

Be prepared

An Emergency Guide for Businesses During a Power Outage

Electrical power failures due to storms, accidents or even terrorist attacks can wreak havoc on businesses. It's wise to be prepared beforehand. Here are some steps your company can take to minimize problems should an outage occur.

Before for an Outage

- ◆ Put together an emergency kit. It should include: battery-powered AM/FM radios; flashlights; walkie-talkies for communicating within the building; extra batteries; a first-aid kit; a basic tool set; a gallon of water per person, per day, in case employees have to stay on-site; non-perishable food; a sign-in and sign-out sheet so workers can be accounted for.
- ◆ Know the location of pay phones or have cell phones available, because your company's regular phone system might not work during an outage.
- ◆ Make a paper list of the cell phone numbers of key employees and customers and distribute the list to staff members.
- ◆ Know the location of your meter room and electric service entrance, and see that you have keys to them. Post an electrical one-line diagram in the meter room to help the people who will work to restore power.
- ◆ Learn to manually operate security doors and electronic gates.
- ◆ Protect computers and other important electronic equipment with surge protectors or an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS).
- ◆ Regularly back up computer files.
- ◆ Install a battery-powered system for fire alarms, emergency lights and exit signs.
- ◆ Prepare a list of the equipment that will need to be reset after an outage.
- ◆ Write an emergency protection plan, then make certain someone is directly in charge of it and that all employees are familiar with it. Be sure to plan for the requirements of employees with special health problems.

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- ◆ Rehearse the employee protection plan.

During an Outage

- ◆ Check your building's circuit breakers or fuses to make sure the power failure isn't caused by a problem within the building.
- ◆ Once you've determined that there really is an outage, shut off the circuit breakers that run to major equipment; that will protect it from power surges when electricity is restored.
- ◆ Check all the elevators to make sure no one is stuck in them.
- ◆ Leave on a few lights to alert you when power is restored.
- ◆ If your company is using a back-up generator, make sure the generator isn't connected to an electric wall outlet or by an extension cord to your building's wiring system. This can create a deadly electrical back feed.

After an Outage

- ◆ Wait about ten minutes before turning on your circuit breakers, to make sure the electricity truly has been fixed.
- ◆ Turn on each breaker individually.
- ◆ If you have a back-up generator, disconnect and refuel it.
- ◆ Meet with the person in charge of your employee protection plan, to review what happened and see if changes need to be made.

SOURCES: American Red Cross; San Diego Gas and Electric; Pacific Gas and Electric Co.