

Disaster Preparedness

Emergency Power Planning for People who use Electricity and Battery Dependent Assistive Technology and Medical Devices

This checklist is designed to assist clients and families dependant on assistive technology devices or medical equipment in creating a plan for back-up power in the event of a disaster causing a sustained power outage. Please communicate with your service coordinator to help you prepare and secure emergency back-up supplies and equipment.

Planning Basics

- Create a plan for alternative sources of power.
- Read equipment instructions and talk to equipment suppliers about your backup power options.
- Get advice from your power company regarding type of backup power you plan to use.
- Regularly check backup or alternative power equipment to ensure it will function during an emergency.
- Teach many people how to use your backup systems and operate your equipment.
- Keep a list of alternate power providers.
- Ask your local police and fire departments, and hospital if you could use them as a backup for your equipment power if your backup systems fail.
- Label all equipment with your name, address, and phone number. Attach instruction cards to equipment and laminate them for added strength.
- Keep copies of equipment serial and model numbers in a waterproof container in your emergency supply kit.

Life-Support Device Users

- Contact your power and water companies about your needs for life-support devices (home dialysis, suction, assistive respiratory devices, etc.) in advance of a disaster.
- Many utility companies keep an emergency list and map of the locations of power-dependent customers. They will put you on a “priority reconnection service” list. Contact the customer service department of your utility company to learn if this service is available.
- Even if you are on the “priority reconnection service,” list, your power could still be out for many days following a disaster. It is vital that you have power backup options for your equipment.
- Let your fire department know that you are dependent on life-support devices.
- All ventilator users should keep a resuscitation bag handy. This bag delivers air through a mask when squeezed.
- If you receive dialysis or other medical treatments, ask your provider what plans are in place for dialysis during an emergency and where you should go for treatment if your site is not available after an emergency.

For More Information:

Emergency Preparedness: Taking Responsibility for your Safety -Tips for People with Disabilities

www.espfocus.org

Power Dependent Equipment

www.redcross.org

FDA Medical Devices

www.fda.gov

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Oxygen Users

- Check with your provider to determine if you can use a reduced flow rate in an emergency to extend the life of the system. Record on your equipment the reduced flow numbers so that you can easily refer to them.
- Be aware of oxygen safety practices.
- Avoid areas where gas leaks or open flames may be present.
- Post "Oxygen in Use" signs.
- Always use battery powered flashlights or lanterns rather than gas lights or candles when oxygen is in use (to reduce fire risk).
- Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near you so you can get to it quickly in case of emergency.

Generator Users

- Make sure use of a generator is appropriate and realistic.
- Operate them in open areas to ensure good ventilation.
- Safely store fuel. If you live in an apartment, check with maintenance for an appropriate location before storing gasoline.
- Store a siphon kit.
- Test your generator periodically to make sure it will be work when needed.
- Some generators can connect to the existing home wiring systems; always contact your utility company regarding critical restrictions and safety issues.
- A 2,000 to 2,500-watt gas-powered portable generator can power a refrigerator and several lamps. (A refrigerator needs to run only 15 minutes an hour to stay cool if you keep the door closed. So, you could unplug it to operate other devices.)
- Create a plan for how to recharge batteries when the electricity is out.
- Check with your vendor/supplier to find alternative ways to charge batteries. Examples include:
 1. Connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery.
 2. Using a converter that plugs into a vehicle's cigarette lighter).
 3. You may substituting a vehicle battery for a wheelchair battery but it the charge will not last as long as a wheelchair deep-cycle battery.
- If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, store a lightweight manual wheelchair for emergency use if possible.
- Stored extra batteries require periodic charging even when they are unused. If your survival strategy depends on storing batteries, closely follow a recharging schedule.
- Know the working life of any batteries that support your systems.
- When power is restored, check to make sure the settings on your medical device have not changed (medical devices often reset to a default mode when power goes out).

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