

Emergency Preparedness Guide

**For
Disasters**

**Utilities, Power Outages,
and Generators**

Disasters Happen: Are You Ready?



**For area specific disaster information contact:
Your local Emergency Management Office**

Website:

**Washington State Emergency Management
www.mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division**

Prepared by Washington State Emergency Management





Power Outages & Generators

“Safety” videos: www.youtube.com/user/EMDPrepare

Before a power outage:

- Register life-sustaining and medical equipment with your utility company.
- Consider buying a generator. When installing a generator, follow the instructions carefully. Keep your generator outside and run a cord inside. Don't connect your generator to main service panels - it's dangerous! Be sure to place carbon monoxide (CO) detectors indoors.
- Make sure your disaster preparedness kit contain light sticks, flashlights, a battery-powered radio with extra batteries and a wind-up clock.
- Have a corded telephone available - cordless phones will not work when the power is out.
- Have a safe alternative heat source and supply of fuel. Never burn charcoal or use a generator indoors.
- If you own an electric garage door opener, know how to open the door without power.

During a power outage:

- Turn off lights and electrical appliances except for the refrigerator and freezer. Even if it is dark, turn light switches and buttons on lamps or appliances to the “off” position. Leave one light on so you will know when the power is restored.
- Unplug computers and other sensitive equipment to protect them from possible surges when the power is restored.
- Wait at least 15 minutes after the power is restored before turning on other appliances.
- Conserve water, especially if you use well water.

- Never use gas ovens, gas ranges, barbecues or portable propane heaters indoors for heating - they use oxygen and create carbon monoxide that can cause suffocation.
- Using a kerosene heater, gas lantern, or stove inside the house can be dangerous. Maintain proper ventilation at all times to avoid a build up of toxic fumes. Be sure to have carbon monoxide detectors to detect fumes.
- Stay away from downed power lines and sagging trees with broken limbs.

Use a generator safely:

- If you plan to use a generator, install CO detectors in your home.
- Determine the amount of power you will need to operate items that you plan to plug into the generator.
- Place the generator **away** from windows, doors and vent that could allow CO to come indoors.
- **Never** use a portable generator indoors, in a garage, carport, basement, crawl space or other enclosed or partially-enclosed areas. Doing so may cause CO poisoning: sick, dizzy, weak. *(Get to fresh air fast.)*
- Plug appliances directly into the generator or use heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cords that are rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads.
- Never try to power the entire house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. This can cause ‘back feeding’ and can lead to electrocution of utility workers or neighbors served by the same transformer.
- The only safe way to connect a generator to house wiring is to have a qualified electrician install a power switch transfer.



WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT
Emergency Management Division
Camp Murray, WA 98430-5122

Web site: www.mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division
253-512-7000; (800) 562-6108



Carbon Monoxide (CO) Safety

“Safety” videos: www.youtube.com/user/EMDPrepare



Only use a generator outdoors; far away from open vents, windows and doors.



Cooking: Never use a gas cooking grill to cook inside your home.

Heating: Never try to heat your home with a gas grill.



Cooking: Never use a hibachi to cook inside your home.

Heating: Never try to heat your home with a hibachi.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that cannot be seen or smelled and can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned.

Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by appliances that are not used properly or that are malfunctioning.

Carbon monoxide can build up so quickly that victims are overcome before they can get help.

Once inhaled, carbon monoxide:

- Can cause permanent brain damage.
- Can cause chest pains or heart attacks in people with heart disease.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Headache
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Fatigue
- Nausea

What should be done if you suspect someone has been poisoned by carbon monoxide?

- Move the person to a place with fresh air immediately.
- Take the person to an emergency room and tell them that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.

How can I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Never burn charcoal inside homes, tents, campers, vans, trucks, garages, or mobile homes. Do not burn charcoal in the fireplace in your home.
- Never use gasoline powered equipment indoors.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Never sleep in a room while using an unvented gas or kerosene heater.
- Make sure that chimneys and flues are in good condition and are not blocked.
- Never idle a car in a garage, even when the garage door is open.
- Carbon monoxide warning devices may provide additional protection, but should not replace the other prevention steps.



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Carbon Monoxide
Poisoning



Utility Safety - Gas/Propane

“Safety” videos: www.youtube.com/user/EMDPrepare

Natural Gas:

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following any major earthquake. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off the natural gas.

Preparing to shut off the natural gas:

- Locate the shut-off valve (see illustration). Make sure this valve will turn. To shut off the gas, turn the valve 90° or 1/4 turn, so that it crosses the pipe (see illustration).

If your valve is rusted open, do not put WD-40™ lubricant on it. It may corrode the O-rings that allow the valve to turn.

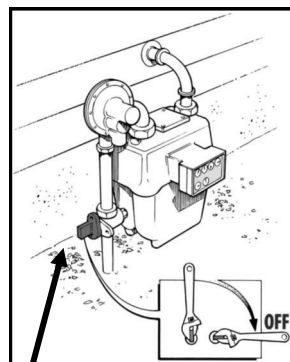
- Attach a wrench to the meter or to the wall directly behind the meter.



- Choose a crescent wrench that is at least 12" long.
- Adjust it to fit your valve before hanging it behind the meter in case it rusts.

Shutting off the gas after an earthquake:

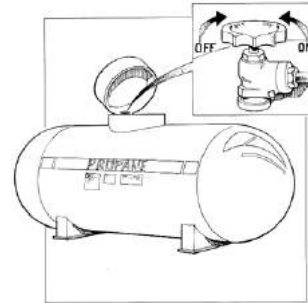
- Shut off the gas immediately only if you smell the characteristic odor of gas, you hear a hissing sound, and/or you notice the meter dials spinning more rapidly than normal.
- Do not use matches, lighters, open flame appliances, or operate any electrical switches until you are sure no gas leaks exist. Sparks from electrical switches could ignite the gas.
- If you smell natural gas, immediately get everyone out of and away from the house. Open the windows and doors to provide ventilation. Shut off the gas at the meter.



The shut-off valve is located on the pipe that comes out of the ground.

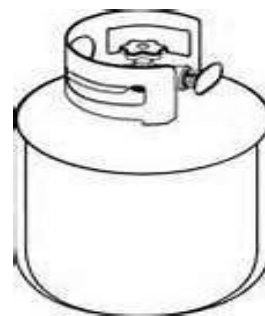
Propane:

- Have your home's propane tank properly installed by a qualified professional and serviced on a regular basis.



Propane Tanks: (portable)

- Do not store tanks in a building, garage, or enclosure.
- When not connected for use, keep tank valve turned off.
- Propane tanks are extremely flammable.
- When transporting your tank, put it in a secure well-ventilated location in your vehicle. Tank should be upright with valve turned off. Tank should be taken directly to and from place of use. Do not leave unattended in any vehicle.
- Do not use portable propane heaters, stoves, or lanterns in tents, campers, truck caps, RVs, or other unventilated enclosures, especially while sleeping.
- Never store a spare tank beneath a grill.
- Always store tanks upright.
- Never store a tank in temperatures of 125F degrees or more.
- Never use or store a propane tank indoors.
- Do not try to repair a damaged tank or tank valve.



Utility Safety
Natural Gas / Propane



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(Utility Safety continued on next page)



Utility Safety - Electricity/Water

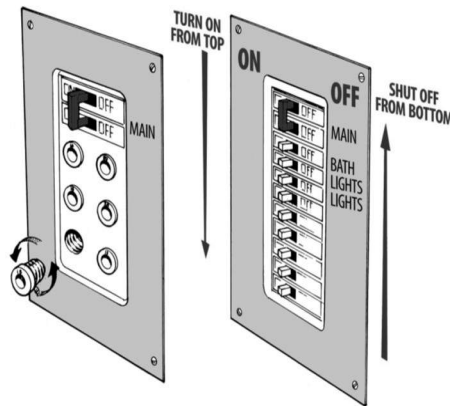
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Electricity:

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

Preparing to shut off electricity:

- Locate your electricity circuit box.
- Teach all responsible household members how to shut off the electricity to the entire house.

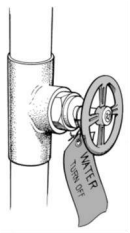


FOR YOUR SAFETY: Always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

- Check your electrical panel to make sure the breakers and fuses are properly rated for the circuit that they are protecting.
- If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, immediately unplug, repair or replace it.
- Check the cords of appliance in your home as well as the plugs and connectors. Make sure they are not frayed, cracked or damaged, placed under rugs or carpets, resting on furniture, or located in high traffic areas.
- Do not nail or staple cords to walls, floor, or any other objects.
- Inspect all outdoor connections, appliance, and tools for frayed cords, broken plugs, and cracker or broken housings.

Water:

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.

- Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from the authorities that it is safe for drinking.
- The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water and toilet tanks unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb – this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool).
- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house. It may look like this: 
- Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open or it may only partially close. Replace it if necessary.
- Label this valve with a tag for easy identification, and make sure all household members know where it is located.



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