

# Powered medical devices and disasters



This resource is to help you prepare for managing your powered medical devices during a power outage.

If losing power to your medical device would result in a **medical emergency**, go to a nearby hospital immediately if you lose power. If **it is not a medical emergency** and you just need power to charge your medical device, use all other options first. The hospital should be the last option for this circumstance.

Emergency services are often busy during disasters and power outages and may not always be available to help you, unless it is a life-threatening medical emergency. Make sure you have a backup plan before trying to call them (**unless it is a medical emergency**).

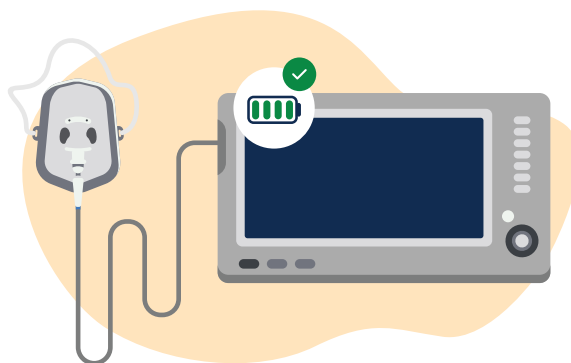
## Examples of powered medical devices that might be affected by a power outage

### ⚠️ LIFE THREATENING

- ✓ Respiratory ventilator for life support
- ✓ Home oxygen delivered via an oxygen concentrator
- ✓ Nebulisers (example – for asthma)
- ✓ Suction devices
- ✓ Intermittent peritoneal or kidney dialysis machine
- ✓ Infusion, insulin, and feeding pumps
- ✓ CPAP/BiPAP machines (depending on the severity of your condition)
- ✓ Phototherapy equipment
- ✓ Any other equipment that a registered medical practitioner certifies is required for life support, or a medical condition which requires continued supply of electricity and/or gas

### ⚠️ NOT IMMEDIATELY LIFE THREATENING

- ✓ Powered mobility devices and equipment (wheelchairs, scooters, hospital-grade beds, patient lifting devices)
- ✓ Vacuum assisted closure (VAC) dressings
- ✓ Some CPAP/APAP machines (depending on the severity of your condition)



## How can you prepare?

If you lost power at your home:

- Do you have any powered medical devices that you would not be able to use?
- If severe weather is predicted, is there a spare battery for your device you can charge?
- Do you have any back up options for accessing power? For example:
  - access to a generator
  - have a friend, family member or neighbour you could visit to charge your devices or stay with that does have power
  - another back up plan (for example, using an oxygen cylinder)
  - check your local disaster dashboard for information on where you may be able to charge devices:
    - there may be community spaces such as libraries open to help people charge their devices
    - evacuation centres are a last resort (before hospitals).
- Read the user manual or contact the manufacturer to find out if your medical device is compatible with batteries or a generator.
- Do you have your plan written down somewhere?
- Do you know who your electricity supplier is and how to check for supply/outage details on the internet or on the phone to find out when the power might be restored?

## Storm and disaster checklist for your powered medical devices

This checklist will help you to develop your own emergency plan so that you can use your powered medical devices if there is a power failure during storms and disasters.

### Get ready ahead of disaster season

#### Medical device specific

- I have advised my local electricity supplier that I am dependent on electricity for a medical device, as the electricity supplier may have a priority list of customers with special needs (such as [Energen Life Support](#)).

- I have tested the battery performance so that I understand how long my battery will last without power.

I have developed an emergency plan related to my powered medical device and:

- included the type of device, model type and serial number of this device in my plan (as above).
- my plan contains how the device works and how long a battery may last and what I will do if there is a power outage.
- I have dated my plan and am aware I should review it every 6 months.
- names and telephone numbers of neighbours/friends/relatives who could assist me are written on my plan.
- names and telephone numbers of support services I may require are written on my plan (for example: my electricity supplier, doctor or emergency services).
- I have labelled my device with my name, address, and phone number and attached simple and clear instruction cards for people who may help me in this time.
- I have engaged with my care team, relatives, neighbours and friends regarding this plan and ensured they know the location and what the plan involves in the case of a power outage (for example: plan is attached to my medical device and includes information about my oxygen flow rate).

Name:  
Address:  
Phone number:  
Date plan created:  
Medical device:  
Telephone numbers for contact in a power emergency:  
Emergency services: 000 (triple zero)  
Medical practitioner/GP:  
Name and contact number of friend, relative or neighbour:  
Electricity supplier:  
If a telephone is unavailable, my plan is:

## Get ready ahead of disaster season

### General preparedness

- I have signed up for weather/disaster alerts through my local council and the Bureau of Meteorology (app).
- I have a torch with spare batteries available for emergency use (for example: to read my plan and access my device if there is no power).
- I have a radio with spare batteries available for emergency use to hear electricity supply updates in my area.
- I regularly check my backup or alternative power equipment to ensure it will work during an emergency.
- I have ensured important documentation (medical device and personal) is stored in an easily accessible place in the event of evacuation.

## During disaster season

### Medical device specific

- I have fully charged my mobile phone, battery-powered medical devices, and backup power sources and prioritise this when a known event is expected, such as a cyclone.
- I have backup products to support my device such as bottled oxygen.
- I have planned assistance and evacuation during an event such as a power outage to ensure continuation of medical care with my medical device.
- I will limit my physical activity during a disaster event or power outage.
- In the event of a power outage, I have looked at my energy provider's website or called them regarding the expected downtime, noting I have a powered medical device.
- I will contact my support network (family, friends, neighbours) as needed.

## During disaster season

### General preparedness

- My emergency kit (torches, important documents, radio, batteries, shelf stable foods) is easily accessible and is full.
- Use torches and listen to radio for updates on power outage downtime and other disaster related updates that may be relevant.

### For more information

- ✓ Health Emergency Kit: [Health and safety during and after a disaster | Queensland Health](#)
- ✓ Get Ready Queensland: <https://www.getready.qld.gov.au/>
- ✓ Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS): [Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme | Queensland Health](#)
- ✓ Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness: [Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness - Queenslanders With Disability Network \(qdn.org.au\)](#)
- ✓ Your GP or specialist

