A PRACTICAL GUIDE

# The First 72 Hours: No Power. No Water. No Hospital.

*A practical, printable plan for the first three days of a grid-down emergency*

Made by the Braxis machine

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

# What this is

This guide is for the reader.

It is a practical method, not a promise of a result. It contains no invented statistics, no fake customers, and no guarantees. The words were drafted with AI assistance.

Use the checklist at the end on a real piece of work this week.

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# Read this before the lights go out

An outage is not a survival movie. It is a list of small problems that become large when they are improvised: water, heat, medicine, light, a charged phone, a neighbour who needs help. This guide is a first-72-hours plan. It is not a prediction that the grid will fail, and it is not medical advice. It is a way to make the first three days calmer. Keep a paper copy where you can find it without a phone. The goal is not to be fearless. The goal is to know the next step. Sources and further reading: Ready.gov, CDC, American Red Cross, WHO, NFPA.

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# Water is the first deadline

Store at least one gallon of water per person per day for drinking and basic hygiene; Ready.gov recommends a three-day minimum, and a two-week supply if you have room. Pets need water too. Keep water in sealed food-grade containers, away from sunlight and chemicals, and rotate it. If you must treat water, follow current local guidance. Boiling is the most reliable household method: bring clear water to a rolling boil for one minute, then cool it covered (three minutes at high elevation, per CDC). Do not use a home-made chemical recipe for an infant, a pregnant person, or someone who is seriously ill. Packaged purification tablets and filters are easier to use correctly; follow their labels. Never drink flood water or water you cannot identify. Write the date on every stored container.

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# Power without carbon monoxide

Never run a generator, camp stove, charcoal grill, or fuel-burning heater inside a home, garage, basement, or attached porch. Carbon monoxide is invisible and can kill before anyone feels sick. Put a battery-powered CO alarm on your list. Use flashlights, not candles, for light. Charge phones and medical devices before the storm when warnings allow; keep charged power banks and spare batteries. If someone depends on a powered medical device, write the device, the power requirement, the backup plan, and the nearest place with power on one page. A generator is useful only when it is sized correctly, vented outside, and kept dry; never back-feed a home outlet. For food, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed: a closed refrigerator keeps food cold for about four hours, a full freezer longer. When in doubt, throw it out.

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# Food, cooking, and sanitation

Keep a three-day supply of food that needs no cooking: canned goods, nut butter, crackers, shelf-stable milk, dried fruit, and a manual can opener. Add a way to cook safely outdoors if you have one, and never use outdoor fuel indoors. Store one gallon of water per person per day for cleaning as well as drinking. For sanitation, line a bucket with a sturdy bag, keep a lid, and separate urine from solids if you can. Wash hands with soap and safe water; if water is short, use an alcohol-based hand rub after visible dirt is removed. Keep a small fire extinguisher within reach. Do not burn treated wood, plastic, or trash indoors. A week of simple meals you actually eat is better than a year of food you have never opened.

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# Medicine when the hospital is far

This is not a licence to practise medicine. It is a list of things to organise before care is far away. Keep a written medication list, allergies, doses, and prescriber phone numbers. Ask a clinician or pharmacist how to obtain a few extra days of essential medicine within the law; do not stop or change a prescription on your own. For a refrigerated medicine, know whether it can be kept cool with a cooler and ice packs and how long it remains usable. For minor wounds, the modern basics are still the best: wash your hands, irrigate a wound with clean running water, apply pressure to bleeding, cover it, and watch for spreading redness, heat, swelling, pus, or fever. Those are reasons to seek care urgently. For dehydration from vomiting or diarrhoea, commercial oral rehydration solution is preferred; follow the package or a clinician's instructions, especially for children, pregnancy, and frail adults. Historical remedies are not modern protocols. Do not use turpentine, kerosene, laudanum, dung poultices, or other old caustic remedies. Keep a first-aid kit, a thermometer, gloves, and a written plan for emergencies; call emergency services whenever they are reachable.

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# Heat, cold, and a safe room

Pick one room to heat or cool and close off the rest. In cold weather, use layers, blankets, hats, and dry socks; never bring a fuel-burning heater into a closed room. In heat, drink water, use shade and wet cloths, and move to a cooling centre if one is open. Check on older neighbours, people who live alone, and anyone with a medical condition. Keep a battery-powered radio for official updates; a phone may run out before the information does. Know how to open your garage door manually and where your water shut-off is. If you must leave, take the paper plan, medicines, water, and a phone charger. Tell someone where you are going. A household plan that everyone has practised is worth more than a cupboard of gear nobody can find.

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# Light, communication, and documents

Keep one flashlight per person, spare batteries, and a headlamp for hands-free work. A hand-crank or battery radio gives you news without the internet. Write down three contacts on paper: a local person, someone outside the area, and a meeting place. Keep copies of identification, insurance, prescriptions, and account numbers in a waterproof bag; a photograph on your phone is useful only while the phone works. Keep a small amount of cash in small bills. Charge what you can before an outage and turn off non-essential settings. Do not rely on a cloud document you cannot open. A paper list is not nostalgic; it is a backup that works in the dark.

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# The neighbourhood plan

The first 72 hours are local. Introduce yourself to the people on your street before anything happens. Make a short list of who has medical needs, who lives alone, who has a generator, who has tools, and who has a vehicle. Agree on a check-in time and a simple signal if phones fail. Share only what people consent to share. In an outage, check on the most vulnerable first. A neighbourhood that knows its own names needs less improvisation. Keep the plan small enough to fit on one page and review it twice a year.

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# The one-page drill

Once a season, run a two-hour drill: turn off the main water valve, unplug the router, and live on stored water and no power for two hours. Find the flashlights. Open the paper plan. Check the medication list. Walk to the meeting place. Then write down what failed. The drill is not about proving you are tough; it is about finding the missing can opener, the dead battery, and the phone number you never wrote down. Fix one thing and stop. A plan you have used once is more reliable than a perfect list you have never opened.

# What not to do

Do not run a generator or grill indoors. Do not drink flood water. Do not use a candle near curtains or oxygen. Do not take antibiotics without a prescription. Do not use historical or internet remedies as a substitute for urgent care. Do not spend money on a year of food you will not eat before you have three days of water and a working flashlight. Do not scare children with predictions; give them a job they can do. And do not wait for a perfect kit. The first useful step is a written plan and one gallon of water per person per day.

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# The first fifteen minutes

Check people first. Account for everyone in the household, then check the people next door who may need help. Do not touch downed wires; treat every wire as live. If you smell gas, leave the building and call the gas utility from outside. Turn off unnecessary lights and appliances so the system is not slammed when power returns, but leave one light on so you know when it does. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Fill the bathtub and any clean containers only if local officials say the water is safe; a filled tub is for washing and flushing, not drinking unless properly treated. Find the flashlights, the paper plan, the medication list, and the battery radio. Give everyone one job. The first fifteen minutes are for people and information, not for collecting gear.

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# Water sources and storage

Stored water is safer than found water. Use sealed, food-grade containers and rotate them. If you run low, the safest sources are capped wells, municipal water that has not been shut off, and packaged bottled water. Rain, streams, ponds, and flood water are not drinking water without treatment; they can carry bacteria, parasites, chemicals, and fuel. Do not assume a filter removes chemicals or salt. If you use a filter, follow its instructions and still have a backup method. Boiling is the simplest reliable disinfection when fuel is available. Store water in more than one place so a single leak or contamination does not take all of it. Label every container with the date and source. Keep a small amount of water for pets and for handwashing; hygiene water is not optional.

# Sanitation and waste

Assume the sewer may stop working. Keep a bucket, sturdy bags, toilet paper, soap, and a way to cover waste. A lined bucket with a lid is a temporary toilet. Keep urine and solids separate when you can, and keep the bucket away from food and sleeping areas. Wash hands after every use. If water is limited, use an alcohol-based hand rub after visible dirt is removed. Do not put chemical disinfectants into a bucket with waste; they can create dangerous fumes. Keep garbage covered and away from animals. If the toilet still flushes, flush only when necessary and never pour grease or chemicals into the drain. Plan for pets and for anyone with limited mobility. Sanitation is one of the first things people improvise badly, and one of the easiest to prepare for.

# If you must leave

Leave earlier than feels necessary if officials issue an evacuation order or if the house is unsafe. Take the paper plan, medications, water, identification, cash, chargers, and a change of clothes. Tell a contact where you are going and which route you are taking. Keep the fuel tank at least half full when warnings begin. Do not drive through moving water; a foot of water can move a car. If you have pets, take them with you and bring their food, water, and carrier. Lock the house, shut off utilities only if officials instruct you, and leave a note for anyone who checks on the home. A go bag is useful only if it is small enough to carry and you know where it is.

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# Pets, children, and people who need help

Pets need water, food, medication, and a carrier or leash. Keep a copy of vaccination records in the paper plan if you may need a shelter. Children do better with a job and a clear explanation than with frightening predictions; give them a flashlight, a comfort item, and a task they can finish. For anyone who is older, disabled, pregnant, or dependent on electricity or medical equipment, write the plan down and practise it. Ask a neighbour to be the backup check-in. Do not leave someone who cannot evacuate alone without a confirmed plan. A household plan that includes the most vulnerable person is the only plan that works.

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# Old medicine: what to ignore

History is useful for resourcefulness, not for treatment protocols. Many old remedies recorded in oral histories are dangerous: turpentine, kerosene, coal oil, laudanum, dung poultices, and saltpeter smoke should not be used. A remedy being old does not make it safe, and a remedy being natural does not make it safe. The reliable low-tech basics are unglamorous: clean hands, clean water, pressure on bleeding, covering a wound, fluids for dehydration, and rest. For anything that could be an infection, a broken bone, a pregnancy complication, chest pain, difficulty breathing, a severe allergic reaction, or a child who is very ill, seek professional care as soon as it is reachable. Do not give prescription medicine to someone it was not prescribed for.

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# Sources to check yourself

Ready.gov: build a kit and make a plan. CDC: water treatment and food safety. American Red Cross: first aid and emergency preparedness. WHO: oral rehydration guidance. NFPA: carbon-monoxide and generator safety. Local emergency management: cooling centres, shelters, and boil-water notices. A guide is a starting point; the official source and a clinician override it. If you are in immediate danger, call emergency services.

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# Checklist

☐ Water: one gallon per person per day, three days minimum; rotate and date containers
☐ Food: three days of no-cook food and a manual can opener
☐ Light: one flashlight or headlamp per person and spare batteries
☐ Power: charged power banks; generator only outdoors, never indoors or in a garage
☐ CO alarm: battery-powered, tested
☐ Medicine: written list, allergies, prescriber numbers, and a lawful extra supply plan
☐ First aid: gloves, dressings, thermometer, and a written emergency plan
☐ Communication: paper contacts, battery radio, meeting place
☐ Documents: waterproof copies and small bills
☐ Neighbours: one-page check-in list and a seasonal two-hour drill
☐ Never: generator/grill indoors, flood water, unprescribed antibiotics, caustic folk remedies
☐ Sources: Ready.gov, CDC water guidance, American Red Cross, WHO oral rehydration guidance, NFPA carbon-monoxide guidance

# Where this came from

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