

Staying safe in a crisis

PERSONAL SAFETY SHOULD BE YOUR FIRST CONCERN IN A STORM.
REVIEW AND SAVE THIS PAGE SO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN THE NEXT ONE HITS.

POWER SAFETY AND KEEPING WARM

Outages: Turn off most electrical devices, and unplug sensitive electrical equipment. Leave a light switched on, however, so you'll know when the power returns. Report the outage to the power company. It will help them pinpoint the outage.

- **Power lines:** Never handle or approach a downed power line.

- **Stay warm and dry:** Dress in layers, and cover your head. Close off unused rooms. Close drapes to prevent drafts.

- **Illumination:** Candles pose a fire hazard, so use flashlights and other battery-powered lighting.

- **Generators:** To avoid deadly carbon-monoxide poisoning, keep the generator outdoors when it's running. Make sure the exhaust is not near a window or other opening to the home. Keep the exhaust and muffler away from combustible material.

Do not refuel the generator while it is running. Clean up spilled fuel before starting the generator.

Do not plug the generator into a household outlet.

Other heat sources: Use only space heaters designed for the indoors and even those need to be adequately vented to avoid carbon-monoxide poisoning. Keep space heaters away from curtains and clothing. Always turn off the heaters before going to bed or leaving home.

For a fireplace, use only dry, seasoned wood or manufactured fire logs. Wood cut from fallen trees is too green to burn.

Never burn charcoal indoors. Charcoal produces toxic fumes that can kill quickly.

- **If you feel ill:** Get fresh air and help right away if you feel sick or dizzy while using a generator or space heater. Fatigue, nausea or sleepiness are signs of carbon-monoxide poisoning.

FOOD

A refrigerator should keep food safely cold about four hours, if the door is not opened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed). Food may be safely re-



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Red Cross

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frozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40 degrees or below.

Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer. A refrigerator should always be kept at 40 degrees or below and a freezer at 0 degrees or below.

Discard perishables such as meat, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after four hours without power.

INSURANCE AND REPAIRS

- **If your home or property is damaged** by a storm, contact your insurance agent or company to file a claim immediately.

- **Document damage** and take pictures.

- **If it is safe to do so**, make temporary repairs to prevent further damage from rain or wind. Save receipts for reimbursement.

Use only licensed, reputable building contractors who have the proper permits. Call the state's contractor-registration line, 800-647-0982.

Avoid contractors who ask for a large deposit up front or bids that are remarkably low. This may indicate a willingness to cut corners or leave work unfinished.

- **Don't pay a lot for temporary repairs** unless authorized by your insurance adjuster. You could get stuck with the bill if the repairs are deemed excessive.

- **Don't discard damaged items** until they have been examined by your adjuster. You could miss out on coverage.

WIND DAMAGE

- **Buildings:** From the ground, use binoculars to check the roof for missing shingles, debris or other damage. If you can do it safely, cover the damaged area with a tarp. Contact your insurance company before making significant repairs.

- **Trees:** Only experienced individuals should use chain saws, which can kick back and cause serious injuries.

Wear safety goggles, gloves, steel-toed boots and ear protection when working around chain saws and wood chippers.

ICE DAMAGE

- **Avoid frozen pipes:** Let water trickle overnight from indoor faucets served by exposed pipes. Keep the heat on at least 55 degrees. If your water pipes are not

Three-day supply

Gather food, water, first-aid supplies, a radio and batteries to survive three days. Items for infants, seniors or relatives with special needs also should be included. A kit could also contain an insulated cooler, cash, extra clothing, and important documents such as birth certificates and passports.

STORM RESOURCES

If you have a life-threatening emergency, call 911.

Here are a few phone numbers for storm-related situations that do not threaten public safety:

Seattle: Resources and tips can be found at www.seattle.gov/transportation/weathertips.htm

- **Street damage:** north of Denny Way, 206-684-7508; south of Denny Way, 206-386-1218; after hours, 206-386-1218

- **Traffic signal/sign problems:** 206-386-1206

- **Drainage or sewer emergencies:** 206-386-1800

- **Fire hydrant or water utility problems:** 206-386-1800

- **Electrical outages:** 206-684-7400

- **Electrical emergencies:** 206-706-0051

Puget Sound Energy: 888-225-5773

King County: www.metrokc.gov or www.metrokc.gov/safety.htm

Snohomish County: www1.co.snohomish.wa.us

Pierce County: www.co.pierce.wa.us

OTHER TIPS

- Install a carbon monoxide alarm.

- Have a fire extinguisher available.

- Enter "ICE" — In Case of Emergency — numbers in your cellphone so emergency workers know whom to contact if you're hurt. Example: enter "ICE wife Jane" and the phone number.

- Have a working phone and list of numbers for emergency services. Cordless phones require electricity. Land-line phones with a cord will work in a power outage and cellphones can be charged with a car adapter.

- Meet your neighbors and find out whether they have medical or other expertise. Plan to unite if the area becomes isolated. Help elderly or disabled neighbors create an emergency plan.

Compiled by Seattle Times staff

Sources: NW Insurance Council, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Seattle Department of Transportation, King County's Office of Emergency Management, Home Safety Council and American Red Cross