

Keeping your Family and Home Safe during an Emergency

Your food

Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors shut as much as possible, to keep the cold air inside. Refrigerated foods should be safe to eat as long as the power was out no more than a few hours and the doors have been kept closed, according to Public Health — Seattle & King County. A full freezer can stay at freezing temperatures for about two days and a half-full freezer for about a day. If the power looks like it will be out for several days, try to find some ice to pack inside your fridge.

Your home

While the power is out, turn off all your appliances save for a single lamp to avoid a circuit overload when electricity is restored. Don't leave candles, oil lamps or other open flames unattended. Do not operate gasoline-powered machinery such as generators indoors (including inside your garage) or improvise ways to cook inside your home. Under no circumstance should you bring a charcoal grill indoors to cook. That produces carbon monoxide. It can be fatal. About the only exception would be if you are using a gas appliance that is already installed in the home and has not been impacted by the outage. If you use a generator, the Red Cross advises you to connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator.

Your property

If your home or property is damaged, contact your insurance agent or company to file a claim immediately. Take pictures and document the damage. If safe to do so, make temporary repairs to prevent further damage from rain or wind and save all receipts for reimbursement. Use only licensed, reputable building contractors and make sure they get the proper permits.

Some tips from the NW Insurance Council:

- Don't pay a lot for temporary repairs unless authorized by your insurance adjuster. You could get stuck with the bill if the repairs are deemed excessive.
- If you decide to do repairs yourself, put on proper equipment for the job: sturdy boots to protect against sharp objects, eye protection to guard your eyes from flying debris and gloves to protect your hands.

Your pets

The Humane Society of the United States recommends having a pet carrier handy so you are able to transport your pet in a pinch, or at least provide them a safe haven.