Guides. Facts checked on 31 October 2026

# Free printable power outage checklist

A one-page power outage checklist to print or download: what to do before, during and after a power cut, from Ready.gov, American Red Cross and UK government advice.

> In an emergency, call 911 (US) or 112 (Europe) first. This page is reference material, not medical or professional advice.

## The short answer

> A power outage checklist has three parts. Before: torches, a battery or crank radio, charged power banks, a plan for medical devices, and a thermometer in the fridge and freezer. During: keep the fridge and freezer closed and use torches, never candles. After: check food against the temperature rules and throw out doubtful items. The one-page version below prints on a single sheet.

If anyone is in danger, call your emergency number first (911 in the US, 999 or 112 in the UK). This page is reference material, not professional advice.

## Before: do these once

Wording here follows Ready.gov, the American Red Cross and, for the UK, the government's Be Ready site. Tick the box when it is done.

- ☐ List what in your home needs electricity. Plan batteries or a power bank for each, and keep a flashlight for every household member.
- ☐ Put a thermometer in the fridge and the freezer.
- ☐ Keep a battery or crank radio, a non-cordless home phone and charged phone batteries.
- ☐ Keep a paper copy of your contact list.
- ☐ Store non-perishable food and water supplies, and plan to use coolers and ice.
- ☐ Keep your car gas tank at least half full.
- ☐ Talk to your medical provider about a plan for powered medical devices and refrigerated medicines.
- ☐ Keep a small amount of cash in case cards and ATMs stop working.
- ☐ Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home.

- [ ] UK only: write down 105, the number to report a power cut, and ask your energy supplier about the Priority Service Register if you qualify.

## During: when the lights go out

- [ ] Keep the fridge and freezer closed.
- [ ] Note the time the power went off.
- [ ] Use flashlights, not candles.
- [ ] Unplug appliances and electronics so a surge does not damage them.
- [ ] Never heat your home with a gas stove or oven.
- [ ] Run a generator only outdoors, at least 20 feet away from windows, doors and attached garages.
- [ ] Contact your support network and let them know you are OK.
- [ ] Leave if your home is too hot or too cold, or if medical devices need power.

## After: when the power returns

- [ ] Check the fridge and freezer thermometers. Throw out food at 40 degrees F or higher.
- [ ] Stay at least 35 feet away from fallen power lines and call 911.
- [ ] Have an electrician inspect any tripped circuit breaker before you switch it on.
- [ ] Restock whatever you used.

## How long food lasts, and what the sheet cannot tell you

The Red Cross says an unopened refrigerator keeps foods cold for about 4 hours and a full freezer holds the temperature for about 48 hours, or 24 hours if it is half full, with the door closed. Our food timer does that arithmetic for you, and the freezer guide covers when to refreeze. The wider UK picture is in power cut: what to do in the UK.

## How to use the sheet

Print it, tick what you already have, and put the sheet where you will find it in the dark: with the flashlight, not on a laptop. The "before" list is a one-off job of an hour or two. The "during" and "after" lists are for the day itself, when nobody wants to search for advice on a phone with a failing battery.

Go through the "before" part with everyone in the household. A child who knows where the flashlight lives and that the fridge stays shut is a real help. Check the thermometer batteries and the radio now, not in the dark. Where a household relies on medical equipment, the conversation with the care provider matters more than any other line on the sheet, because only they know how long a device or a medicine can go without power.

## UK notes

The Be Ready site is the UK government's own advice. It says to write down the number to report a power cut and to sign up to the Priority Service Register if you are eligible. It also recommends a battery or wind-up torch, and notes that torches are safer than candles. The register is a free service in England, Wales and Scotland, and Northern Ireland has its own equivalent. Check the current details with your network operator.

A checklist covers what is common to most homes. It does not know your medical devices, your heating or your neighbours. Pair it with the emergency binder, which has room for those details.

We are building Waystone, an offline assistant that is still in development, so that questions like these can be answered from a stored library with the source page shown. For now, paper is more reliable in an outage than any app.

## Common questions

### What should be on a power outage checklist?

Light sources, a battery or crank radio, charged power banks, a thermometer in fridge and freezer, food and water, and a plan for medical devices. During an outage, keep the fridge shut, and afterwards check food temperatures.

### How long can I keep food in the fridge during a power outage?

About 4 hours, according to the Red Cross, if you keep the door closed. Throw out food if the temperature is 40 degrees or higher.

### Is there a UK version?

Yes. In England, Scotland and Wales, 105 is the number to report a power cut, and the Priority Service Register offers extra support if you qualify. Northern Ireland uses 03457 643643 and calls its registers Customer Care Registers.

### Can I download this checklist as a PDF?

Yes, use the download button at the top of the page. It prints from this page, so the PDF and the text stay the same.

## Sources

Every number on this page is copied from one of these sources. We check them again on the date shown above.


1. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
   Power Outages
2. American Red Cross
   Power Outage Safety

3. Be Ready (UK Government)
   Power cuts