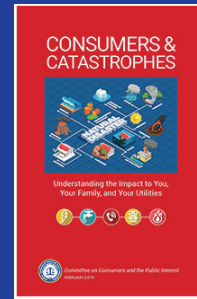


The information below is from a publication, "Consumers & Catastrophes: Understanding the Impact to You, Your Family, and Your Utilities," prepared by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' (NARUC) Committee on Consumers and the Public Interest. Download the free NARUC consumer guide.



Blizzard

A blizzard means that the following conditions are expected to prevail for a period of 3 hours or longer: (1) Sustained wind or frequent gusts to 35 miles an hour or greater; and (2) Considerable falling and/or blowing snow (i.e., reducing visibility frequently to less than a ¼ mile). (From the National Weather Service, weather.gov.)

How it Might Impact Your Utility Service

- Heavy snow and ice can weigh down poles and lines, causing a disruption in utility services.
- Blizzard conditions make it difficult to see and make the roads dangerous. Vehicle accidents resulting from blizzard conditions can damage utility poles and lines, causing loss of utility service.
- When a blizzard hits, you may not be able to make phone calls or have heat, water, gas, or electric utility services.
- Loss of utility services can also cause food spoilage and water contamination.



ALERTS

Be aware of outside conditions.

Refer to local radio and television stations for severe weather warnings.

Install a weather station at your home to monitor severe weather.

Nixle: Almost every city sends out Nixle alerts. They range from simple alerts about crimes and community notices to major alerts regarding disasters. It is a good idea to sign up for all applicable alerts in your area.

BEFORE A BLIZZARD

Basic Preparation

STEP 1: Educate Yourself

- Know the risks of winter storms for your area.
- Know how to keep pipes from freezing.
- Know common first aid techniques.
- Know your local and emergency resources.

STEP 2: Download a family emergency plan template from Ready.gov or FEMA.gov.

- Fill out the plan and review it with family members before an emergency happens!
- Be sure to plan for all family members, including pets!
- A comprehensive list can be downloaded from FEMA.gov at <http://bit.ly/FEMAFamplan>.

STEP 3: Build a Kit

- Include enough food, water, and medicine for all persons in the household.
- Remember your pets' needs, too.

STEP 4: Prep Your Home

- Add extra insulation, caulking, and weather stripping.
- Inspect and service your furnace.
- Have a back-up heating supply.
- Have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. The Red Cross currently has a free smoke detector/fire prevention program available in every state.
- Install and test smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detectors with battery back-ups.

Also,

- Ensure that you have a full tank of gas.
- Make sure you know how to manually open and close any electric garage doors, security doors or gates.
- Plug in surge protectors on important electrical equipment such as computers, DVD players, and televisions.
- Gas appliances with electronic ignitions will not work because electricity is needed to ignite the natural gas.
- Appliances requiring fans or other electric devices to run (such as central air conditioning units and gas clothes dryers) will not operate.
- Make sure to have extra blankets available in case of loss of power.
- Charge cellular phones and have a portable battery available.

Generators

Consider purchasing a generator and learn how to use it safely. For more information on generators, see the Department of Energy's online resource, ***Using Backup Generators*** at <http://bit.ly/DOEGenerators>. Improper use of generators can result in carbon monoxide poisoning. To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows.
- Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven.

DURING A BLIZZARD

General Advice

- Stay off the roads during blizzard conditions.
- If trapped in your car, stay inside, with your heater running if possible.
- Stay indoors and wear warm clothing.
- Bring pets inside or prepare adequate shelter for them to survive outdoors.
- Limit your time outside. If you need to go outside, then wear layers of warm clothing.

Frostbite and Hypothermia

If someone has been outside in a blizzard or heat is lost in the home or car, watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Seek medical attention as soon as it's safely possible if you believe you or someone else has frostbite or hypothermia.

AFTER A BLIZZARD

Continue listening to local news or a [NOAA Weather Radio](#) for updated information and instructions.

- Access to some parts of the community may be limited or roads may be blocked.
- Avoid driving and other travel until conditions have improved.
- Dress appropriately if you go outside. Hats and gloves are especially important!
- Avoid overexertion.

If you are using a portable generator, **take precautions** against carbon monoxide poisoning, electrocution, and fire.

Food and Medication Safety

- When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- If the power is out for more than a day, discard any medication that should be refrigerated, unless the drug's label says otherwise. If a life depends on the refrigerated drugs, consult a doctor or pharmacist and use the medicine only until a new supply is available.

DISCLAIMER

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