Preparing for a power cut



At some point you're likely to experience a power cut. Following this advice will ensure you're prepared and aware of the help available

Some power cuts are planned, for example when an electricity company needs to carry out maintenance. You'll be told about these in advance. But other power cuts are unplanned – for example when power lines are brought down by storms.

In either case, here is advice about how to cope before, during and after a power cut. Use these links to get to the information you need:

What to do before a power cut

If you rely on medical equipment that needs electricity

What to do during a power cut

What to do after a power cut

Compensation

Signing up to the Priority Services Register

What to do before a power cut

These tips will help you prepare for either type of power cut. There are many steps you can take in advance, like knowing who your network provider is, saving helpful numbers, purchasing useful items – like a torch – and ensuring you know what will happen to medical equipment in the event of a power cut.

Stay updated

Tip: Know who your local network operator is so you know where to look for updates. To find out, enter your postcode on **www.PowerCut105.com**.

Tip: Save emergency numbers to your phone. **0800 111 999** is the gas emergency number in case you smell gas during a power cut. **105** is the dedicated and free power cut emergency

number. You can also follow your local network operator on social media for updates.

Tip: If you only have a landline, or have a connected telecare kit, and you are concerned about being unable to make calls during a power cut, contact your landline provider. They can let you know if your phone would work during a power cut. If it doesn't, they might be able to offer you a solution that would enable you to call the emergency services if you needed to during a planned power cuts.

Tip: Charge a mobile phone that you can use to check for updates online, call an emergency number, or check in on vulnerable family and friends. You might also want to have a fully charged power bank to hand so you can charge your phone or other devices.

Tip: Check in with friends, family and neighbours about their plans for a power cut and encourage them to plan ahead.

Items to have and things to check

Tip: Keep a charged torch (or spare batteries if it's battery-powered) in a convenient place – maybe a drawer or a bedside table. You'll want this to be easy to reach in case your power goes out at night.

Tip: Have food and drink available that doesn't require electricity to heat or prepare.

Tip: If you know a power cut is coming make sure you have at least half a tank of petrol in your car as many service stations can't pump fuel during a power failure. It's also useful to know how to manually open your garage door, if you have an electric one.



Tip: Most gas and oil boilers need electricity to fire up or even just keep running, so it's unlikely your heating will work during a power cut. If it's winter and you know a power cut is coming, have blankets and warm clothes handy, so you can keep you warm without heating. You could also prepare some hot water bottles.

If you rely on medical equipment that needs electricity

If you rely on medical equipment at home, it's important to understand what will happen to it during a power cut. If you're unsure, speak to your healthcare provider as soon as possible. They'll tell you what steps you might need to take, such as backing it up or ensuring it has been serviced regularly.

If you have a stairlift, check if it has a manual handle to allow you to safely go downstairs during a power cut. Most stairlifts also have a battery backup.

If you do rely on electrical medical equipment or feel you may need extra support in the event of a power cut, sign up to the Priority Service Register (see below).

What to do during a power cut

If it's an unplanned power cut, report it by calling **105** for free if you live in England, Scotland or Wales or by going to your local network operator's website or app on your mobile.

Check to see if your neighbours have power in their home. If they do, it may not be a power cut at all and your trip switch may have activated; check your fuse box to see if any switches are in the off position. If your electricity meter is displaying this means power is coming into your property.

If you live near someone who may be vulnerable and you feel able to, consider checking in on them to make sure they are safe, warm, and have access to food that can be eaten cold.

Switch off all electrical appliances that shouldn't be left unattended, such as cookers, grills, chip pans, hair straighteners and electric fires. This way, when the power is back they won't come on without you realising. It's also a good idea to unplug your TV and PC, to avoid damage to them in case of a surge when power returns.

A power cut will mean that your fridge and freezer switch off. But don't worry; food will stay cool for up to four hours in the fridge and remain frozen for 48 hours in the freezer – as long as the door is kept closed. If you're unsure if food is safe, don't eat it. The Food Standards Agency (**www.food.gov.uk**) has more information.

Your network operator's social media and website will be have news of when power is likely to come back.

What to do after a power cut

Power should return to your home automatically and, if it's a planned power cut, within one hour after the expected time of reconnection. If you're still without power, or are concerned about the amount of time you've been left with no power, you can:

Visit your local network operator's website to report the fault and find updates.

Visit **powercut105.com** or call **105** for assistance. Be aware phone lines are likely to be extremely busy so going online will probably be the quickest way to report a problem.

Compensation

In some circumstances you might be entitled to compensation for a power cut. This will depend on:

- **If it is a planned power cut.**
- **How long the power cut lasts.**
- **If your network operator has not met standards set by Ofgem.**

Typically, compensation is given if you're without power for a significant amount of time (12 hours or more) or have had frequent smaller power cuts (four times a year for at least three hours). Visit **Power Cut 105** for more information.

Priority Services Register

If you feel you need additional support in the event of a power cut, you can sign up to the Priority Services Register (PSR) for your network operator, supplier and water company.

The PSR is a free service for people in England, Scotland and Wales that helps people with additional needs. The type of help available will vary depending on your circumstances, but support includes:

- **Notice of planned interruptions to your electricity or water supply.**
- **Advice on preparing for a power cut or water outage.**
- **A cold weather crisis pack (where available).**
- **Support in an emergency, such as providing heating and cooking facilities or accommodation.**
- **Free bottled water in case of water outage**
- **A generator for the medical equipment you depend on.**

- A direct number to get straight through for updates and support.
- Bills in a different language or in Braille.
- Passwords for when suppliers visit you.

Eligibility criteria

If any of the following apply to you, you can sign up:

- You're aged over 60.
- You rely on electricity for medical reasons or mobility equipment.
- You have a hearing or visual impairment.
- You have a disability or long-term health condition.
- You have a child under 5.
- You have a health condition which makes it difficult for you to understand your bills or to stay warm at home.
- Anything else which would cause you to feel vulnerable in a power cut or water outage such as mental health.

Sign up by contacting your energy supplier, water company and local network operator.

If you have different suppliers for your gas and electricity, you'll need to contact them both separately. And if you switch supplier, you'll need to ask to join their Priority Services Register.

Preparing for emergencies

The government recommends that everyone take simple steps to prepare for emergencies such as severe weather, disease and cyber attacks on infrastructure. Many of the actions described in this leaflet, including staying aware of alerts, keeping your phone charged and having a few days of essential supplies available, can help you cope with a range of unexpected disruptions.

For further advice, including creating a household emergency plan and understanding local risks, visit the UK government's BeReady website: https://beready.campaign.gov.uk.

This factsheet was updated in November 2026

The information on this leaflet is available as a webpage; scan the QR code or click the button.

Go to webpage

CSE

We're a charity (298740) supporting people and organisations across the UK to tackle the climate emergency and end the suffering caused by cold homes.

St James Court, Bristol BS1 3LH
cse.org.uk

We offer free advice on domestic energy use to people in central southern and southwest England.

Contact us:

0800 082 2234
home.energy@cse.org.uk

See all our energy advice pages at www.cse.org.uk/advice