

Power and water outages

Overview

An outage is a short or long term loss of water or electric power. It can affect a single property, a building, or an entire community.

Many of Alberta's hazards, such as high winds, freezing rain, and flooding, can damage power lines causing power outages. Water outages are caused by extreme temperature fluctuations and pipe corrosion causing water main breaks, among other reasons.

Before an outage

Be prepared for an outage before it happens.

- Download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app for critical, life-saving alerts.
- Find out where your community will post information and updates during an emergency.
- Develop and practise a preparedness plan for you and your loved ones.
- Maintain an [emergency kit](#) stocked with supplies such as food, battery-powered/crank radio/flashlight and extra batteries.
- Store water for your family (including pets) for drinking, cooking, and hygiene.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm with backup battery power.
- Know your utility company phone number.
- Have a backup exit plan if you rely on an elevator.
- Sign up for a medical alert program if you have critical needs.
- Have back-up power in place for your generator, heat, and critical medical equipment.
- If you have a vehicle, keep the tank full in case fuel stations lose power or close down, and keep an emergency [vehicle kit](#).

Financial preparedness

- Speak to an insurance agent about your specific needs.
- Know your insurance policy. Make sure your home, vehicle, business and belongings are protected.
- If possible, consider an emergency savings account to cover temporary expenses while you are out of your home.

- If you can, keep emergency cash handy in case banking services are unavailable.
- If you are evacuated, keep all receipts for additional expenses.
- Prepare a [detailed list](#) of all your belongings.
- Know the [7 steps](#) for making a home insurance claim.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada is ready to answer your questions. Connect with them by email at askibcwest@ibc.ca or by telephone 1-844-227-5422. For more information on insurance preparedness visit [ibc.ca](#).

Carbon monoxide poisoning is preventable. Generators, camp stoves, or barbecues do not belong indoors; gas stoves and ovens are not a safe source of heat.

During an outage

Outages can leave you without heat, water, lights, air conditioning, information services, and vital communication channels. Services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, banks, and ATMs may be closed during an extended outage.

Outage troubleshooting

- If the power is still on in your neighbourhood but not in your home, check your breaker.
- Call your utility provider to determine if the interruption is widespread or only affecting your property.
- Leave one light on inside and one light on outside so you and the utility worker will know when power has been restored.
- Don't use any household appliances that require water.

Know when to go

Extreme heat and cold can have a greater impact on older adults, young children or those with health issues. If it is too cold to stay where you are, and it is safe to leave, head to a shelter until it is safe to return.

Outage survival tips

- Head to the lowest level of the building. Heat is drawn from the ground so it will stay warm longer.
- Keep doors and blinds closed.

- Have extra blankets and warm clothes on hand.
- Use a wood-burning or gas fireplace if you have one.
- Turn cell phones to battery-saving mode and only use them for emergency calls.
- Disconnect appliances and electronics.
- Keep freezer and refrigerator doors closed.

After an outage

Outages can create safety risks and cause property damage. Be aware of the risks and take caution when power and water returns.

Safety tips

- Do not enter a flooded basement unless you are sure the power is disconnected.
- Keep yourself, kids, and pets away from affected areas in your community.
- Never use water-damaged appliances, electrical outlets or fuse-breaker panels until they have been checked by a qualified electrician.
- Check all food for signs of spoilage and damage. When in doubt, throw it out.
- After 24 hours of no power, all refrigerated medication should be thrown out, unless the label says otherwise.
- Restock your [emergency kit](#).

How to prevent further damage

- Unplug appliances and electronics before turning on the main power switch.
- Allow the power to stabilize and wait 15 minutes before reconnecting tools and appliances.
- Turn the essentials on first. Start with heat, followed by the refrigerator and freezer.
- Turn on the main water supply.
- Make sure the hot water heater is filled before turning it on.
- Connect with your utility provider for more information.

For more information

Read our other fact sheets on:

- Hazard specific preparedness information including severe weather, flooding and more.

You can find more information about preparedness through [Alberta.ca](#), or by contacting your community's Director of Emergency Management.