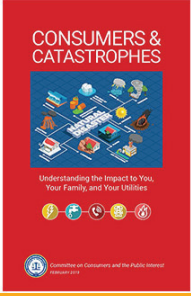


The information below is from a publication, "Consumers & Catastrophes: Understanding the Impact to You, Your Family, and Your Utilities," prepared by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' (NARUC) Committee on Consumers and the Public Interest. Download the free NARUC consumer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



Utilities 101 – The Importance of Shutting Off and Unplugging

Emergency service providers and utility employees will be overwhelmed after a disaster, so it's important to know how and where to control the utilities. Before a disaster occurs, it is important to know:

- where your utility shut-offs are located;
- when it's appropriate to shut off your utilities; and
- the emergency phone numbers for reporting outages and gas leaks.

Shutting Off Natural Gas

- Locate your gas meter and shut-off valve.
- Contact your local gas company for information on the safest way to shut off the gas supply to your home according to your home's gas meter configuration.
- When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household.
- Be sure you have the correct tool needed to turn the valve off; an adjustable wrench or other simple tool should work.

What to Do If You Smell Gas or Have a Gas Leak

- If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly.
- Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve, if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home.
- DO NOT use your phone (landline, cellular, or smart phone) or any other portable electronic devices); these can cause a spark that could trigger an explosion.
- DO NOT use matches or other open flames, or operate any electrical switches or appliances.
- If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

Shutting Off Water

- Locate the shut-off valve for the main water line of your home, which can be found in one of these areas:
 - On a wall near the front of the house.
 - Near the water heater.
 - In the garage.
 - Buried in the ground outside, near the street, in a covered box
- Label the shut-off valve so you can easily find it in the future.
- Be sure that the valve completely closes when you turn it clockwise. If the valve doesn't completely close, it may be rusted or damaged. In this case, have it replaced by a qualified technician.
- Make sure all household members know where it is located.

- Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.
- The water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks may drain due to gravity unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve.

What to Do If You Have a Major Leak

- Shut off the water at the master shut-off valve; you may want to shut it off at the meter as well.
- If you have standing water in your home, you may need to shut off your electricity as well; do not try to use an electrical appliance or even flip a switch if you're standing in water.

Shutting Off Electricity

- Locate your main electrical panel/circuit. For your safety, always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit. If your house has fuses instead of circuit breakers, keep extra fuses on hand in case one blows during an emergency. Never replace a fuse with one of higher amperage.
- Keep a working flashlight and a battery-powered radio accessible, with extra batteries for each.
- Finally, make sure your circuit breaker or fuse box is properly labeled so you know exactly what switches cut power to which areas of the house.

What to Do If You Lose Power

- Check the circuit breakers (or fuses) to confirm that the problem is not solely in your house.
- If you see sparks or broken/frayed wires or if you smell hot insulation, shut off your electricity immediately.
- Turn off all electrical equipment (i.e., electronics, lights, heat/AC, etc.) to prevent fires and system overload when power is restored.
- Do not stand in water while cutting/restoring power to your breakers or fuses.
- Turn on a porch light and an interior light so you, and utility crews, will know when service is restored.
- If you use a generator for backup power, follow the manufacturer's instructions and ensure that the generator is in a well-ventilated area.

DISCLAIMER

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