UK EMERGENCY GUIDE

Power cuts & blackouts

Most UK power cuts are short and local. A longer outage can also stop your heating, internet, some landlines and, sometimes, the mobile network. A few preparations at home will keep you warm, informed and able to eat and drink until the power is back.

IF YOU ONLY DO THREE THINGS

01 Call 105 free (England, Scotland and Wales) or 03457 643 643 in Northern Ireland to report a cut and get restoration updates — or use powercut105.com.

02 Keep a torch, a charged power bank, a battery or wind-up radio, bottled water and food that does not need cooking where you can find them in the dark.

03 Sign up to the Priority Services Register if you might need extra support, and write down 105 and key numbers on paper.

LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCY

999

Or 112. Stay away from damaged power lines. Electricity can jump gaps.

REPORT A POWER CUT

105

Free in England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland: 03457 643 643.

This guide is general public information for UK households. It is not a substitute for the emergency services, official local advice, or professional medical training. In an emergency, always call 999. Official warning and response advice can change — follow current guidance from the emergency services, the NHS and gov.uk/prepare. Three Day Kit (threedaykit.co.uk) is an independent brand and is not affiliated with, or endorsed by, the UK government or any official agency.

BEFORE

GET READY AT HOME

You may already have most of what you need in the cupboard. Gather it in one place you can reach if the lights fail, and check it every six months.

01 **Keep light that does not rely on your phone**
A battery or wind-up torch (and spare batteries) is safer than candles and will not drain your mobile. Leave it somewhere obvious — by the door, in a kitchen drawer, or in your Three Day Kit.

02 **Store three days of water and no-cook food**
Official preparedness advice is 3 litres of bottled drinking water per person per day, for at least three days, plus more for cooking, washing, pets or formula. Keep tinned food, dried fruit and nuts, a tin opener, and ready-to-feed baby formula if you need it.

03 **Plan how you will get information**
Write down 105, family numbers and the FM frequencies of national and local radio stations you use for news. Keep a battery or wind-up FM radio and a charged power bank. A car radio can work, but in severe weather it is usually safer to stay inside.

04 **Find your network operator and load-block letter**
Enter your postcode at **powercut105.com** to find your local electricity network operator and, if listed, your load-block letter. In a rare national energy shortage, areas may be disconnected in rotation for around three hours at a time.

05 **Sign up for extra support if you need it**
The Priority Services Register (thepsr.co.uk) is free. It tells your electricity, gas and water companies that you may need extra help. Many households are eligible, including those with children under five. In Northern Ireland, ask about Customer Care Registers.

06 **Check phones, telecare and medical equipment**
Digital landlines and many internet-based phones will not work without power unless you have a back-up battery. If you use telecare, a personal alarm or powered medical equipment, ask the provider now what happens in a cut and agree a plan with your care team.

07 **Keep a little cash and know your trip switch**
Card machines and cash machines can fail in a wider outage. Keep a modest mix of coins and notes for essentials. If the lights fail in your home only, check the trip switch (consumer unit) first — and check whether neighbours still have power.

> **Never use barbecues, camping stoves or petrol generators indoors.** They produce carbon monoxide, which can kill. If you smell gas, get out and call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

DURING

WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

01 Report it and leave a light switched on
Report the cut online via your network operator or by calling 105 (or 03457 643 643 in Northern Ireland). Switch off irons, ovens, electric heaters and similar appliances, and unplug TVs and computers to protect them from a surge. Leave one light switched on so you know when power returns.

02 Stay away from damaged power lines
Keep well back and keep others away. High-voltage electricity can jump gaps with no warning. Call 105 to report damaged equipment. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

03 Keep fridges and freezers shut
The Food Standards Agency says a closed fridge should stay cold for up to 4 hours. A full freezer can stay frozen for up to 48 hours, or about 24 hours if it is only half full. These are estimates — avoid opening the doors.

04 Keep warm and check on others
Layer clothing, use blankets, close doors of unused rooms and close curtains. Older people, babies and anyone with a long-term illness are most at risk from the cold. If you can, check on neighbours and share warmth, food or information.

05 If you cannot call 999 from a landline
Try a mobile. Emergency calls should automatically use any available network. You may pick up signal from a nearby area that still has power. Use devices sparingly to save battery.

AFTER

WHEN THE POWER RETURNS

01 Reset, restock and go easy on the supply
Wait a moment, then switch appliances back on gradually. Recharge power banks and medical-device batteries. Check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Restock water, batteries and any food you had to use.

02 Follow food-safety rules, not guesswork
If the fridge has been at 8°C or above, the FSA says food that must be kept chilled should be eaten within 4 hours or thrown away. Do not refreeze food that has fully thawed. When in doubt, throw it out — especially for children, older people and anyone pregnant or unwell.

WHAT TO HAVE IN YOUR KIT

A basic Three Day Kit covers the essentials of a blackout: bottled water, food that does not need cooking (and a tin opener), a torch and spare batteries, a charged power bank, a battery or wind-up FM radio, a little cash, warm layers or a blanket, and a paper list of numbers including 105.

Add any regular medicines, printed instructions for medical equipment, ready-to-feed formula, and pet food if you need them. Keep the kit where you can find it in the dark.

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

TICK WHAT YOU HAVE DONE

- [ ] Torch and spare batteries (not just a phone torch)
- [ ] Charged power bank, plus spare batteries for any medical device
- [ ] No-cook food for 3 days, plus a tin opener
- [ ] Small amount of cash (coins and notes) and payment cards
- [ ] Signed up to the Priority Services Register if eligible (thepsr.co.uk)
- [ ] Checked whether my landline, telecare or medical kit works without power
- [ ] Ready-to-feed formula, nappies, pet food or extra water if needed
- [ ] Battery or wind-up FM radio, and station frequencies written down
- [ ] Bottled water: 3 litres per person per day, for 3 days
- [ ] Warm clothing, blankets or a sleeping bag
- [ ] Paper list of 105, family, neighbours, GP and utility numbers
- [ ] Found my network operator and load-block letter at powercut105.com
- [ ] Household knows where the trip switch is, and not to use stoves or generators indoors
- [ ] Checked expiry dates in the last six months

UK CONTACTS

WRITE THESE DOWN

EMERGENCY SERVICES
999 or 112
Immediate danger to life, or a damaged line with someone at risk.

POWER CUT (GB)
105
Free. Connects you to your local electricity network operator. Also powercut105.com.

POWER CUT (NORTHERN IRELAND)
03457 643 643
Northern Ireland Electricity Networks emergency line.

GAS EMERGENCY / CARBON MONOXIDE
0800 111 999
National Gas Emergency Service, 24 hours. Get into fresh air first if you suspect CO.

NHS NON-EMERGENCY
111
Urgent medical advice when it is not a 999 emergency. 111.nhs.uk

PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER
thepsr.co.uk
Free extra support from energy and water companies.

OFFICIAL PREPAREDNESS ADVICE
gov.uk/prepare
Also beready.campaign.gov.uk. Follow official updates in a major incident.

WEATHER WARNINGS
metoffice.gov.uk
Met Office app and National Severe Weather Warnings.

SOURCES

Guidance in this booklet was checked against publicly available official advice in November 2026. Always follow the latest instructions from the emergency services and the links below.

1. Energy Networks Association, “What to do if you have a power cut” — energynetworks.org/customers/power-cut and powercut105.com
2. UK government Prepare / Be Ready, power cuts — prepare.campaign.gov.uk / beready.campaign.gov.uk
3. National Grid, power cuts — nationalgrid.com/power-cuts
4. Food Standards Agency, food safety in a power cut — gov.uk/government/publications/food-safety-in-a-power-cut-advice-for-consumers
5. NHS, carbon monoxide poisoning — nhs.uk/conditions/carbon-monoxide-poisoning

General guidance only — not a substitute for the emergency services or professional medical training. Call 999 in an emergency. Independent brand, not a government publication.