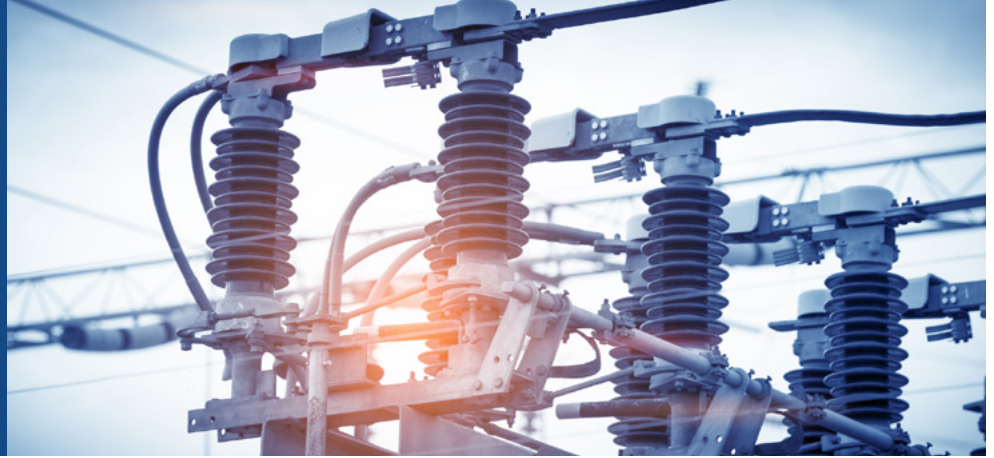


Managing an Extended Power Outage



Natural disasters can affect the power grid and [cause extended power outages](#). Whether an outage is the result of extreme temperature swings, a tornado's gale-force winds, or an earthquake, the principles of emergency management can help minimize the effects and keep your organization safe.

Power outages are more than an inconvenience. They can disrupt communications, cut off access to transportation, close gas stations and grocery stores, cause food spoilage and water contamination, and prevent the use of life-saving medical devices. The frequency and duration of power outages vary by region, but in some cases, after a natural disaster, outages can go on [for a week or more](#). In 2018, the average duration of a power outage for U.S. electricity customers was nearly six hours, according to [the U.S. Energy Information Administration](#).

While the timing and severity of natural disasters are unpredictable, [understanding your region's disaster history](#) can help your organization prepare. Natural disasters are reoccurring and share common traits your organization can address through the [four phases of emergency management](#): mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

This resource covers each phase and discusses some of the actions you can take to reduce the effects of extended power outages on your organization.

Mitigation

This phase aims to prevent or reduce the impact of extended power outages caused by natural disasters.

- Invest in a generator or an additional backup generator. Evaluate the return on investment based on your region's history of natural disasters and power outages. Make sure generators are in good operating condition by regularly checking fuel levels and stirring tanks.

- Ensure attics and crawl spaces are properly insulated to [prevent pipes from bursting](#) when heating systems are offline during severe cold snaps.
- Inspect mechanical equipment areas to make sure they're well vented in times of extreme heat.
- Conduct routine and preventative maintenance on all equipment, including generators, boilers, alarm systems, and emergency lighting.
- Maintain a supply of scrap lumber and plywood to secure your property.
- Keep equipment on hand to deal with [water remediation](#).

Preparedness

This phase includes planning and training for power outage events you cannot mitigate.

- Develop your organization's business continuity plan to ensure operations continue with little or no impact.
 - If you don't have a business continuity plan, you can create one [using our custom tool](#) (please note, you must have an HAI Group member login to access this tool).
 - Your plan will need to address all back-of-house functions, such as data backup and payroll, cybersecurity, and the handling of confidential information. Evaluate what operations will need alternate processes and how employees will use manual procedures and paper files for backup.
- Develop emergency action plans for your organization.
 - Plans should address how staff members receive instruction on what to do and where to go in the event of an evacuation.
 - Include a resource list of state and federal agencies, non-profit resources, emergency responders, hospitals, and utility companies.
 - Designate warming and cooling centers.
 - Maintain a supply of batteries, flashlights, bottled water, and portable battery-powered radios. Keep mobile phones and other electric equipment charged and gas tanks full.
 - Ensure first-aid kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies are well stocked.
 - Sign up for local alerts and warning systems to monitor weather reports.
- Train employees on the proper use of your organization's [generators or portable power sources](#).
 - Incorrect use of a generator or portable power source can lead to [carbon monoxide poisoning](#) from engine exhaust, electric shock, electrocution, or fire.
- Enhance cybersecurity measures to secure sensitive data.
- Test out your plans by holding tabletop exercises or conducting evacuation and process drills.



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Response

The response phase occurs once a natural disaster is imminent in your area or disrupts your operations. A power outage may be one of several emergencies, which is why the preparedness phase is crucial. During this phase, you will need to put your plans into action.

- Execute your organization's disaster response plans.
- Respond to emergency maintenance issues and priority work orders to secure buildings.
- Assist residents with cleanup efforts and taking action to protect employees and residents.
- Post resources so they're visible and available to residents.
- Test water supplies and address any resident concerns about water safety.

Recovery

During the recovery phase, restoration efforts run concurrently with regular operations. Since the recovery period may be prolonged, you can break it down into immediate and long-term actions.

As part of your immediate recovery efforts:

- Stay in touch with local authorities and await any special instructions.
 - Be aware that emergency hotlines may be backed up due to high call volume.
 - If your property was part of a mandatory evacuation, don't return until approved by authorities. Once approved, execute return procedures for staff and residents. If feasible, engage with residents through video or phone calls to provide updates on the property.
 - Stay clear of downed power lines and debris.
- Document any damage to your property with photographs to assist in filing an insurance claim.



As part of your long-term recovery efforts:

- Take action to reduce your organization's vulnerability to future power outages.
- Develop plans to incorporate the use of portable power sources.
- Recover data lost during extended power outages and eliminate existing loopholes.

Your organization serves an essential role in your community by protecting residents from the hazards that threaten their way of life. The goal of local emergency management programs is for the public to be as prepared as possible. Incorporating the principles of emergency management during power outages can aid in keeping employees and residents safe.

Contact our Risk Control Services Team

for more resources and answers to your housing organization's risk-related questions.

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