

SURVIVING AN ICE STORM
Prepared by SW Hills Neighborhood Emergency Team

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Information to Have in Advance

In advance, have a list of numbers/websites to report problems:

PGE outages, lines down – 503-464-7777, 877-660-6789

NW Natural – gas odor, gas leaks: 9-1-1

Road hazards – 9-1-1

Trees in public right of way – 503-823-8733 (PBOT)

PBOT (other): 3-1-1; pdxroads@portlandoregon.gov

Water line breaks: 9-1-1; 503-823-4874

Portland (other): pdxreporter.org

Non-emergency (fire, police): 503-823-3333

Communications – know your provider’s contact information.

Internet service

Mobile and/or landline phone service

Evacuating with pets

In advance, keep an updated list of pet-friendly hotels.

Check hotel policy for your type of pet – some “pet friendly hotels” take dogs, but not cats, for example

Information sources during the event

Cell phone numbers of immediate neighbors – text.

In advance, sign up for alerts (or set up a social media account) for posts from:

PGE - set up/update PGE app on phone.

PBOT

Portland Water

Portland Fire and Rescue

NW Natural

PBEM

Over the air – KXL (100 FM); OPB (91.5 FM)

“Know How” in Advance

Know in advance – vehicles:

Safety check for vehicles (especially anti-freeze)

Practice putting on chains or other traction devices, if any

Know in advance – water main shut off:

Know where your in-house and street (meter) water main shut offs are.

If turning off water at the meter, have appropriate tool available.

For most Portland meters, this is commonly called a Water Key or a Meter Key

Example: Home Depot sells these as a “Water Meter Valve Key”

Be sure both exterior and interior main shut-offs are accessible.

Know in advance – how to drain inside water lines.

First know how to turn off water at the main.

If you are going to drain hot as well as cold water lines (recommended), first, turn off power to your hot water heater (electric – turn off appropriate circuit breaker at electrical panel; gas – turn on/off knob to the pilot setting.

[*note: do not turn off the gas entirely*]). This step is a fire safety issue.

For a multi-storied residence, open and drain lines from the top down.

Leave water lines open; when drained, no water should be flowing.

Know the difference: 9-1-1, 3-1-1, Non-emergency

Reporting Issues During a Storm

Downed utility lines

Power lines

Assume electrical lines are live.

Report to 9-1-1.

Stay 50 feet away.

Communications lines – landline coax is low-voltage; be able to recognize it.

Downed trees:

If a safety hazard, call 9-1-1.

Check carefully for any entangled utility lines – do this from a distance.

If on your property, when safe to do so take photos.

If on your property, report to your homeowners/renters insurance company.

Personal Safety

If you are alone in a residence, set up a check-in routine with at least one other person.

Seniors, small children - extreme temperatures

Can't regulate body temperatures as well as teens or non-senior adults.

Don't let them “tough it out” – more likely victims of hypothermia

Power Outages – Avoiding Frozen Pipes

For moderately cold temperatures, without all-house heat, leave water running at a solid trickle; just dripping may not be enough.
Open cabinet doors for sink, bathroom pipes.

If remaining in residence, but alternate power source heats only a few rooms
Fill a bath-tub with water.
Turn off water at the main (See Know In Advance).
Drain inside pipes (See Know in Advance).
Be mindful of “hidden” water lines, such as those to a clothes washer; also uninsulated and/or east facing lines.

Draining on-demand water heaters
Shut off water and drain if not in a heated area.
Turn off gas supply; leave pilot on, if appropriate.

If leaving an unheated house – turn off water at the main; drain inside pipes.

If you find frozen pipes, and are able to do so, turn off water at the main (to prevent further water damage as they unfreeze).
If there is water damage, when possible, take pictures and contact your homeowners or renters insurance agent.

Power Outages – Household Issues

If using alternate power sources:
CO monitors – batteries (code but check); 10-year batteries may be CO effective for only 5 years (check).

Power off to fridge:
Keep a battery operated two-read thermometer in the fridge.
If reading shows inside temperature exceeded 40 degrees, assume food is not safe to eat.

Power off – emergency water storage containers:
If stored in unheated environment, check to see if frozen and, if yes, check for damage to the containers (cracks, leaks).
Store some emergency water inside – even without heat, takes longer to freeze.

Power off – food preparation:
Consider preparing meals during daylight, to maximize kitchen safety.

Power off – keeping your mobile device charged:
Top off from “power banks” or similar charging devices if possible.

Alternate power sources

Especially important for homes at high elevations (SW and NW Hills) and in the Columbia River Gorge:

A gas or wood-burning stove will keep one room warm. (Open fireplaces are less useful.)

If using wood-burning stove insert, go into storm season with a wood supply. (This option will not prevent water pipes elsewhere in the home from freezing!)

A portable generator with fuel.

As is, this may only allow warming one or a few rooms.

A cost-effective addition (highly recommended) – have an electrician wire a “transfer switch” into your system, in access to where you will run the generator. (This is a safety measure; it also allows the generator to run your furnace; fridge, etc.)

Propane is a particularly good fuel option.

Very long “shelf-life.” Also, can be safely stored in very cold weather.

A particularly popular model is the Honda EU2200i. If using this model, also purchase a fuel adaptor kit, to run the generator on propane.

An in-line, all house generator

These run on natural gas. They are wired into your electrical system.

They are convenient but VERY expensive.

Are not likely to be useable after an earthquake.

Generac and Champion are particularly good models, among others.

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