September is National Preparedness Month: Power Sources

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average U.S. electricity customer was without power for 250 minutes and experienced 1.3 outage in 2016. A power outage can disrupt medical services, close pharmacies, and create a life-threatening predicament for the over 2.5 million people who rely on electric-powered medical equipment. Prepare for a prolonged blackout with an emergency power plan and back up and alternative power sources for your cellphone, refrigerator, and medical equipment.

The Basics

- A flashlight or head lamp
- Extra batteries in standard sizes, such as AA and AAA
- Hearing aid batteries
- Car charger(s) and adapters for electric-dependent equipment and devices
- Jump starter and/or jumper cables
- A battery-powered or hand-crank NOAA weather radio with USB port(s)
- A generator
- Battery-powered smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors
- Appliance thermometers for your refrigerator and freezer
- A surge protector power strip(s)

Quick Tips

- Pack flashlights or a battery-powered lantern for emergency lighting. Candles pose a fire hazard.
• Create an Emergency Power Planning Checklist for your medical devices, including breathing machines, power wheelchairs and scooters, nebulizers, and oxygen or home dialysis equipment.
• Read the user manual or contact the manufacturer to find out if your medical device is compatible with batteries or a generator.
• Contact your local fire department, and power and water companies if you use electric-powered medical equipment. Some utility companies keep a “priority reconnection service” list of power-dependent customers.
• If possible, buy manual alternatives for your electric devices that are portable, dependable, and durable. For example, a manual wheelchair, walker or cane as a backup for an electric scooter.
• Fully charge your electronic devices, medical equipment, and back-up power sources if you know a disaster is coming.
• Place plastic bags filled with water in the freezer to keep foods cold in a power outage. Drink the water when the ice melts.

Resources

• What You Need to Know When the Power Goes Out Unexpectedly
• Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning After an Emergency
• Electrical Safety and Generators
• Home Use Devices: How to Prepare for and Handle Power Outages (FDA)
• Tips about Medical Devices and Storms (FDA)
• Refrigerated Food and Power Outages: When to Save and When to Throw Out (HHS)
• Homeowners: Respond to Power Outages (DOE)
• Homeowners: Choosing the Right Backup Generator (DOE)
• Homeowners: Alternative Backup Power Options (DOE)