

FIRST 72 HOURS — IMMEDIATE ACTION CHECKLIST

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HOUR 0–1 ASSESS AND SECURE

- Check circuit breakers — household issue or wider outage?
- Check with neighbors — are they also without power?
- Tune battery-powered or car radio to emergency broadcasts
- Check phone for emergency alerts while cellular is still up
- Identify the nature and apparent scope of the outage
- Lock all exterior doors and windows
- Account for all household members — confirm everyone is present
- Identify immediate medical needs that require power (equipment, refrigerated meds)
- Locate and distribute flashlights and headlamps — one per person

Do not open the refrigerator or freezer. Closed fridge = 4 hrs safe. Closed freezer = 24–48 hrs safe.

HOUR 1–6 WATER, FOOD, COMMUNICATION

WATER

- Fill all bathtubs immediately — municipal water pressure may fail within hours
- Fill every large pot, bucket, and available container
- Locate stored water supply — calculate days of coverage at 1 gal/person/day
- Locate water purification supplies: filter, tablets, boiling capacity

FOOD

- Identify what in the refrigerator needs to be eaten first — highest perishability
- Do NOT open the freezer — assess contents from memory
- Calculate rough days of shelf-stable pantry coverage
- Plan meals: perishable food first, shelf-stable second, long-term storage last

COMMUNICATION

- Charge all phones and devices now — car, battery bank, solar
- Contact immediate family members — establish status and location
- Locate battery-powered or hand-crank radio — confirm it functions
- Establish communication plan if cellular fails: rally points, check-in schedule
- If you have a ham radio: power it up, check local repeaters, identify emergency nets

HOUR 6–24 STABILIZE SYSTEMS

HEAT / COOLING

- What is outdoor temperature and trajectory?
- At what point does home become unsafe to occupy?

MEDICAL

- Inventory all prescription medications in household
- Calculate days remaining of each critical medication

- Identify backup heat source — wood stove, propane, kerosene
- Verify heat source is functional and fuel supply is adequate
- If no backup heat and temp dropping: consolidate to warmest interior room

SANITATION

- Assess toilet function — failing water pressure = no flushing soon
- Locate bucket toilet or composting toilet supplies
- Identify waste disposal site (outdoor latrine or bag-and-bury)
- Establish handwashing station with stored water and soap
- Brief all household members on sanitation protocol

- Identify meds requiring refrigeration — address storage now
- Locate first aid kit — verify contents
- Identify any members with conditions needing ongoing monitoring
- Assess whether any situation requires evacuation

SECURITY

- Brief household members on security protocol
- Identify entry points — assign monitoring responsibility
- Establish household rules for answering the door
- Connect with immediate neighbors — share information
- Do NOT advertise your supply level to unknown parties

HOOR 24–72

ASSESS DURATION AND ADJUST

- Monitor radio continuously for official information on outage scope and duration
- Assess infrastructure signals: utility crews visible? Municipal services operating?
- Distinguish short-term outage (days) from prolonged event (weeks or longer)
- If prolonged: adjust resource consumption rate now — rationing begins immediately
- If tap water has failed: activate rain collection, gravity filter, or well pump
- Establish daily water budget: 3 gallons/person/day functional minimum
- Begin tracking daily caloric consumption — prioritize caloric density
- Establish one hot meal per day using rocket stove or no-power cooking method
- Set radio monitoring schedule — twice daily minimum
- Identify which neighbors are home and what their situation is
- Map neighbor resources and skills: generator, medical training, vehicle with fuel
- Establish daily check-in protocol with immediate neighbors
- Begin building mutual aid network — who helps whom, in what order

WHAT NOT TO DO IN THE FIRST 72 HOURS

Do not wait: Act immediately. Water pressure fails. Food spoils. Medical equipment runs down. The window closes fast.

Do not broadcast: A household visibly managing well attracts attention in a struggling neighborhood. Be quietly competent.

Do not burn fuel fast: Generator fuel, propane, lamp oil, and firewood feel unlimited at the start. They are not. Conserve from hour one.

Do not neglect sleep: Decision quality degrades sharply with sleep deprivation. Establish a sleep rotation. Rest is functional, not optional.

Do not isolate: A household managing alone is far more vulnerable than a neighborhood managing together. Connect early.

Household members:	_____	Rally point (primary):	_____
Out-of-area contact:	_____	Rally point (secondary):	_____
Ham/GMRS call sign:	_____	Primary radio channel:	_____
		Backup channel:	_____