

Storms and Power Outages



Tips to keep you

and your family safe

Each year at this time, storms cause extensive damage to many Upper Midwest electrical systems. Lightning, heavy rains and high winds can bring even the sturdiest poles to the ground. Here are some safety tips to keep your family safe.

Power outages

- If a power outage occurs, first check your fuses or circuit breakers to rule out a blown fuse or tripped breaker. If this is not the cause of the outage, call Montana-Dakota at 1-800-638-3278 to report the outage.
- Unplug computers, TVs, VCRs and other sensitive appliances to avoid possible damage when electricity is restored.
- Turn off all but one of the lights that were on, so you will notice when electricity is restored. If you have an outside light, leave it on so crews working in your area will know that power has been restored.
- Use a flashlight. Avoid candles because of the fire risk.
- If a standby generator is used, make sure it has a manual or automatic transfer switch. This switch will isolate home circuits from power lines. A portable generator that does not have a transfer switch can backfeed electricity into main power lines, causing a shock hazard for you and utility crews. A portable generator should be used for individual appliances and never wired directly into a service panel.
- When power resumes, reset clocks and check automatic alarms and timers. Plug in only essential items. Wait 10 minutes before connecting the rest to let the electrical system stabilize.
- Don't open the refrigerator or freezer unless absolutely necessary. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold for about four hours; a full freezer will hold the temperature of frozen foods for 24 to 48 hours (the fuller the freezer, the longer items inside will stay frozen).

Downed power lines

- Always assume downed power lines are energized. Downed power lines can hurt or kill you. Never attempt to touch or drive over downed or low-hanging lines. From a safe distance, call Montana-Dakota immediately at 1-800-638-3278.
- Downed lines are most common after storms and high winds. If you are outside after a storm, be alert for lines that may be hard to see in streams or puddles, or hidden by brush or debris.
- Shuffle, don't run, from a downed line. Shuffle with your feet together and on the ground when moving away from a downed line. When a live wire touches the ground, electricity travels through the ground in all directions. If you run or take large steps, you increase the chance that electricity could come up one leg and go out the other, and you could be shocked.
- Stay inside your car. If a power line comes down on or near your vehicle, stay in the vehicle until utility crews arrive and make the situation safe. Don't touch metal parts of the vehicle, such as radio knobs, ashtrays, etc. If people come near the car to help, tell them to stay away and call 911 and Montana-Dakota at 1-800-638-3278.
- Always stay away from downed power lines. Be safe and let the professionals take care of downed power lines.

Play it safe around electricity.



A photograph of a two-story house with beige siding and white trim. The house has a large front porch with a glass door and several windows. In the foreground, there is a green lawn and a concrete patio area. On the patio, there is a brown patio umbrella, a grill, and some outdoor furniture. To the right of the patio, there is a yellow sofa with red cushions and a yellow armchair. The house is surrounded by green bushes and trees.

Do you have buried pipes in your backyard?

If you have a buried gas line to your garage, shop, grill, gas light or any other location, the Department of Transportation rules of Aug. 14, 1995, apply to you!

Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. operates and maintains all natural gas piping through your gas meter in accordance with Federal Gas Pipeline Safety Regulations. Your buried gas lines downstream of (beyond) the meter are subject to the same inspection and maintenance requirements as similar company-owned lines. That is, they must be monitored for corrosion and leaks. If unsafe conditions are found, buried lines must be repaired or disconnected.

When you excavate, you must call a professional to locate the line in advance. Excavation around piping must be done by hand.

Plumbing and heating contractors in your area can provide locating, inspecting, new installation and repair services on your downstream buried pipes.



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