



POWER OUTAGE | O | FOR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Power outages and blackouts can occur unexpectedly. It is important for your organization to be prepared for these events and to be ready to provide mission-critical functions for your constituents and community should such an event occur.

What to do during a power disruption:

- Put pre-developed plans into action.
- Turn off or unplug [electrical equipment](#).¹ Leave one light on to know when power returns.
- Have appointed person listen to radio and television to relay updated information.
- Save flashlights for emergency needs.
- Check on identified special needs constituents.
- Food can spoil easily. Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezers. Check food carefully for spoilage before use.
- Take steps to keep everyone [cool and hydrated \(or warm during winter months\)](#).²
- Stay indoors. If you must go outside, stay away from downed and dangling lines. Treat all power lines as if they are live and dangerous.

*How to prepare **before** an emergency:*

- Set up a committee to plan for emergencies. Have the committee:
 - Identify congregants with special needs (e.g. homebound or on life-sustaining equipment). Create and maintain a database that specifies the needs and contact information of these members and details appropriate emergency outreach.
 - Create a communication system/plan (e.g. cell phone tree or messenger system) to be able to contact and disseminate information to employees, parents, and special needs members.
 - Make sure there are working flashlights in all classrooms and offices.
 - Test emergency lighting and equipment regularly.
 - Obtain a portable radio and/or TV (battery or wind-up operated).
 - [Ensure that your organization has a “plain vanilla” telephone that does not need to be plugged in](#).³ Your multi-line phone system will not work in a power outage.
 - [Back up computer files and operating systems regularly. Purchase high quality surge protectors](#).⁴ Consider off-site storage for your data a electronic copies of critical documents.
 - Follow energy conservation measures to keep the use of electricity as low as possible, which can help power company(ies) avoid imposing rolling blackouts.
 - If using a generator, get advice from a licensed professional. Keep the generator outdoors and have extra fuel on hand (stored appropriately). Only use licensed and professional contractors to connect a generator to your building’s electrical wiring.
 - If you lose power or experience dim, partial, or flickering lights, contact your electricity provider immediately. This helps determine the location and extent of a problem in order to restore power quickly and safely.

You should also modify your plans taking into account power disruption concerns, including:

(See over)

- the impact of Sabbaths, holidays and after hours
- care for the elderly, young children, and disabled
- use of volunteers and available resources
- whether and under which circumstances should students should be dismissed
- delivery of disaster spiritual care
- providing/obtaining mutual assistance

Notes (adapted from the American Red Cross):

1: Turn off or disconnect any appliances, equipment (like air conditioners) or electronics you were using when the power went out. When power comes back on, it may come back with momentary "surges" or "spikes" that can damage equipment such as computers and motors in appliances like the air conditioner, refrigerator, washer, or furnace. Be careful when unplugging large appliances.

2: *If it is hot outside*, take steps to remain cool. Move to a lower level of your facility, as cool air falls. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty. If the heat is intense and the power may be off for a long time, consider moving constituents to a movie theater, shopping mall, or "cooling shelter" that may be opened in your community. Listen to local radio or television for more information. *If it is cold outside*, wear layers of warm clothing. *Never use a stove, oven, or outdoor grill for heat. They can produce deadly Carbon Monoxide and present a fire hazard.* If the power may be out for a prolonged period, plan to go to another location (shared or public facility) that has heat to keep warm.

3: Use the phone for emergencies only. Do not call 9-1-1 for information -- only call to report a life-threatening emergency. If you have a telephone instrument or system at that requires electricity to work (such as a cordless phone or answering machine), plan for alternate communication, including having a standard telephone handset, cellular telephone, radio, or pager. Remember, too, that some voice mail systems and remote dial-up servers for computer networks may not operate when the power is out where these systems are located. So even if you have power, your access to remote technology may be interrupted if the power that serves those areas is disrupted. Check with remote service providers to see if they have backup power systems and how long those systems will operate.

4: Keep computer files and operating systems backed up regularly. Consider buying extra batteries and a power converter for laptop computers. A power converter allows most laptops (12 volts or less) to be operated from the cigarette lighter of a vehicle. Also, turn off all computers, monitors, printers, copiers, scanners and other devices when they're not being used. That way, if the power goes out, this equipment will have already been safely shut down. Get a high quality surge protector for all of your computer equipment. Consider purchasing and installing an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) for your computers. Consult with your local computer equipment dealer about available equipment and costs.

For further information for your organization as well as for individual households, navigate to the power outages pages on the following sites:

- ConEd: www.coned.com or 1-800-75 CONED (752-6633).
http://www.coned.com/customercentral/power_problems.asp
- Office of Emergency Management: www.nyc.gov/oem or 718-422-4800.
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/hazards/utilities.shtml>
- American Red Cross: www.nyredcross.org or 1-877-REDCROSS (733-2767).
http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_133_,00.html
- JCRC, 70 West 36th St. Suite 700, New York, NY 10018: www.jrcny.org or 212-983-4800.
<http://jrcny.org/security/>