

# Section 4: Power and phone outages and property access

- What to do when the power goes out for an extended period of time and the mobile phone network goes down.
- How to ensure you and the emergency services can access and leave your property during an emergency.

## Power outages

Storms, floods, slips, fallen trees, lightning strikes on transformers, washed out bridges and even traffic accidents can cause power outages. Occasionally, major faults at substations or with transmission lines some distance away can cut power and take a long time to repair.

## What will a power outage mean?

If you don't have a back-up generator, power outages could have significant implications for your property.

## Water pumps not working

Where possible make sure you can retrieve water from your tank if there's a power outage. Having some gravity flow to the house is great, or a tap you can turn on to get water from your tank without the pump running. Also think about storing bottled water.

To get water from an underground tank, you'll need a bucket and rope to draw up water through the lid.

Your toilet can still operate if you have a source of water to manually flush with. If your septic tank system isn't operational, and you don't have other options, call a company to hire a temporary toilet.

## No cooking or heating

Make sure you have a barbecue or camp stove with plenty of fuel for cooking. A fireplace or pot belly stove and plenty of dry accessible wood can be used for warmth, heating water and drying clothes.

**WARNING:** Never use outdoor gas heaters inside or try to use your BBQ for indoor heating.



## Loss of refrigeration

If the power goes out, eat the food from your fridge first, then your freezer, before you eat the food in the cupboard or your emergency supplies. Keep your fridge and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Throw away freezer food after three days without electricity.

If you, a member of your household or animals have medication that requires refrigeration, make sure you have a backup plan in place.

## Pets at risk

Pets are just as likely to become sick by eating unsafe food. If you're throwing away food that's not safe for you to eat, it's not safe for your pets to eat either. If you're boiling water for safe drinking water, do the same for your pets.

## Lights out

Make sure you have torches and batteries where everyone can find them in the dark. Solar lights and camping lamps are also handy.

**TIP: Avoid using candles as they can be easily knocked over. Avoid using kerosene lamps as they require lots of ventilation and aren't recommended for indoor use.**

## Loss of cell phone/computer power and broadcast media

In an emergency you could lose access to radio and television or ways to power computers or mobile phones. If you don't have a battery-operated radio, use your car radio. Conserve phone batteries by limiting mobile calls and data use.

Make sure you have a car (cigarette lighter socket) charger for your mobile phone so you can recharge it from your car or tractor.



## Losing power to electric fences

If you have animals, they might stray onto roads or unsafe areas on your property. Your neighbours' animals could also push through boundary fences and enter your property.

Think about installing 7-wire, post and batten fencing or an electric fence power system that doesn't require electricity (e.g. solar, battery or generator).

## Impacts on stock drinking water

If your stock drinking water supply is reliant on power to fill troughs, you'll need to ensure an emergency supply of water.

Portable troughs can be used during prolonged power outages. They're smaller than regular troughs and can be refilled manually. Also consider gravity fed water systems which pull water from a creek or pond or your water tanks.

## What to do in a power outage

### Keep away from affected sites

Don't go near affected sites until they've been properly inspected, and authorities have given the all-clear. Stay well away and don't attempt to cut or move trees that are in contact with power lines. Call 111 to report this as a risk to life and/or property. Report trees down on public land to your local council

### Contact your neighbour

Phone a neighbour and check if they have power. If they do, the fault may be with your property – perhaps a fallen tree. A quick check for obvious problems before phoning the power company could pinpoint the location and save a lot of time. Treat all electricity as live and never touch exposed electrical equipment.

### Check with your electricity company

Your electricity company's power outage website will normally have information on the extent of the outage and estimated restoration time.

Electricity companies are only responsible for connecting power to your property at the road. You, as a homeowner, are responsible for repairing any damaged lines from the road to your house or other dwellings on your property.

Always phone the power company, even if your neighbours have already phoned. The company may not realise your power supply is also out. If there's a widespread fault, they'll probably have an automated message telling you what areas are affected and when it will be fixed.



If power outages happen often where you live, you might want to look at having an alternative power supply, like solar panels. It could also be a good idea to buy a generator. Talk to your electrician about what generator would best suit your situation and make sure you have enough fuel to run it.

## Connect with community support

When power goes down, your community will often be able to help. Talk to your neighbours and find out who has a generator. You might also be able to charge your mobile phone and put food in their refrigerator or freezer.

If your local library or community centre has power, you could drop in to meet friends, charge your phone, use the free internet and stay warm.

If others are affected and you're not, reach out and offer help.

## Community Emergency Hubs

After a major emergency, you and your neighbours can support one another at a Community Emergency Hub. These are places run by the community and have a radio link to the Local Council Emergency Operations Centre.



**[Find your local Community Emergency Hub.](#)**



## **Loss of phone or internet connection**

### **Check the cell phone service**

Most cell phone towers have back-up power systems to maintain operations, however, these may last for only a few hours. If the cellular network is down, it's likely there are widespread problems. Listen to the local radio for information.

### **Be prepared – get a radio**

Radio is one of our most resilient communication channels. Listen to a solar, battery-powered AM/FM radio or a car radio to keep up to date with the latest news.

- Newstalk ZB HB 90.3FM or 1278AM
- The Hits 89.5FM (Wairoa 99.7FM)
- The Breeze 97.5FM
- More FM 88.7FM
- Central FM on 106FM or 105.2FM (Dannevirke)
- Wairoa 88FM
- Radio New Zealand News 101.5 FM or 630AM
- Radio Live 106.3FM or 1368AM

## **Property access**

In an emergency, your driveway or the only road onto your property could become blocked by fallen trees or power lines. It's important you have alternative ways to access and leave your property safely.

## **Talk to your neighbours**

You might be able to access your property through your neighbours' properties, so check what private roads are available for use in emergency events.

If you have livestock, ask your neighbours if it would be okay to cut through boundary fences to let livestock onto higher land in an emergency – and offer the same in return.



# Property Access for Emergency Vehicles

It's crucial emergency vehicles can access your property. To make access easier and faster:

- **make sure your driveway has clear access of at least 4 metres by 4 metres** so fire trucks, ambulance and other emergency vehicles can get to you, and
- ensure your street number is clearly displayed and visible from the road.

