

Emergency Power Planning for People Who Use Electricity and Battery Dependent Assistive Technology and Medical Devices

This emergency power planning checklist is for people who use electricity and battery dependent assistive technology and medical devices. Electricity and battery-dependent devices include:

- breathing machines (respirators, ventilators),
- power wheelchairs and scooters, and
- oxygen, suction or home dialysis equipment.

Some of this equipment is essential to your level of independence while other equipment is vital to keeping you alive! Use the checklist below to make power-backup plans.

This document also contains:

- how to establish a support team,
- how to mastering the skill of giving quick information on how best to help you

Emergency Power Planning for People Who Use Electricity and Battery Dependent Assistive Technology and Medical Devices Check List

Date complete	Does not apply	Item
		Planning Basics
		Create a plan for alternative sources of power.
		Read equipment instructions and talk to equipment suppliers about your backup power options.
		Get advice from your power company regarding type of backup power you plan to use.
		Regularly check backup or alternative power equipment to ensure it will function during an emergency.
		Teach many people to use your backup systems and operate your equipment (see below <i>Establish a Support Team</i>).
		Keep a list of alternate power providers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your nearby police and fire departments and hospital if you could use them as a backup for your equipment power if your backup systems fail.
		Label all equipment with your name, address, and phone number. Attach simple and clear instruction cards to equipment and laminate them for added strength.
		Keep copies of lists of serial and model numbers of devices, as well as important use instructions in a waterproof container in your emergency supply kits.
		Life-Support Device Users
		Contact your power and water companies about your needs for life-support devices (home dialysis, suction, breathing, machines, etc.) in advance of a disaster.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many utility companies keep an emergency list and map of the locations of power-dependent customers. They will put you on a “priority reconnection service” list. Contact the customer service department of your utility companies to learn if this service is available.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if you are on the “priority reconnection service,” list, your power could still be out for many days following a disaster. It is vital that you have power backup options for your equipment.
		Let your fire dispatch know that you are dependent on life-support devices.
		All ventilator users should keep a resuscitation bag handy. The bag delivers air through a mask when squeezed.

If you receive dialysis or other medical treatments, ask for your provider what the plans are in an emergency and where you should go for treatment if your site is not available after an emergency.

Oxygen Users

	Check with your provider to determine if you can use a reduced flow rate in an emergency to extend the life of the system. Record on your equipment the reduced flow numbers so that you can easily refer to them.
	Be aware of oxygen safety practices:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>avoid areas where gas leaks or open flames may be present.</u> • <u>Post "Oxygen in Use" signs.</u> • Always use battery powered flashlights or lanterns rather than gas lights or candles when oxygen is in use (to reduce fire risk). • Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near you so you can get to it quickly in case of emergency.
	Generator Users
	Make sure use of a generator is appropriate and realistic.
	Operate them in open areas to ensure good airing.
	Safely store fuel.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenge when you live in an apartment knows how safely to safely store enough gasoline. • <u>Store a siphon kit.</u>
	Test it from time to time to make sure it will be work when needed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some generators can connect to the existing home wiring systems; always contact BC Hydro regarding critical restrictions and safety issues.
	A 2,000 to 2,500-watt gas-powered portable generator can power a refrigerator and several lamps. (A refrigerator needs to run only 15 minutes an hour to stay cool if you keep the door closed. So, you could unplug it to operate other devices.)
	Rechargeable Batteries
	Create a plan for how to recharge batteries when the electricity is out.
	Check with your vendor/supplier to find alternative ways to charge batteries. Examples include:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery.</u> • <u>Using a converter that plugs into a vehicle's cigarette lighter).</u> • Substituting a vehicle battery for a wheelchair battery but it the charge will not last as a charge for a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery
	If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, if possible store a lightweight manual wheelchair for emergency use.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stored extra batteries require periodic charging even when they are unused. If your survival strategy depends on storing batteries, closely follow a recharging schedule.
	Know the working time of any batteries that support your systems.
	When you have a choice, choose equipment that uses batteries that are easily bought from nearby stores.
	Other Backup Plans
	When Power is Restored
	Check to make sure the settings on your medical device have not changed (medical devices often reset to a default mode when power goes out).

*** Review and update this checklist every six months (one way to remember to do this is when you set your clocks forward in the spring and back in the fall).**

Establish a Support Team

Build a support team of people who will help you in an emergency if necessary. They should be people who are regularly in the same area as you. The real first responders in an emergency are often your neighbours, friends and co-workers. These people, not professional first responders, make 70% of rescues in major disasters.

When you train many people, you create a universal team. When everyone knows what to do, everyone can help!

Build support teams with many people at every place where you spend a large part of your day: at work, home, school, or volunteer site. This is especially important when it is hard to predict who will be where you are at any given time.

Practice with different people to figure out who will best be able to help you. Traits to look for may include people who are:

- Strong,
- Calm,
- Listen well,
- Communicate clearly,
- Can guide you safely, and
- Attend to important details.

Work with people who are dependable and have the physical and emotional ability to assist you reliably.

Buddy Systems and Attendants: Do Not Rely on One Person

Do not depend on any one person. Buddy systems (choosing and training one person to assist you in an emergency) have weaknesses. You and your buddy may not be able to contact each other quickly in an emergency.

If you rely on personal assistance services (attendants), they may also not be available when you need them. Therefore, it is important that your support team include other people.

Plan Multiple Ways to Give and Get Information

Different communication systems work differently. In an emergency, some may work when others fail. The more systems you have available to you, the more likely it is that you will be able to contact other people.

How many of these systems do you have?

- E-mail
 - Internet
 - Pagers
 - Text messaging
 - A standard phone that does not need electricity
 - Cell phone
 - Low cost two -way radios
 - **Ham radio**
- (most new phones, including cordless ones, need to be plugged into an electrical outlet)

Master the Skill of Giving Quick Information on How Best to Help You

In spite of your best planning, sometimes you have to build a support team on the spot. Think about what you will need, how you want it done and what kind of people you want to work with if you have a choice.

Be ready to give people who may not know you all the information they need to be able to help you without causing injury. Be clear, specific, and concise with your directions. Think about how much detail is necessary. Be ready with additional instructions if necessary. Practice giving these instructions using as few words as possible. For example:

- “Connect the battery by the window to my vent by following the instructions attached to the battery.”
- “Take my oxygen tank; right side of green bookcase. I can breathe without it for 15 minutes.”
- “Take my communication device from the table by the wall.”
- “Take my manual wheelchair.”
- “The traditional “fire fighter’s carry” is hazardous for me because of my respiratory condition. Carry me by “
- “You have to carry me out. Get an evacuation chair hanging at the top of ‘stairway two’ and I will tell you what to do next.”

If communicating may be a problem, consider carrying preprinted messages with you, for example:

I cannot speak, but I do hear and understand. I use a communication device. I can point to simple pictures or key words. You will find a communication sheet in my wallet.