

Fire Safety Notice: Power Outage Safety Tips from McDOUGALL FIRE DEPARTMENT

For Homes, Apartments and Businesses

Warning/Caution

While the electricity is off, take care when using alternative lighting, cooking and heating equipment. Review the following information and take precautions to make sure everyone stays safe.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

These alarms are essential for your family's safety. Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms electrically connected to your home's power supply will not work when the electricity is off, unless they have battery back-ups. Test your smoke alarms to find out if they work. Make sure your home has a battery-operated smoke alarm on every level and a battery-operated carbon monoxide alarm. You are responsible for notifying your landlord that the dwelling is without electricity.

Home Escape Planning and Emergency Communication

Inform everyone in your home about the fire safety rules they must follow. Conduct regular safety checks of each room and keep a watchful eye on children and older adults. Make sure everyone knows they must leave the building immediately in event of fire. Practice your escape plan. Have at least one telephone (not cordless) that works during a power failure.

Heating and Cooking

Make sure electric stove elements, ovens, kettles, frying pans, clothes irons, hair-dryers, etc., are OFF or unplugged to prevent fires from starting when the electricity is restored. Think carefully before you bring a fuel-burning appliance into your home. Any device that burns fuel requires *oxygen* to burn properly and *ventilation* to remove the deadly products of combustion. Carbon monoxide is produced by any device fuelled by natural gas, propane, heating oil, kerosene, coal, charcoal, gasoline or wood. It is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that can be deadly.

Alternative Lighting

- Use flashlights or chemical light sticks instead of candles or lanterns to reduce fire risks.

Matches and Lighters

- Keep all matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children, preferably locked away.

Candles

- Place in secure candleholders, protected by a glass chimney.
- Keep candles away from all combustible materials, such as draperies, paper, etc.
- Place them out of reach of children and pets.
- Avoid walking with a lit candle or taking it into a closet or similar area to look for things.
- Extinguish candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Never leave them unattended.

Lanterns and Oil Lamps

- Place lamps and lanterns in a secure place where they cannot be knocked over by children or pets.
- Keep them away from combustibles and windy areas.
- Refill lamps and lanterns outdoors away from combustibles and other people.
- Before going to sleep, make sure that all lamps are out.

Portable Space Heaters

- Use only portable space heaters that have been designed for indoor, and where applicable residential use.
- Before using one, review the manufacturer's recommendations for usage and follow the instructions carefully. Only use the fuel for which the appliance is designed.
- Provide adequate ventilation by opening a window slightly, when the heater is in use.
- Before refueling, turn off the heater, wait for it to cool and take the heater outside to refill.
- Keep all heaters at least 1 m (3 feet) away from combustible materials including drapes, carpeting and furniture.

- Turn portable space heaters off when you are not in the room and before going to sleep.

Woodstoves and Fireplaces

- If you have not used the fireplace or woodstove for a long time, have it checked by a professional technician before using it. The chimney may be blocked or damaged, which could cause a fire or a build-up of carbon monoxide inside the building.
- Always empty ashes into a covered metal container and store them outside, away from combustibles.

Propane and charcoal barbecues

- should be used outside only. Do not bring them inside the building.

Loss of Heat

When a building's heating system is inoperative, water supplies, sanitary systems, fire sprinklers, standpipe hose systems and portable fire extinguishers, amongst other things, may freeze. Freezing can make this equipment inoperative and cause damage. Precautions must be taken to prevent this from happening.

Portable Generators

- Portable generators should be used outdoors only. They should be carefully placed outside to ensure that fumes do not enter the building.
- Generators and hot gases should be kept away from combustibles.
- Store fuel for the generator outside in an approved container a safe distance away from the building and generator.
- Refuel only after shutting it down and letting it cool. Follow manufacturer's recommendations regarding use.
- Hire a licensed electrical contractor or electrician to install the unit. Have the installation inspected by the Electrical Safety Authority.

Fire and Life Safety Systems

Without electricity, fire and life safety systems may not operate as originally designed. The fire alarm system, voice communication system, emergency lighting, fire sprinkler system, standpipe and hose system, and other fire and life safety features rely on electricity to operate appropriately. Some fire and life safety systems are equipped with a secondary source of power consisting of batteries. When the power is depleted in these batteries, the system or equipment will no longer work.

The Ontario Fire Code, O. Reg. 388/97 as amended, stipulates that such systems must be maintained in operating condition at all times. Should the power not be promptly restored or where an alternative electrical power supply is not provided, occupant safety and property are at risk from fire.