

# Extended Storm Outage

## **Safety reminders for an extended storm outage:**

- Stay away from sagging or fallen power lines. Consider all wires energized and any limbs or trees touching them energized. Call WMS Customer Assistance/Wmwegency Line at 734.324.7190 to report downed power lines. Do not attempt to remove limbs or trees from wires yourself.
- Stay away from loose or disconnected meters.
- Listen to radio and TV status reports.
- Avoid opening your refrigerator or freezer more than absolutely necessary. Opening these appliances will allow the cold to escape and food to thaw more quickly. In warm weather, get extra ice if possible. Ice helps maintain cold temperatures in your freezer and refrigerator. If you are worried about food spoilage, put foods in a cooler with ice. Check to see if any of your medications need refrigeration.
- Be careful when using candles. Keep the flame away from combustible objects and out of the reach of children.
- Remember where your smoke alarm gets its energy. Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery at least once a year.
- Unplug sensitive equipment. Voltage irregularities can occur for any number of reasons during or after a storm, especially if there has been damage at or near your home. The safest thing to do is to unplug any sensitive electrical devices, such as TV, VCR, stereo, computer, microwave, answering machine and garage door opener. Planning ahead you may wish to consider surge suppressors, which can be purchased either for individual pieces of equipment or the entire home.
- If you use a generator at home to provide power while your service is interrupted, it's critical that your generator be completely disconnected from your utility's service whenever the generator is in use. Proper installation of generators is essential to prevent a house fire and to avoid electricity feeding back into our lines and endangering the life of an unsuspecting lineworker. The generator must be plugged directly into the appliance you are operating or be connected to your home's wiring through a special transfer switch to be sure electricity produced by the generator does not backfeed into our electric lines. This should be installed by a licensed electrician. Generator exhaust is deadly, so it's important that the unit be placed or vented outside.

### **Alternative heating safety:**

- Make sure wood stoves are properly installed and at least three feet away from combustible materials. Ensure they have proper floor support and adequate ventilation. Make sure the damper is open. Prepare for winter weather ahead of time. Have the stove pipes and chimneys cleaned and checked for damage or blockage.
- To prevent creosote buildup in stove pipes, use only seasoned dry wood in wood stoves, no green wood, no artificial logs or trash.
- Store cooled ashes from your fireplace or wood stove in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.
- Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby carpets, furniture or other combustible items.
- Kerosene heaters may not be legal in your area and should only be used where approved by authorities. Use only in well ventilated spaces.
- Do not use the kitchen oven range to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes.
- Only use heaters with the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) safety approval.
- Alternative heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least three feet away.
- Make sure your alternative heaters have "tip switches" that automatically turn off the heater if they are tipped over. Unplug electric heaters when not in use.
- Only use the type of fuel recommended by the manufacturer for your heater. Always follow suggested guidelines.
- Never refill a space heater while it is operating or still hot.
- Never overfill any portable heater.
- Refuel heaters only outdoors.
- To keep pipes from freezing in a winter storm outage: wrap pipes in insulation or layers of old newspapers, covered with plastic to keep out moisture. Open faucets to drip a little. Know how to shut off water valves. If pipes freeze up, turn faucets all the way on. Remove insulation or newspapers from the pipes. Pour hot water on the pipes starting at the point closest to exposure to freezing weather.