

Don't get caught out by Power Cuts

Winter is the time when electricity cuts are most likely, usually due to extreme weather blowing trees onto overhead cables. However, faults requiring power stations to be shut down for maintenance or sub-stations becoming over loaded will also create problems. These can be minimised if all homes and businesses reduce their electricity use by switching things off when not absolutely necessary.

Even if you never have a power cut, you should still make plans just in case you do; they usually happen without warning and in winter when you may not be able to obtain the things that you need to keep safe and warm.

Things you should do now just in case!

- Know who you will contact in the event of a power cut (keep numbers handy- eg relatives, electrical/heating contractor, energy supplier)
- Have a torch ready (best not to use candles- fire risk)
- Have a battery or wind up radio ready for local information (have spare batteries)
- Keep a basic phone handy that plugs into the wall (most modern phones need electricity)
- Protect computer with surge protection plug and or uninterruptible power supply (UPS)
- If you have a stair lift, check it has a manual lever to return to the ground floor or see if it can work using a battery.
- If you're elderly or disabled, register with your energy supplier's Priority Services Register
- Check you're insured/covered for losses for a prolonged break in your electricity service

Is it a fault in your house rather than a power cut?

- Check it's not just a problem with your electricity (has next door's gone off as well?)
- Check your fuse box (if the main switch is OFF, try putting the switch back to ON)
- If that doesn't work, try isolating a circuit at a time and switch to ON each time
- If you have a house electrical fault, contact an electrical contractors phone number

What to do if there is a power cut!

- If you don't think the problem is in your house, call your energy supplier
- Check nothing is left on which could be a problem when the power returns, like your oven
- Keep your freezer shut (food should stay frozen for about 12 hours)
- Put on more warm clothes if it's cold
- If you have a gas fire or cooker, they may still work but need ventilation, but boilers won't
- Neighbours with a gas cooker may be able to help with warm food or drinks
- Stay away from fallen overhead power lines (phone police if a road or path is blocked)
- Be careful when clearing fallen branches after bad weather (keep away from anything that may be touching overhead power lines)

Contact Western Power Distribution if you have a power cut (West Midlands area)

- They may not know of the power cut (contact them on Freephone **0800 6783 105**)
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can use Text Relay by dialling 18001 first using your text phone.
- If calling from a mobile phone call **0330 123 5002** (cheaper than Freephone)