READY AT HOME · VOLUME 2

Power Cuts & Storms

Getting through long outages

Before, during and after a big storm
Keeping food cold, lights on and phones charged
Power stations, generators and carbon monoxide safety



THE SERIES

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1. Before the storm

Storms are the most common cause of long power cuts in Ireland. You usually get 1-3 days' warning from Met Éireann, which is enough time to do everything on this page.

When a Yellow or Orange warning is issued

☐ Charge every phone, power bank, laptop and lantern	☐ Charge the power station to 100%
☐ Fill water containers and the bath (washing and flushing)	☐ Fill the car with fuel; get some cash
☐ Turn the freezer to its coldest setting	☐ Freeze bottles of water to fill gaps
☐ Bring in bins, trampolines, garden furniture	☐ Park away from trees and power lines
☐ Check torches and spare batteries	☐ Check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours
☐ Download offline maps and save numbers	☐ Put stored meals and a stove where you can reach them

If someone at home depends on electricity for medical equipment

- Ask your electricity supplier to put you on their Priority Services Register.
- Ask the equipment supplier (oxygen concentrator, CPAP, home dialysis, pumps) what backup they provide and how long the battery lasts.
- Have a plan to go somewhere with power (family, hospital) if an outage will last longer than your backup.

2. When the power goes

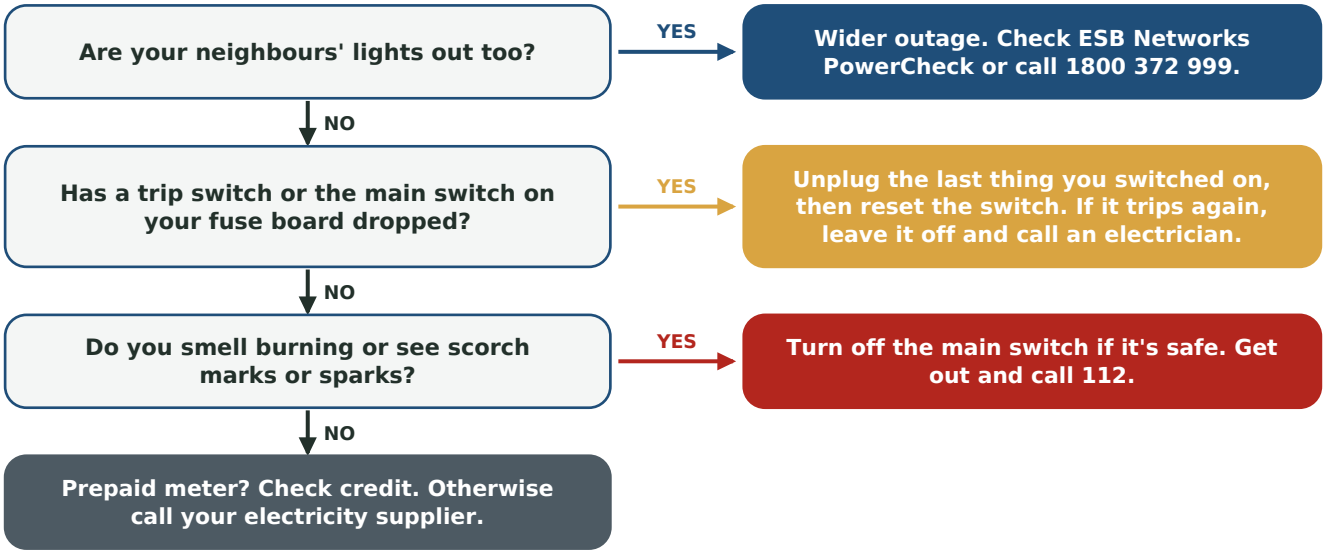


Figure 1. Is it just my house?

Fallen or damaged lines

Always assume a fallen line is live, even if it's sparking or silent. Keep everyone, including pets, well back. Don't touch anything it's lying on (fences, trees, cars, water). Call ESB Networks on 1800 372 999 straight away, or 112 if someone is hurt.

The first day, hour by hour

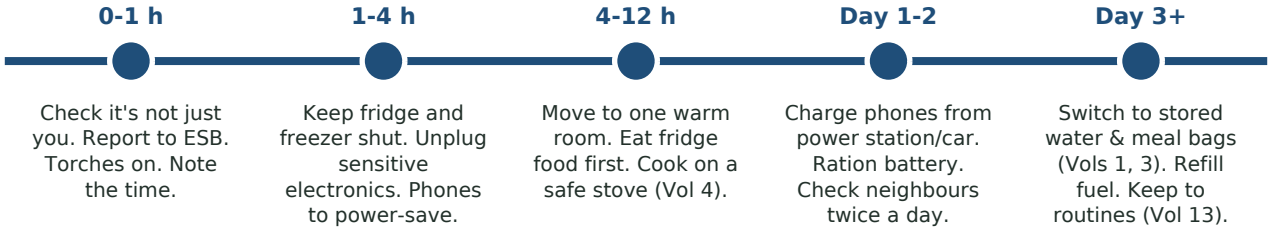


Figure 2. What to do as an outage goes on.

3. Food in the fridge and freezer

Keep the doors shut. Every opening lets out cold air. Food is safe as long as it stays at 5°C or below in the fridge and frozen solid in the freezer.

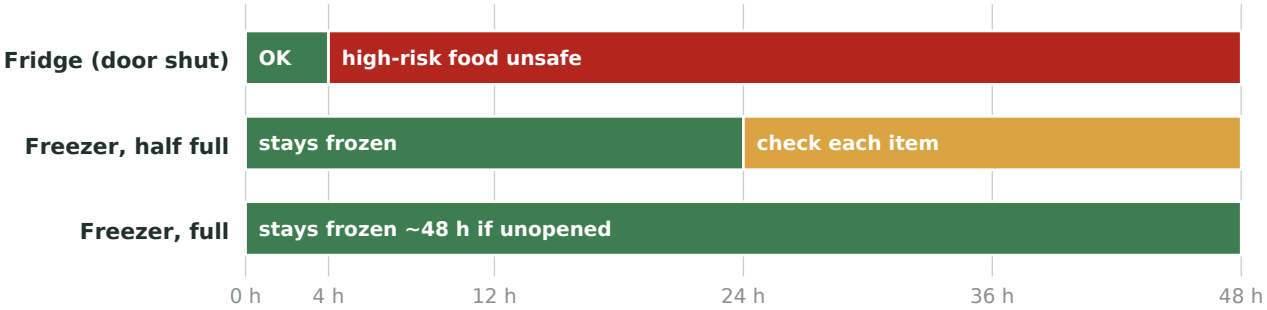


Figure 3. Typical times with doors kept shut. A fridge thermometer removes the guesswork.

Food	Above 5°C for more than 2-4 hours	Notes
Raw & cooked meat, fish, poultry	Throw out	Includes deli meats, sausages, leftovers
Milk, cream, soft cheese, yoghurt	Throw out	Hard cheese and butter usually keep
Cooked rice, pasta, potatoes	Throw out	Rice is a particular risk
Eggs, egg dishes, custards	Throw out	
Fruit, raw veg, jams, sauces, bread	Usually fine	Discard if mouldy, slimy or smells off
Freezer food with ice crystals	Safe to refreeze	Quality may drop
Freezer food fully thawed and warm	Throw out	Cook straight away only if still cold

If in doubt, throw it out

Food that has gone unsafe often looks and smells normal. Never taste something to check it.

Make your freezer last longer

- A full freezer stays cold far longer. Fill gaps with bottles of water (leave room to expand).
- Group items together and cover the freezer with blankets or a duvet (don't block vents once power returns).
- Eat fridge food first, then freezer food, then stored food.

4. Light, power & phones

Lighting

DO

- A headtorch for every person (hands free)
- LED lanterns for rooms
- Rechargeable batteries plus a set of alkaline spares
- Glow sticks for children's rooms and stairs
- Solar garden lights: bring them in at night as night lights

DON'T

- Candles near curtains, children, pets or in bedrooms
- Leaving a candle unattended, even briefly
- Paraffin or oil lamps without good ventilation
- Car headlights for long (flat battery)

Figure 4. LED lights are safer, brighter and cheap. Volume 4 covers candles and oil lamps as a backup.

What a power station can run

A typical 'river size' power station (about 250-300 Wh, such as the EcoFlow River 3 Plus) gives roughly 240 Wh of usable power. Runtime is roughly **usable Wh ÷ watts**.

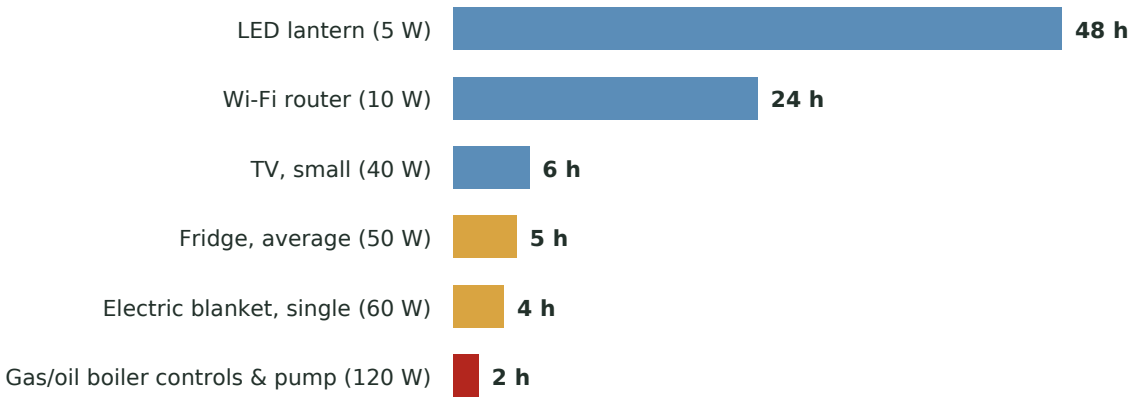


Figure 5. Approximate hours on one full charge of a ~240 Wh usable power station.

Charging	Energy per charge	Charges from ~240 Wh
Smartphone	about 15 Wh	about 15
Tablet	about 30 Wh	about 8
Laptop	about 60 Wh	about 4
Power bank 20,000 mAh	about 75 Wh	about 3
Headtorch / lantern	5-10 Wh	25+

- Kettles, heaters, ovens and immersions use far too much. Use gas or stored hot drinks (flasks).
- **Recharge it** from a car, a solar panel, or a friend with power (Section 5).
- Many gas and oil boilers won't fire without electricity. Ask a registered electrician (Safe Electric) about fitting a plug so the boiler can run from a power station or generator.
- Medical devices first, then light, then communications, then comfort.

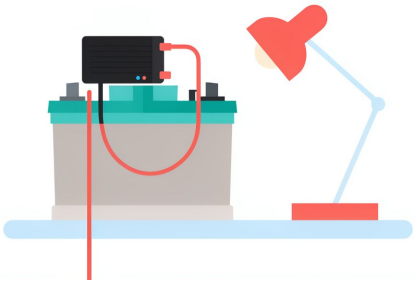
Phones when the network struggles

- Mobile masts have backup batteries that can run out in a long outage. Texts get through when calls don't.
- Turn on low-power mode, lower brightness, turn off Bluetooth and location.
- Agree a check-in time with family (e.g. 8 am and 8 pm) instead of calling all day.

- Keep a wind-up or battery FM/DAB radio. RTÉ Radio 1 and local radio give outage and road updates.

5. Backup power: car, power station, generator

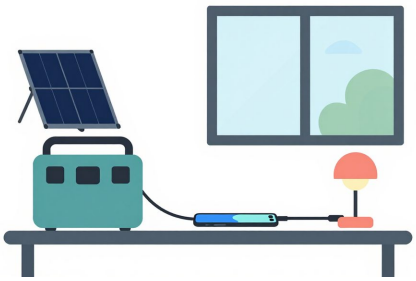
Power from the car



A car battery holds roughly 500-700 Wh, but you need to keep enough to start the engine. Treat the car as a charger that runs while the engine is on.

- USB sockets and a 12 V USB adapter charge phones and power banks.
- A small inverter (150 W) in the 12 V socket runs a laptop or router.
- A larger inverter (300-1000 W) clips straight onto the battery terminals: red to +, black to -. Keep the engine running while you use it.
- Choose a 'pure sine wave' inverter for laptops and medical devices.
- Run the engine outdoors only, never in a garage, and not with the exhaust near a window.

Power stations and solar

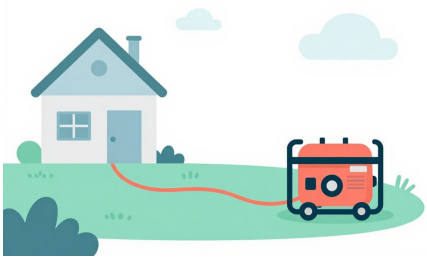


A portable power station is a big rechargeable battery with sockets. It's silent, safe indoors and has no fumes. Size it to what you'd actually run (Figure 5).

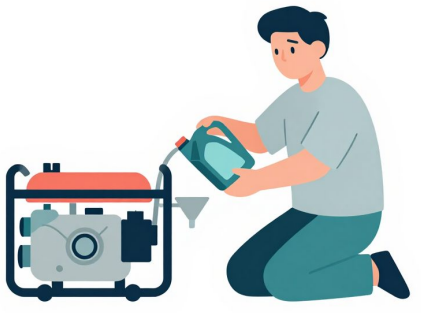
Panel	Summer day	Winter day
100 W	300-500 Wh	50-150 Wh
200 W	600-1000 Wh	100-300 Wh

Rough Irish yields, panel facing south and angled to the sun. Cloud cuts output a lot.

Generators



- Run it outdoors only, at least 6 metres from doors, windows and vents, exhaust pointing away from the house. Never in a garage, shed, porch or under a carport.
- Plug appliances into the generator itself with outdoor-rated extension leads.
- Never plug a generator into a wall socket or wire it to the fuse board. It can send power back down the lines to ESB crews. To power house circuits, have a registered electrician fit a changeover switch.
- Switch it off and let it cool before refuelling.
- Keep it dry: use it under an open-sided cover, not a tarp wrapped round it.



Looking after a generator

1. Check the oil level on the dipstick before every use, on level ground.
2. Change the oil after the first 5-20 hours (see the manual), then every 50-100 hours, or every season.
3. To change it: run for a few minutes to warm the oil, switch off and let it cool a little, drain it into a pan, refill with the grade in the manual (often 10W-30) to the mark.
4. Take old oil to a civic amenity site.
5. Run it for 15 minutes under a light load once a month, so it starts when you need it.
6. Keep a spare spark plug, an air filter and a funnel with it.

Storing fuel legally and safely

Fuel	What the rules allow at home	How to keep it
Petrol for engines (generator, mower, car)	Up to 100 litres without a licence or notification. Tell your local fire authority if you keep 100-273 litres, or use a container bigger than 23 litres.	Approved petrol cans (UN-marked metal or plastic), in a shed or detached garage away from the house and anything that sparks. Add fuel stabiliser; untreated petrol goes stale in about 6 months.
Diesel	Less strict (harder to ignite), but use sensible amounts.	Approved diesel cans, cool and dry. Keeps about a year.
Kerosene (home heating oil)	Your oil tank.	Keep the tank above a quarter full in winter (Volume 4).
Gas cylinders and cartridges	No household limit, but keep it modest.	Upright, outdoors or in a ventilated shed, out of the sun. Never in a cellar.

Petrol rules: Dangerous Substances (Retail and Private Petroleum Stores) Regulations 1979, as summarised by the Health and Safety Authority. 20-50 litres in proper cans is well within the limit for home use.

Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas with no smell or colour, given off by anything that burns fuel. Power cuts raise the risk because people use stoves, barbecues and generators they don't normally use. A CO alarm on every floor gives you early warning.

Headache
Often the first sign. Does it ease outside?

Dizziness
Feeling faint, confused or unsteady

Nausea
Feeling sick or being sick

Breathless
Short of breath, chest tight

Tiredness
Unusual sleepiness

Others too
Several people or pets unwell at once

CO alarm
One on every floor, near boilers, stoves and bedrooms

Act
Get everyone into fresh air. Call 112.

Figure 6. Signs to look out for.

If you suspect CO

- Turn off the appliance if you can do it quickly.
- Open doors and windows and get everyone outside.
- Call 112 or 999 if anyone has symptoms. Don't go back in until it's been checked.
- A smell of gas (rotten eggs) is different: leave and call Gas Networks Ireland on 1800 20 50 50 from outside.

6. After the storm

1. Check on neighbours, especially anyone living alone or elderly.
2. Walk round the outside of the house in daylight: roof, slates, chimney, gutters, trees, fences.
3. Photograph all damage before you clear anything, for your insurer.
4. Leave fallen trees near lines to ESB. Chainsaws need training and protective gear.
5. When power returns, switch appliances back on a few at a time.
6. Check the fridge and freezer contents (Section 3) before eating anything.
7. Recharge everything, refill water, restock what you used and write down what you wished you'd had.

Emergency numbers & the series

Service	Number	Use it for
Emergency services	**112 or 999**	Ambulance, Garda, fire, coast guard. Works from any phone, any network.
ESB Networks	1800 372 999	Power cuts, fallen or damaged lines (24/7)
Gas Networks Ireland	1800 20 50 50	Smell of gas (24/7). Call from outside the house.
Uisce Éireann (Irish Water)	1800 278 278	Water outages, burst mains, boil-water notices
HSELive	1800 700 700	Health service information
Public Poisons Line	01 809 2166	Advice if someone has swallowed or touched something harmful (8am-10pm daily)
Samaritans	116 123	Anyone struggling to cope (24/7)
Text About It	Text HELLO to 50808	Free text support (24/7)
Childline	1800 66 66 66	Children and young people up to 18 (24/7)
Your county council		Roads, flooding, local emergency centres
Met Éireann	met.ie / Met Éireann app	Weather warnings

Numbers checked November 2026. Write in your county council's number above, and your own local numbers (GP, out-of-hours doctor, pharmacy, vet, neighbours) in Volume 0.

The Ready At Home series

Vol	Title	What it covers
0	Start Here	Household plan & emergency numbers
1	Just Add Water	Home-dehydrated emergency meals
2	**Power Cuts & Storms**	Getting through long outages
3	Water & Sanitation	Storing, treating, toilets
4	Cooking & Warmth	Without mains power
5	First Aid	Step-by-step emergency care
6	Symptoms & Home Care	Red flags, minor illness, medicines
7	Home Systems & Repairs	Shut-offs, leaks, storm damage, floods
8	Fire Safety & Security	Alarms, escape plans, extinguishers
9	Communications	Family plan, radios, signals
10	Grab Bags & Kits	72-hour, car, child & pet kits
11	Pantry & Stockpile	A 30-day food store you rotate
12	Outdoor Skills	Fire, shelter, knots, navigation
13	Kids, Morale & Wellbeing	Keeping people okay
14	Offline Knowledge & Media	Libraries, maps & media without internet
15	Other Emergencies	Radiation, chemicals, heat, illness, cut off

This series gives general preparedness guidance. It is not a substitute for professional medical, electrical, gas or structural advice, or for a certified first-aid course. In an emergency, call 112 or 999 and follow the call-taker's instructions.

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