

How to prepare for a power outage

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative is invested in providing reliable service to the community in Southern Maryland. This investment includes improving, maintaining, and upgrading the electric system, proactive right-of-way clearing, and increasing protective equipment.

By employing up-to-date technology and installing necessary infrastructure, SMECO is working to increase reliability of its delivery service network, improve energy efficiency efforts, and enhance customer service.

For information on how to prepare for and what to do during a power outage, please read this brochure.

prepare for an outage

Although SMECO works as quickly as possible to get the lights back on, you can take steps before and during an outage to be prepared.

- If someone in your household depends on electricity to operate a life support system, plan ahead for alternate sources of power or lodging.
- Have an alternate source of light: keep flashlights and extra batteries where they can be found easily. Lanterns and candles are **not** recommended because they can cause fires.
- Keep a battery-powered radio with fresh batteries, and stay tuned to local news bulletins and weather reports.
- Stock emergency food and related items. Ideal choices are nonperishable foods that do not need cooking, such as canned fruit, canned milk, peanut butter, crackers, cereals and cereal bars, canned soup, and canned tuna. Stocking up on refrigerated or frozen foods may not be a good idea if the power goes out.
- Keep a manual can opener handy, along with disposable plates and utensils.
- Keep your grill available year-round for cooking during an outage. (Always use a gas or charcoal grill outside.)
- Store extra water in clean jugs, bathtubs, laundry tubs, or other containers if you know a storm is on the way.
- During an outage, you may flush a toilet, then pour water into the toilet tank (not the bowl) before flushing again. Turn off the water supply to the toilet before flushing. Toilet tanks hold several gallons of water, so plan accordingly.

SMECO's outage restoration policy is to make repairs that will restore service to the most people in the least amount of time. The power must be restored in this sequence because individual services cannot receive electricity until all previous steps are completed. SMECO restores power to transmission lines first, substations second, main distribution lines third, tap lines fourth, and any individual services last.

Remember, melted snow or ice can be a source of water during winter outages (but not for drinking).

During the summer, you may be able to use water from a pool or hot tub.

- Plan an alternate source of heat in the event of a cold-weather crisis. If you have a fireplace or wood stove, keep adequate kindling and firewood on hand. Have extra clothing, blankets, or sleeping bags available.
- Consult a plumber or other home specialist for other steps to take in the event of a prolonged outage. These may include draining water from pipes or other recommendations particular to your home, situation, or appliances.
- Keep fresh batteries in your smoke detectors.
- It is helpful to have a corded phone available: cordless phones will not work without electricity. If you have a cell phone, you may need an auto adapter to recharge it.
- If you have livestock, you will need a means of obtaining adequate supplies of fresh water. A generator is recommended.
- Keep your automobile's gas tank full.
- Maintain a supply of cash. Credit cards and ATM machines may not work if the power is out.

For your safety:

*Place your portable generator outside, **never** in the house, garage, attic, crawl space, or basement. Make sure your generator is connected safely; an improperly connected generator can cause serious injury or death. When your power comes back on, turn off and disconnect your generator.*

during an outage

- Leave the freezer and refrigerator closed so food will stay cold longer.
- Make sure the oven and stove are off; this will prevent fires if the power comes back on while you're away. Do not set dishes, towels, or paper on the stove; these may catch on fire if a burner is on when the power comes on.
- Turn off all the major appliances in your home, especially the heat pump. This will prevent damage to the appliances once the power is restored. Turn on appliances one at a time so the electric demand does not jump suddenly.

Never touch downed power lines or attempt to remove trees from power lines. Contact with power lines may result in serious injury or death. Let qualified SMECO crews handle the clearing and repair work. Please report downed power lines to SMECO immediately.

Report an outage

- **Call:** 1-877-74-SMECO (1-877-747-6326)
- **Mobile app:** Report your outage or view outages from the app.  Download the app for free from Apple iTunes or Google Play. Type SMECO 24/7 in the search field.
- **Text:** Report outages, receive power restoration updates, and request outage status updates through your phone. To sign up, simply text REG (for register) to 76326 (SMECO). Standard data rates may apply.

Record your account number here:

and keep this brochure near your phone in the event of an outage.