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## **Iowa's Electric Cooperatives Offer Tips and Advice for Dealing with a Power Outage**

Des Moines, Iowa, March 1, 2007 — As Iowa braces for its second major winter storm in less than one week, Iowa's electric cooperatives encourage member-consumers to be prepared in case of power outages. If a power outage occurs, Iowa's electric cooperatives recommend:

- Calling your local electric cooperative to report the outage – even if you think a neighbor already has done so.
- Turning off the stove, oven and other appliances (except the refrigerator and freezer, unless they're empty) to prevent heavy startup loads that could cause secondary blackouts when power is restored.
- Unplugging sensitive electronic equipment such as computers, TVs and other home entertainment equipment to avoid damage to them when power is restored.
- Keeping refrigerator and freezer doors closed to prevent food from spoiling.
- Leaving one light turned on, so you'll know when the power is restored.
- Selecting a room on the warm side of the house away from prevailing winds to wait out the storm.
- Keeping curtains and exterior doors closed.
- Wearing layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration and the resulting chills.
- If you have an unvented, fuel-burning space heater, placing it on a level, hard and nonflammable surface—not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Cross-ventilate by opening a window an inch on each side of the room; it's better to let some cold air in than to run the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, never leave a space heater unattended or within the reach of children or pets – and turn it off when you leave the room or go to bed.
- If temperatures fall to near freezing in your home, open all faucets slightly so they drip. This minimal water flow will help prevent pipes from freezing – visit [www.iowarec.org](http://www.iowarec.org) for more details.

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- Closing off as many rooms as possible, unless you are using an unvented, fuel-burning space heater. Then you should keep the doors open to the rest of the house, to help prevent pollutant and carbon monoxide buildup.
- Do not use your stove, oven, cooktop, outdoor grill, camping stove or any other fuel-, charcoal- or wood-burning cooking equipment to try to produce usable heat inside your home. The carbon monoxide these devices produce could be fatal within in a matter of minutes.
- Using your fireplace if you have one. Otherwise, make sure the flue is closed.
- Don't use candles for lighting; they can cause a fire. Use a flashlight or battery-powered camping lantern instead.

***Also, keep these things in mind when using a portable generator:***

- Read the manufacturer's instructions and learn how to operate and shut off your generator before you need to use it.
- Make sure the extension cord you use is in good shape and rated for a load greater than the total wattage of all connected appliances and other devices (125 volts x amps = watts).
- Keep the generator dry, and don't operate it indoors or in an enclosed or partially enclosed area such as a garage or porch. Generators quickly can produce high levels of deadly carbon monoxide gas.
- Keep children and pets away from the generator when it's running.
- Practice power management. For example, when the power is out for several hours or longer, use the generator to run the refrigerator every few hours so food won't spoil – instead of just powering lights in your home all day long.
- Give your generator several breaks during the day. Most portable generators aren't designed to run 24/7, so shut down your unit several times a day to let it cool down.
- Always switch the engine off and allow it to cool before adding fuel in a well-ventilated area. Take care not to contaminate the fuel tank with dirt or water.
- Turn off the generator's circuit breaker before starting, so the load doesn't draw current until the generator is running smoothly. Turn off the breaker before stopping the generator.
- Test the ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) on the generator every time you fire up the engine.

Electric cooperative member-consumers who may be without power for any extended amount of time are encouraged to relocate to a nearby emergency shelter. Consumers may contact their local emergency management coordinator, call the Iowa Concern Hotline at 1 (800) 447-1985 or 211, or visit <http://www.bereadyiowa.org/winterstorm.asp> to locate a shelter in their area. The Governor's office is also encouraging Iowans to call 911 if it is an emergency and they need to be transported to a local shelter. In addition, Iowa's electric cooperatives advise the public to stay away from downed power lines and other equipment as they could cause serious injury.



The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, formed in 1942, is the Des Moines-based statewide association representing 37 distribution cooperatives in Iowa and six generation and transmission cooperatives serving more than 210,000 rural homes, farms and industries in all 99 counties. The IAEC provides legislative, regulatory, safety, communications and education and training programs and services to its members. The IAEC is also a Touchstone Energy partner – a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. More than 600 Touchstone Energy cooperatives in 45 states are delivering energy and energy solutions to more than 22 million customers every day.

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