

## Power Outages

The power can go out for a variety of reasons, including storms, damaged equipment or power lines, or planned outages. It's important to be ready for the electricity to go out to protect yourself, your equipment, and your research.

### Pre-Planning

Ensure that your laboratory has a plan in place and that staff members are trained on what to do in the event of a power outage. The plan should include:

- Have emergency lighting (i.e. flashlights, glow sticks, etc.)
- Keep aisles and exits clear, and your emergency signage and contact lists up-to-date.
- If you have emergency power outlets, ensure your most critical equipment is plugged in to these. For truly critical equipment, consider an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). A UPS will provide power during the time between power failure and emergency power coming online.
- Make a list of equipment that requires special attention in the event of a power outage. For example, equipment that needs to be unplugged, put on back-up power, or reset after an outage.
- Make a plan for freezers/refrigerators during a power failure. Include information on the alarm systems, what to do if they go off, and when to take action.
- If your experiments use high or low temperatures or pressures, plan ahead for how to relieve or maintain conditions in order to prevent uncontrolled reactions or release. Consider posting emergency shut-down instructions near the experiment.

### When the Power Goes Out

- Remember to stay calm. Proper preparation and planning will make that much easier.
- Secure all chemicals that are being used.
- Stop or stabilize all experiments immediately.
- Turn off heat sources (electric or gas burners) to prevent fires.
- Turn off gasses at the cylinder valve if you are able and it is safe to do so.
- If you are using a fume hood and fumes may be present, shut the fume hood sashes to prevent the fumes from escaping.
- Avoid opening refrigerators or freezers to keep them as cold as possible.
- Shut off or unplug computers, printers, shop machinery, and other electronic or potentially dangerous equipment. This prevents unexpected start-ups or damage from power surges when power is restored.

Revised:

# Power Outages (cont.)

## Evacuation

- If evacuation notice has been given, fire alarm goes off, or if other emergency notification instructs you to evacuate, do so in a calm and orderly manner. Do not re-enter until authorities have given instruction to do so.
- If you are trapped in an elevator, use the emergency phone to call for help. If you are outside of the elevator, do not pry the doors open to help others out. Wait for emergency assistance.
- Remember that emergency lighting will only work for a limited time so evacuate as soon as possible.

## When Power is Restored

- Restart equipment and check for function, especially fume hoods. Make a note of any equipment or materials damaged by the power outage and report it to your department administration.
- Contact Health, Safety, and Risk Management (HSRM) if any issues came up as a result of the outage, such as spill, hazardous releases, or other concerns. If there is an emergency, call 911.

## Questions

If you have any questions about what to do in the event of a power outage, contact HSRM at [hsrm@umn.edu](mailto:hsrm@umn.edu) or (612) 626-6002.