-powered appliances, such as generators and charcoal or gas grills, increases the number of carbon monoxide poisoning cases and fatalities due to improper use of this equipment. Carbon monoxide is known as a “silent killer.” It is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas and is highly poisonous.

Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

- Fatigue and weakness
- Chest pains for those with heart disease
- Shortness of breath upon exertion
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Headaches
- Confusion and/or lack of coordination
- Impaired vision
- Loss of consciousness and, in severe cases, death

Ventilation

Do not burn anything larger than candles in your home without providing adequate ventilation to the outside. All heaters, except electric heaters, should be vented to provide oxygen and to safely remove exhaust fumes, gases and smoke.

Generators

Do not ever operate generators indoors, not even in the garage. Operate them outside and connect them to your appliances via cables. There are also ways to connect them directly to your home’s electric system, thereby allowing you to run all your appliances as you usually would. Ask a professional for guidance, if this is your choice.

Fumes

Toxic gases present a serious danger when there is insufficient ventilation. For safety, provide cross ventilation by opening a window an inch on each side of a room.

TIPS TO STAY WARM

Insulate your home from the cold

The first step is to insulate everything the best you can to keep as much heat as possible inside the house. Seal cracks around doors and windows with towels and blankets. Window insulation film kits are available at most local hardware stores.

Limit the area to be heated

Select a space on the "warm" side of the house, away from prevailing cold winds. It's best to avoid rooms with large windows or uninsulated walls. Interior rooms, such as inside bathrooms or closets, probably have the lowest heat loss. Your basement may be another great option in cold weather, because of the heat gain from the earth. Isolate the room from the rest of the house by keeping doors closed, hanging bedding, heavy drapes, blankets or towels over entryways. Hang drapes, bedding, shower curtains and other insulating items over doors and windows.

Dress warm

Wear multiple layers of warm clothing. If it starts getting very cold, put on a hat, a scarf or neckwarmer, warm socks, layers of long underwear, fleece, and wool. You can also raid your camping clothes or your ski clothes. Sleeping in clothes (especially with a hat on) will keep you warmer, as well.

Solar heat

An appreciable amount of heat can be gained through large windows on the southern side of the house.

Pet care

Wrap your pet cages on the top and three sides with bubble wrap, thick towels or blankets. If you use bubble wrap, make sure the bubbles face away from the cage. Most drug stores carry heat packs that "snap" to activate the heating element. Wrap a couple of them in towels and place them on the bottom of the cage. Make sure your pet can't come into direct contact with the heat pack because the contents are toxic.

Heated bricks

If you have a gas oven or fireplace, use them to heat bricks up to a high temperature. If you have an electric oven and expect a power outage, you can warm the bricks up as a precaution. Remove the bricks when they are warm, but still touchable. Bricks hold warmth for a long time, sometimes days. You can wrap these bricks in towels and warm up your bed.

Hot water

Filling your bathtub with hot water will help if your power is out for a brief period.

Bedding

Beds may be the safest, warmest place. Use adequate blankets and coverings to trap and conserve vital body heat. Several people in the same bed can share heat.

ALTERNATIVE HEATING OPTIONS

Generators

If you have a generator, obtain fuel. DO NOT store fuels in heated areas. This is particularly true for highly combustible items such as gasoline and kerosene, or even paper. When in use, generators need to be kept OUTDOORS with cables leading into the house and to the appliances they are powering up. Do NOT operate generators indoors including the garage.

Fireplaces

If wood logs aren't available, paper "logs" can be made by rolling newspapers or magazines tightly into small log-sized bundles, which can be burned if they are stacked to allow proper air circulation. If the situation gets critical, other burnable wood can be considered, including lumber and even furniture.

Gas or charcoal grills

For cooking your food, a grill is a great option during an electric outage; however, never use a grill indoors. To warm up the house, you can use your outdoor grill to heat bricks or even rocks. These hold heat for quite awhile.

EMERGENCY KITS

Below are some items that may be needed for a winter power outage emergency:

- Enough non-refrigerated food for three days: soup mixes, cereal, dried foods, crackers, canned food, etc. The less cooking it requires, the better, because you may not be able to cook.
- Water — plastic milk cartons make great storage containers. Keep a three-day supply on hand.
- Reusable plates, cups and utensils; garbage bags.
- Blankets and/or sleeping bags.
- Battery-operated radio and flashlights (with new batteries and extras on hand).
- Camping equipment such as gas stoves can be used outside or on a porch or a deck. Don't use a gas camping stove inside a house; ventilation is needed.
- Candles, matches, oil lamps. (Do not leave unattended, especially with young children and pets.)
- List of emergency phone numbers.
- A phone that doesn't need electricity to work. (Remember: An uncharged cellphone does need electricity. Use a car charger for your cell phone when necessary.)
- Fire Extinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Board games, cards, books, etc.

FREEZING PIPES

Without heat for at least several hours and the temperature well below freezing, you will have to protect exposed plumbing. Drain all pipes, including hot water heating pipes, in rooms that will not receive emergency heat. Familiarize yourself with your home plumbing and heating layout in advance so you can do the job quickly and thoroughly to avoid repairs later.

Emergency cooking

During an emergency, providing hot meals for your family may be a problem. A camp stove can be used or, if necessary, cooking can be done in a fireplace. Keep a supply of canned foods such as stews, soups, canned meats, beans or spaghetti to supplement dry foods such as cereal, bread, dried meats and cheeses. Freeze-dried meals for campers and backpackers are often excellent foods that can be prepared with a minimal amount of heat.

“The Cold Weather Rule”

Kansas Gas has “The Cold Weather Rule,” which allows for special payment and disconnection procedures for residential natural gas customers with unpaid accounts to continue or restore service throughout the cold weather period (November 1 through March 31). For more information go to www.kansasgasservice.com or call customer service at 1-800-794-4780.

Reporting electrical outages

Do not assume that Westar knows your electricity is out. To report an outage contact Westar at 1-800-LIGHT-KS (1-800-544-4857). Westar’s online service or automated reporting line is the most efficient way to report an outage. The online system can be found at www.westarenergy.com. You must register your account in order to use the online reporting system. It would be best to do so before an electrical outage happens.

Stay informed

It may take several days to fully restore electricity to the region following a major storm. The City of Manhattan works closely with Westar Energy to prioritize tree and debris removal from city streets so electrical crews may complete power restoration. Stay informed with the following methods:

- Keep a battery-powered radio in your emergency kit to receive updates from local media.
- Follow the City of Manhattan and Manhattan Fire Department on social media.
- Sign up for IRIS Alerts at www.rileycountyks.gov for emergency notifications.
- Stay in touch with email alerts from the City of Manhattan. Sign up at www.cityofmhk.com/intouch.

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