

## SAFETY

# OUTAGE PLANNING

for those who rely on medical equipment



Firelands Electric Cooperative cares deeply about the health and safety of the people in our community, and we realize that some of our members' health is dependent on having a steady supply of electricity.

As much as we would like to promise that power will always be available every moment of every day, unavoidable outages due to severe weather or a nearby vehicle accident could leave you without electricity. While Firelands' crews can often restore power quickly, the amount and extent of the damage could lead to an extended outage. We encourage all of our members — especially those with specific health needs — to have an emergency plan in place in the event of a power outage.

### Details to consider

- Talk with family and friends about what you would do if a prolonged power outage occurred. Do you have an alternative place to stay? Does your town or city have an emergency shelter?
- Many medical devices use electricity or are battery dependent, including breathing machines, power wheelchairs, oxygen, and home dialysis equipment. Read the instructions and talk to the equipment suppliers about backup power options.
- If your devices are battery operated, make sure you have extras on hand.
- Check backup batteries — unused rechargeable batteries need to be charged periodically. Portable battery packs can supply hours of backup energy, but only if they are kept fully charged.
- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about any medications that need to be refrigerated. If the power goes out, a refrigerator should hold its temperature for two to four hours, if you keep the door closed. However, it's essential that you and your family members know the requirements for your specific medications. Find out how long medication can be safely kept outside of the fridge and know how to quickly replace those that are no longer usable.

- Keep your cellphone charged so that you can call for help or be reached by someone else, in the case of an emergency.

### Backup generators

Consider whether your medical needs require investing in a generator for your home. Begin by identifying your basic electrical needs in the event of a power outage and calculating the number of watts you'll need. You may want a generator that produces enough for only the necessities, or you may want one with enough power for your entire home.

Standby generators are connected directly to your home's wiring and are typically powered by natural gas or propane. They will start automatically when the power goes out. An approved generator transfer switch, which keeps your generator separated from the electric co-op's power supply, must be installed by a professional. This is both a requirement of the National Electrical Code and to ensure the safety of the co-op's linemen, your family, and your home.

Portable generators are usually gas powered, can be moved around, and must be used outside the home. Make sure to keep enough fuel on hand to last at least 24 hours.

To safely operate your generator:

- Start the generator first, before connecting appliances.
- Operate your generator once a month for at least 10 minutes to ensure that it is running properly.
- Keep the generator where it will be easily accessible and weatherproof.
- Always place a portable generator outside of your home, away from windows and doors.

If you rely on health equipment that requires electricity, it's extremely important to work with your medical provider to develop an emergency power outage plan. If you have questions regarding power outages, you can also contact Firelands Electric at 1-800-533-8658.