

## Guidelines for Long-Term Care Homes During a Power Outage

This fact sheet is a guideline only. Listen for media reports for situation updates and specific instructions. In Lanark County Lake 88 is the designated emergency radio station. In Leeds/Grenville CFJR 104.9 and BOB 103.7 are the designated stations.

Where possible, long term care homes should consider having a backup generator to power essential systems. Generators must be tested on a regular basis, and a supply of backup fuel must be readily available. In cases where a generator is not available, the following information will help keep residents safe.

### Where do I start?

**Identify a “Person-In-Charge”** who will be responsible for ongoing management of the emergency situation and ensure ongoing compliance with safety requirements.

### Cold Holding - Refrigeration

**Food** – A refrigerator without power will keep food cold for 4-6 hours, as long as the door is kept closed. The length of time is dependent on the temperature of the room and the temperature of the fridge before the power outage.

#### Immediately:

- **Record** the time the power outage began.
- **Monitor** and record food temperatures every 2 hours with a probe thermometer.
- **Add ice to the refrigerators** to maximize the time the food stays cold.
- **Minimize** refrigerator opening.

#### Start planning for:

- **Relocation** of food to a refrigerated truck, an alternate location unaffected by the power outage, or to portable coolers.
- **Immediate Use** of Potentially Hazardous Foods that have risen into the Danger Zone (above 4°C/40°F) but have been there for less than 2 hours.
- **Discarding food.** Potentially Hazardous Foods that have been stored above 4°C/40°F) for more than 2 hours need to be discarded.

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## Cold Holding - Refrigeration

**Vaccines** – Vaccines are sensitive biological substances that can lose their potency and effectiveness if they are exposed to temperatures outside of the required range of +2°C to +8°C.

### Immediately:

- **Keep refrigerators where vaccines are stored closed.**
- **Monitor temperatures.** Record the time and internal temperature (maximum-minimum and current) of the non-functioning refrigerator (as soon as possible after the start of the electricity disruption) in the vaccine temperature logbook and reset the thermometer. Continue to monitor temperature at regular intervals. Remember to reset the thermometer each time you check it.

### Start Planning for:

- **Relocation of the vaccine** to a functioning monitored refrigerator or cooler.
- **Transportation of the vaccine** in your insulated vaccine bag with ice packs.

If you are concerned with the temperature exposure of your vaccine supply after a power outage, store the vaccines in a bag marked “Do Not Use” in a functioning, monitored refrigerator until you have consulted with a representative from the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

## Cold Holding – Frozen

A full freezer will keep food frozen about 2 days if the freezer is kept closed. A half-loaded freezer will keep food frozen about half a day if the freezer is left closed.

### Immediately:

- **Keep freezers closed.**
- **Add ice to the freezer** and add additional insulation, covering the freezer with blankets, to assist in keeping the food frozen longer.

### Start planning for:

- **Relocation of frozen food** to a freezer truck, or an alternate location unaffected by the power outage.
- **Thawing of food.** Potentially hazardous foods that have thawed but the temperature has not increased to above 4°C/40°F can be safely cooked and eaten or cooked and refrozen
- **Refreezing of partially thawed foods.** As a general rule, if there are ice crystals in the food, and there are no obvious signs of spoilage, then it’s safe to quickly refreeze. Do not refreeze thawed ready-to-eat foods.
- **Discarding food.** Any food that has completely thawed and has been sitting at room temperature for more than 2 hours or an unknown period of time needs to be discarded.



For more information, please call the  
Health ACTION Line at **1-800-660-5853**  
or visit our website at **[www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)**

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## Mechanical Ventilation

### Immediately:

- Discontinue interior cooking that produces steam, smoke and grease laden vapours.

## Cooking

### Immediately:

- Discard potentially hazardous foods that were in the cooking process but did not reach a safe final cooking temperature unless cooking can be completed immediately by an alternate method.

### Start planning for:

- Obtaining an alternate heat source for cooking.
- Never use charcoal or gas barbecues or propane fueled appliances indoors.

## Hot Holding

### Immediately:

- Record the time the power went out.
- Monitor hot holding temperatures hourly.

### Start planning for:

- Obtaining an alternate heat source for hot holding.
- Discarding food. All potentially hazardous foods that have been held in the Danger Zone (below 60°C/140°F) for more than 2 hours must be discarded.

## Utensil Washing

### Immediately:

- Use single service tableware if utensils cannot be adequately washed and sanitized.
- Use the 3-compartment sink method for manual dishwashing. Refer to the “Dishwashing – 3 Sink Method” poster for guidance.



## Lighting

### Immediately:

- Restrict activities to those that can be safely conducted in natural light whenever possible.

### Start planning for:

- Providing an alternate source of lighting. Candles are not recommended, use flashlights instead.
- If you must use candles, choose ones that are enclosed in non-flammable containers.
- Do not burn candles on or near anything that can catch fire.
- Never leave burning candles unattended and extinguish candles when you leave the room.
- Keep burning candles away from drafts.

## Hot Water

### Immediately:

- Heat small amounts of water on a natural gas or propane appliance.
- Never use charcoal or gas barbecues or propane fueled appliance indoors.

## Air Conditioning

- Heat-related illnesses can develop within a short period of time when people are exposed to extreme heat. The elderly are very susceptible to heat related illness.

### Immediately:

- Have drinking water available for all residents and encourage residents to drink often.
- Keep shades drawn and blinds closed on the sunny side of your facility.
- Open windows to encourage cross breezes.

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## Air Conditioning

### Start planning for:

- Monitoring of residents for signs and symptoms of heat related illness.
- Cooking of residents with a cool bath, shower or application of cool, wet towels.
- Relocation to air-conditioned spaces if possible even for a short period of time.

## Heat

### Immediately:

- Conserve body heat by dressing residents warmly in layers and using blankets.

### Start planning for:

- Locating an alternate heat source.
- Creating an emergency heated area within your facility.

## Circulation system for pool or spa

### Immediately:

- Close pool and/or spa

### Start planning for:

- Re-opening the pool in compliance with Public Pools, RRO 1990, Reg.565 and the spa in compliance with Public Spas O.Reg 428/05.

## Well pump (if applicable)

### Immediately:

- Obtain a supply of potable water.
- Refer to the fact sheet “Guidelines for Long Term Care Homes during a Water Interruption”.

## Sewage Pump (if applicable)

### Immediately:

- Discontinue all operations. If the sewage pump is not functional, continuing to use water in the facility will result in sewage backing-up into the lowest fixtures. Contact a member of the infectious Disease Control Team.