



Town of Darien

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Health Officials Encourage Residents to Be Ready for Power Outages

We have seen a series of severe storms pass through town over the past couple of years and while most of us have been lucky to avoid significant damage, the type of devastation seen elsewhere in the country could happen anywhere. It is important for everyone to be prepared for a severe storm as well as an extended power outage by stockpiling between three (3) to seven (7) days of provisions (food & water) since it could take that long to recover. It is important that each family prepare to be somewhat self-sufficient for a while because downed power lines and broken trees could make transportation difficult to impossible for some time. The Darien Health Department provides the following tips to stay healthy and safe in the event of extended power outages.

Food Safety: To prepare for a power outage...

- Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food at all times. Stock up on shelf-stable foods, canned goods, fruits, and vegetables, juices and food for infants.
- Before the storm, set refrigerators and freezers to their coldest temperature settings.
- The refrigerator will keep food at proper temperature for about four hours if the doors are not opened. A full freezer will hold a safe temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full).
- Make sure you have thermometers for checking temperatures of food and appliance thermometers **for your refrigerator and freezer**. An external thermometer is best since you don't have to open the door to see the temperature.
 - Check to make sure that the freezer temperature is at or below **0 °F** and the refrigerator is at or below **40 °F**.
 - In case of a **power outage**, the appliance thermometers will tell you the temperatures in the refrigerator and freezer to help you decide if the food is safe.
- **Freeze containers of water** for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers in case the power goes out. If your normal water supply is contaminated or unavailable, the melting ice can also be used as drinking water.
- **Freeze refrigerated items** such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need right away. This helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- **Group food together** in the freezer so they form an "igloo" protecting each other. This helps the food stay cold longer.
- **Have coolers on hand** to keep refrigerated food cold if the power goes out for more than 4 hours.
- Buy or make **ice cubes in advance** and store in the freezer for use in the refrigerator or in a cooler. Put two or three ice cubes in a plastic freezer bag so you will know if food has thawed and refrozen. Freeze **gel packs** ahead of time for use in coolers.
- **Store food on shelves** that will be safely out of the way of water in case of flooding.

Drinking Water

- Make sure to have a **supply of bottled water** stored where it will be as safe as possible in case of flooding. This can be water from your tap stored in clean containers.
- If your home has a private well, check your well before the storm, and shortly after to make sure that it is safe from pollution and possible contamination due to flooding.
- If your home has a private well, fill your bathtub with water before the storm to flush toilets as you will not have running water if there is a power outage.
- If you have public water and there is the threat of major long term power outages, or widespread damage is possible, service interruptions could occur so stockpiling water would be prudent.

Sewage Disposal

- If you lose electricity and your home is connected to a pressurized sewer system or you have a septic system utilizing a pump, there is limited storage capacity for waste water. Until power is restored, *you must minimize the use of water or sewage could back up into your house*, especially if you are on public water and service is available. If you have a generator, we advise you to make sure it provides power to the pumps.
- If sewage has backed up into your home, it is recommended that you contract with a qualified professional for clean-up and disinfection. If you must do some clean-up yourself, always:
 1. Wear protective eyewear, gloves, and boots
 2. Wear goggles when hosing off items to prevent eye splash
 3. Avoid direct contact with sewage material
 4. Wash your hands after cleaning
 5. Protect all cuts and scrapes. Immediately wash and disinfect any wound that comes into contact with sewage
- *Never mix bleach with ammonia – it makes a deadly gas!*

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

- If you have a generator, place it at least 20 feet from the house and away from windows, doors and vents.
- Never use a generator or small motor indoors, inside of a garage or basement, or an enclosed porch. Opening windows and doors, and using fans is not enough to prevent buildup of CO in a home.
- Read the warning label on your generator and follow the instructions in the owner's manual. Use the right type of power cord.
- Never use gas powered pressure washers in enclosed basements or rooms.
- **DO NOT** use charcoal or gas grills, kerosene or propane heaters, or camping stoves indoors.
- **DO NOT** use your gas oven to heat your home.
- Check to make sure that you have carbon monoxide detectors installed on each level of your home, and outside sleeping areas, and that they have fresh batteries.
- Know the symptoms of CO poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness and confusion. If you suspect CO poisoning, get outside immediately and then call 911.

Evacuation

- Have an emergency supply kit ready in case you have to evacuate. Be sure to include food, water, utensils, change of clothes, blankets and pillows, toiletries, battery-powered radio and extra batteries, and anything else you may need in case you can't return home for a few days.
- If you have an inflatable mattress or exercise pads, you should take them. Emergency cots are not known to be the most comfortable sleeping surface.
- Remember to bring your medications and any medical supplies you need (including oxygen) with you. You should have an "[Emergency Health Information Card](#)" which includes any disabilities or medical conditions you may have, medications you are taking, medical supplies you may need and contact information for a family member, friend, or doctor who is aware of your condition.
- Follow instructions from authorities if you are told to evacuate.
- If you have pets and are going to a shelter, make sure to check if pets are welcome before you go. If not, make sure your pets are secured and cared for while you are gone.

Prevent Fires

- Use flashlights or battery-powered lanterns if possible. If you must use candles, place them in safe holders, away from anything that can burn and never leave unattended.

Check on Family, Friends, and Neighbors

- People who are homebound, have special healthcare needs, or who live alone may need assistance. Call or visit family, friends, or neighbors who might need help. If you have no power, take a few minutes to visit with your neighbors. Good relationships are good health. If you find someone who needs shelter or power for life-sustaining medical devices, dial 2-1-1 for assistance.

Personal Safety

- Stay away from downed power lines.
- If you have a chain saw, make sure you have fuel on hand and keep the blade sharp.
- NEVER cut trees or limbs near downed power lines.
- Always wear gloves, safety glasses and protective shoes.

For more information about staying safe and healthy after a disaster or storm, visit www.darienhealth.com
www.ct.gov/dph.