Long-term food and backup power

Some crises last well beyond three days. This guide helps families build and maintain a two-week food reserve, keep food safe through long power cuts, and use backup power at home without risking carbon monoxide poisoning or fire.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Two weeks of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food per person
- [ ] Water: about 4 litres (1 gallon) per person per day, for two weeks
- [ ] One month of long-term prescription medicines
- [ ] Baby formula, pet food and special needs equipment
- [ ] Camping stove with fuel
- [ ] Cooler with ice or frozen gel packs
- [ ] Fridge and freezer thermometers
- [ ] Battery-operated carbon monoxide alarm
- [ ] Heavy-duty outdoor-rated extension cord
- [ ] Labelled fuel safety can
- [ ] Battery pack that can recharge critical devices several times

PREPARE

- Build a home store of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food and water to last two weeks.
- Add baby formula, pet food and any special equipment household members with special needs rely on.
- Keep a month of long-term prescription medicines at home, always using the oldest first.
- Ask the device maker whether it can run on batteries or a generator, and tell your electricity company.
- Keep a camping stove and fuel so you can cook without electricity. Use it only outdoors, never inside the home or garage.
- Get advice from a licensed electrician before buying or installing a backup generator.

USE AND MAINTAIN

- Keep fridge and freezer doors closed: a closed fridge keeps food cold about 4 hours, a full freezer about 48 hours (24 if half full).
- Check your stored food every few weeks and eat the oldest cans first.
- Keep cans in a cool, dry place below 29°C (85°F), away from stoves, sinks and damp areas.
- After 4 hours without power, move perishables into a cooler with ice, at 4°C (40°F) or below.
- If the outage may last long, get dry ice or block ice to keep the fridge cold.
- Run a generator outdoors only, 6 metres (20 feet) from doors, windows and vents, never in a garage.
- Use heavy-duty outdoor cords rated above the total load, with no cuts and all three prongs.
- Switch off and cool the generator before refuelling, and store fuel in labelled safety cans outside living areas.

REVIEW

- Check fridge and freezer temperatures. Keep or refreeze food at 4°C (40°F) or below, discard the rest.
- Throw out food with an odd smell, colour or texture, or that feels warm. Never taste it.
- Discard cans that are bulging, leaking, deeply dented or heavily rusted.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist whether refrigerated medicines are still safe to use.

MY NOTES

Sources: American Red Cross, What Do You Need In a Survival Kit (https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/survival-kit-supplies.html); American Red Cross, Power Outage Safety (https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/power-outage.html); American Red Cross, Safe Generator Use (https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/power-outage/safe-generator-use.html); Canadian Red Cross, Power Outages: Before, During and After (https://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada/types-of-emergencies/power-outages); US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Safety Alert: Portable Generator Hazards (https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5123_SafetyAlert_PortableGenerators_102021.pdf); CDC, Avoiding Carbon Monoxide Poisoning (https://www.cdc.gov/natural-disasters/psa-toolkit/avoiding-carbon-monoxide-poisoning.html); CDC, Keep Food Safe After a Disaster or Emergency (https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/foods/keep-food-safe-after-emergency.html); USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), Shelf-Stable Food Safety (https://www.fsis.usda.gov/es/node/3296); US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Are You and Your Food Prepared for a Power Outage? (https://www.usda.gov/node/19949); US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), FDA Offers Tips about Medical Devices and Natural Disasters (https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/fda-offers-tips-about-medical-devices-and-natural-disasters); Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (MCF), Basics of home preparedness (https://www.mcf.se/en/advice-for-individuals/home-preparedness--prepping-for-at-least-a-week/basics-of-home-emergency-preparedness/); Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (MCF), One month's supply of medicines at home (https://www.mcf.se/en/advice-for-individuals/home-preparedness--prepping-for-at-least-a-week/one-months-supply-of-medicines-at-home/); Government of Canada, Power outages: how to prepare (https://www.canada.ca/en/services/policing/emergencies/preparedness/get-prepared/hazards-emergencies/power-outages/how-prepare.html); Government of Canada, Emergency kits (https://www.canada.ca/en/services/policing/emergencies/preparedness/get-prepared/emergency-kits.html)
General guidance in our own words. Always follow your local authorities.