



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-4230
Fax: (607) 547-4385

NEWS RELEASE

Stay Safe during Summer Power Outages

We need a plentiful, uninterrupted source of electrical power to cool our homes, work places and other places that give us respite from hot, humid days. But, when we all draw on the same system, there can be an overload on our electrical supply. That results in brown outs, or short periods of no power, as well as blackouts of no power. Severe summer storms can knock out power and leave us for days without electricity.

The Otsego County Department of Health recommends that you make plans for how you will live, cook, keep foods cold, and keep your family healthy and safe if the power goes out.

If your power goes off, call your electric supplier to get an estimate on the time it will take to restore power. Unplug appliances with electronic components, such as microwaves and televisions. This will help protect appliances from voltage surges when electricity is restored.

Food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to consume if the power is out for less than two hours. While power is out, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold longer. If the power is out for longer than two hours, follow these guidelines:

- A freezer that is half-full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours.
- A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours.
- Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
- Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and perishable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.
- Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of food just before you cook or eat it.
- Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

A hot summer day without air conditioners or fans can be hazardous. Be aware of the risk of heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and fainting. To avoid heat stress, you should:

- Drink fluid every 15 to 20 minutes and at least one gallon each day.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine. They both dehydrate the body.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- If you feel dizzy, weak, or overheated, go to a cool place. Sit or lie down and drink water. If water is available wash your face with cool water.

If you don't feel better soon, get medical help quickly. Work during cooler hours of the day when possible, or distribute the workload evenly throughout the day. Heat stroke is the most serious heat illness and happens when body temperature rises rapidly, sweating fails and the body cannot cool down. It can cause death or permanent disability if emergency care is not given. Warning signs of heat stroke vary but can include red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating), rapid, strong pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness and an extremely high body temperature (above 103°F). If you suspect someone has heat stroke, call for medical attention immediately.

For more information on staying safe during a summer power outage, call The Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 or visit www.nyhealth.gov for a free copy of "Don't Be Left in the Dark."