

Outage Preparedness

By Lori Froehlich

Do you need electricity for health reasons? Do you have a plan during a power outage? For most people, power outages are merely inconvenient. But for others, they may be life-threatening.

The power in your home can go out for many reasons throughout the year. Trees, windstorms, animals, heavy ice/snow, excavators digging through lines and vehicles hitting poles all can cause considerable damage.

Depending on the severity and where the incident occurs, it can leave you without electricity for hours or even days.

Many times, outages with extensive damage are in isolated locations.

It is also not uncommon for KPUD or the Bonneville Power Administration to plan power outages for maintenance to the system. These outages can last for hours. Usually, they are scheduled at night to be the least disruptive to the greatest number of people.

There is never a perfect time for the power to be out. By performing routine outages with advance planning, our system can better handle weather extremes and other variables when you count on electricity the most.

Please make sure your contact information is current so staff can notify you about planned outages. Also register with Klickitat County Emergency Management at www.klickitatcounty.org/249/Emergency-Management to receive notifications about emergencies that affect your location.

If you rely on electricity for health care reasons, please take a moment to plan ahead for a power outage. For example, if you use oxygen therapy, you need to be prepared for events that leave you without electricity to operate your stationary oxygen concentrator. This also applies to people who rely on continuous positive



A storm in February 2008 knocked out power for approximately 12 hours while crews repaired multiple broken poles that snapped off in the severe wind.

airway pressure—CPAP—machines, kidney dialysis machines, life support or other electronics for survival.

Talk to your oxygen or health care provider about alternatives, and make an emergency response plan so you know what to do in case of a power outage.

Here are some tips for customers who are oxygen dependent:

- Know how the delivery of your oxygen or medical supplies could be affected by snow or downed trees and power lines. This is particularly important if your home is hard to reach when roads are bad.
- If you use a home oxygen concentrator, consider getting a portable oxygen concentrator.
- Ask your provider how much oxygen—in tank form—you need during an outage. Order and store these extra tanks for emergency use.
- Have the delivery person label the tanks with how much time of continuous oxygen flow each tank contains.
- Do you receive liquid oxygen? If so, ask for an extra reservoir for use when there is no power.

If you are unable to change oxygen

equipment on your own, you need to train a friend or family member to assist during an outage. Please do this before an emergency occurs so you and your family are prepared.

One alternative to consider is buying a backup generator. If you choose this option, use a licensed electrician and make sure it is inspected by the Department of Labor and Industries. Installing and using a generator correctly and safely protects not only you, but KPUD line crews.

A generator without a properly installed transfer switch can back-feed along the power line and electrocute or injure anyone coming into contact with it, including our lineworkers who might be making repairs.

While we do our best at KPUD to make sure you always have electricity, we cannot guarantee this service 24/7 and never want you to put your life at risk on that assumption. If your emergency response plan fails and you are left without oxygen, contact emergency medical personnel and get to a hospital.

If you have any questions, please call (800) 548-8357. ■