

# Blackouts



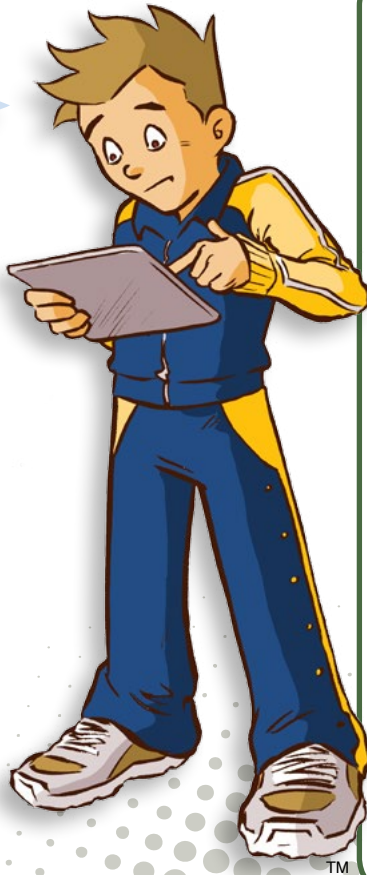
Blackouts are a loss of power to an area. They could be due to problems at power stations, damage to equipment, or the overuse of energy in a particular area – like during a heat wave if everyone runs an air conditioner on high all day and night. We don't realize how dependent we are on power until we are without it. Power affects the electricity we get in our homes, as well as the water supply and transportation systems – from traffic lights to airplanes.

## Am I at risk?

Blackouts can happen anywhere, and to anyone, which is why it is so important to have an emergency kit prepared at all times.

## Did you know?

A blackout on August 14, 2003 left 50 million people without power. That's roughly six times the size of New York City!



## FACT CHECK

- 1. True or False?** When the power goes out, water from the tap may not be safe to drink.
- Blackouts can happen when:
  - a. there is extreme weather like a snowstorm, hurricane, or thunder and lightning
  - b. there are high winds
  - c. utility companies intentionally shut down power to conserve energy
  - d. all of the above
- 3.** In a loss of power, why should you use flashlights instead of candles and wear warm clothes instead of burning coal or turning on your oven to stay warm? \_\_\_\_\_

(1) True. Water purification systems may not be working. Only bottled, boiled, or treated water is safe to drink.  
 (2) D, all of the above. C is called a rolling blackout.  
 (3) Because candles create a risk for home fires, and using an oven or burning coal indoors to stay warm can create dangerous and deadly fumes.

ANSWERS



For more facts and info on blackouts visit  
<http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/blackouts>  
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/needtoknow.asp>

# Blackouts

# Be Prepared

## BEFORE

- ✓ Build an emergency kit.
- ✓ Make a family communications plan.
- ✓ If you know a rolling blackout will occur, fill plastic containers with water and place them in your refrigerator and freezer. The chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold during a short power outage.

## DURING

- ✓ Don't open the fridge or freezer! You'll let out whatever cold air is inside and food will spoil more quickly.
- ✓ Leave one light on so that you'll know when the power comes back on.
- ✓ Only use flashlights, NOT candles. The flames from candles can lead to a bigger risk of fire.
- ✓ If it's very hot outside, try to stay cool by going to the lowest level of your home. Cool air falls, hot air rises. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing and drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- ✓ If it's very cold outside, wear many layers of warm clothing. Don't use your gas oven as a source of heat. The fumes could be dangerous. Try to find a place that has power and go there to stay warm.

## AFTER

- ✓ Don't eat any food that was in the refrigerator if you were without power for more than a day. Food could have spoiled and will make you sick.

### WORDS TO KNOW

**Electric Grid** The network that gets power from the power company to the consumer. It consists of power stations, transmission lines, and transformers.

**Energy Conservation** Using less energy by turning off lights or the TV, or walking, or biking instead of driving a car

**Rolling Blackout** When electric companies shut down power to an area for a certain amount of time in order to avoid a total blackout of the power system

