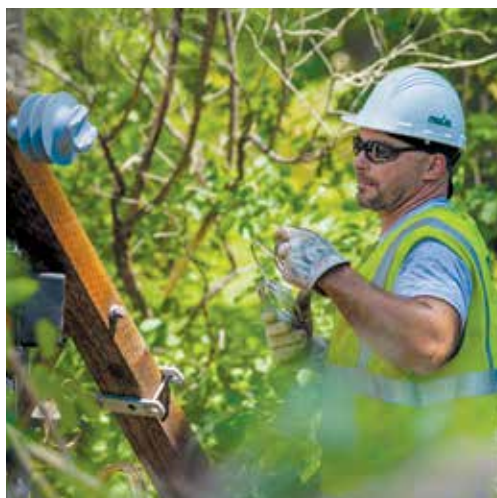


# energy emergency guide



## taking responsibility

As an individual, your efficient use of energy brings benefits such as lower bills, improved comfort levels in your home and a reduced personal impact on the environment.

Acting together, our individual choices add up—for the benefit of our community, our environment and our energy future. That's the power of working together.

As your community energy company, we are committed to sharing our experience and energy expertise. You can always contact us for:

- Answers to your energy questions.
- Energy efficiency information and advice.
- Help in evaluating energy-saving options.
- Assistance in finding energy-efficient products.

# Energy emergencies

Most power outages are caused by storms or accidents. Although these forces are beyond our control, we know you rely on electricity and natural gas—so we’re ready to respond quickly and safely. This booklet explains how we restore power and what you can expect during storm cleanup efforts. It details what you should do in a power outage or if you find a natural gas leak. For more information on how to stay safe indoors and out, visit [mge.com](http://mge.com) or call us at (608) 252-7117.

## Table of contents

Prepare now for a future major storm . . . . .	2
Steps you can take to respond to an outage . . . . .	3
For customers with special needs . . . . .	3
Connect to our outage map . . . . .	4
Using a generator . . . . .	6
How MGE restores power . . . . .	7
Cleaning up after a storm . . . . .	9
Food preservation . . . . .	10
Hot-weather outages . . . . .	12
Cold-weather outages . . . . .	13
Natural gas leaks . . . . .	15
Customer-owned natural gas pipes . . . . .	16
For more information . . . . .	18
Call us if your power is out . . . . .	18
Resources . . . . .	18

## Prepare now for a future major storm

- Create a family emergency plan. Know what you will do in an emergency and be sure everyone in the house knows too. Plan where you will meet in case you are separated.
- Assemble or store a disaster kit in your home emergency shelter. Include these items:
  - Water: Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.
  - Food: Three-day supply of nonperishable, high-energy food.
  - Tools: Can opener, paper plates, utensils, flashlight, batteries, cash, bleach.
  - First aid kit: Sufficient to care for minor injuries.
  - Battery-operated weather radio: To receive updates.
- Be sure to plan for your family pets. They'll need food and water too.
- If you require electricity for health care, be sure to have a backup emergency plan to meet your needs if electric service is interrupted.
- Make MGE's emergency number (608-252-7111) a contact in your cell phone so you won't have to look it up if the power goes out. We can only restore electric service for MGE electric customers. If you receive electric service from a different company, please call them when your power goes out.

### **If a storm watch is issued**

- Check flashlights and cell phones. Have extra batteries charged and ready if the storm causes power outages.
- A power outage may disrupt your water supply. Electricity to run municipal water pumps or individual well pumps may be disrupted. As a precaution, store water in plastic or glass containers for drinking and fill the bathtub with water for other uses.

## **If a storm warning is issued**

- Go to your place of shelter.
- Take your pets and cell phone with you.

## **Steps you can take to respond to an outage**

1. See if your neighbors' power is out:
  - If it is not, check your fuses or circuit breakers.
  - If it is, look out your windows for anything unusual like fallen wires or tree limbs on a line.
2. Call 252-7111, MGE's emergency number, to report a power outage, partial lighting in your home, a leaning power pole or a sparking or smoking transformer.
3. Stay away from downed power lines and transformer equipment.
4. Unplug sensitive electronic equipment and turn off light switches, air conditioners and dehumidifiers to help prevent overloads when power is restored.
5. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
6. If your power remains out after your neighbor has lights, call MGE.

## **For customers with special needs**

If you or someone in your household relies on life-support equipment, plan ahead and be prepared in case your power goes out.

### **Emergency planning**

- Call MGE at (608) 252-7222 if someone in your household requires electrical life-support equipment.
- Inform your nearest rescue, fire or other public safety service about your situation.

- Have a backup power supply available and know how to use it. MGE cannot provide portable generators or other backup equipment for customers.
- Know how long your backup power supply will last.
- Make arrangements ahead of time with friends or relatives to move to their home if your backup supply would not be adequate.

### **When the lights go out**

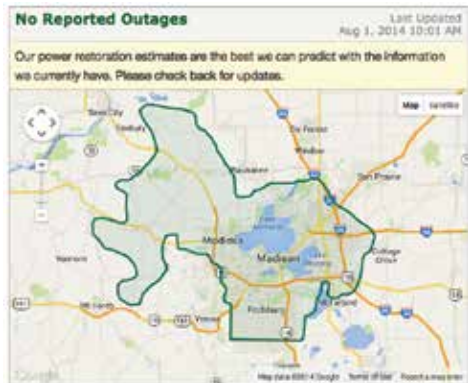
- Call MGE at (608) 252-7111 to report your electric power interruption.
- Explain your situation when you report an outage.
- Monitor the outage situation. If it looks like the power will not be restored before your backup power runs out, move to another location with electric service.

**If someone is in immediate danger, always call 911.**

### **Connect to our outage map**

Use your smart phone to connect to our outage map if you are without power.

The outages we show are the separate situations where problems with equipment or power lines are affecting customers in MGE’s electric service area. At the top of the map, we also show the total number of customers affected by all the outages.



If you are an electric customer of MGE, your power is out, and you do not see it reflected on the map, please call us at (608) 252-7111. We rely on you to let us know when your power is out. Your call helps us to more quickly and efficiently identify, isolate and repair the problem. We appreciate your patience as we work to restore your power as quickly and safely as possible.

If you are a gas-only customer of MGE, please note that although your address will appear (outside the green outline) on the map, MGE cannot restore your power because we do not supply your electric service. Please call your electric service provider when your lights go out.

- **Time First Reported:** The time when MGE received the first customer call alerting us to the individual outage.
- **Estimated Customers Affected:** The potential number of customers that could be affected by the problem, based on where we suspect the problem is.
- **Crew Assigned:**
  - **Yes:** Crew has been assigned and is working on site or traveling to the site.
  - **Pending:** We are aware of the situation and are still assessing it or waiting for necessary equipment or for a crew to become available to work on the problem.
- **Estimated Restoration:** Time by which we think we will have the repairs finished and your service restored.
  - **Pending:** We are aware of the situation and are still assessing it.
  - **See Message Above:** When there is a major outage, due to the complexity of the situation we do not have the ability to predict restoration times for individual outages. We will temporarily shut off the Estimated Restoration for each individual outage and instead publish a more global estimate immediately above the map.

## Estimate accuracy

We know accurate estimates of power restoration are important to you. Our estimates are the best we can predict with the information we have at the time. Please know we are working as quickly as is safely possible to restore power. Unexpected things happen that can change how quickly we are able to restore power. We will update our estimates when this happens.

## Using a generator

A generator can help during emergencies, but its safe use requires care and planning.



Gasoline-powered generators produce deadly carbon-monoxide fumes:

- Always run portable generators outside the house. Keep generators more than 20 feet from buildings, windows and doors.
- Never run generators in a garage even with the windows open.
- Keep generators well away from open windows—including neighbors' windows—so deadly exhaust does not enter the home.

Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring. Power from a generator connected to a home's wiring will "back feed" into utility lines, potentially severely injuring or killing a neighbor or utility crew working to restore service.

Either:

- Plug appliances directly into the generator's outlet.
- Use a heavy-duty extension cord rated for outdoor use to keep the generator safely outdoors. If the appliance has a three-prong plug, always use a three-prong extension cord.



- Follow the manufacturer’s recommendations for grounding the generator.

Or:

- Hire a licensed electrician to connect the generator to your house wiring using a UL-listed transfer switch. The transfer switch will safely prevent your generator from back feeding into utility lines, thus avoiding a safety hazard and preventing possible damage when utility power is restored.

## How MGE restores power

We realize that when you lose power, you want to know how quickly your service will be restored. Rest assured we are working as quickly as we safely can to put the power back on. On an average “blue sky day,” MGE has historically restored power within 2 hours or less.

All outage restoration follows a five-step process. In small incidents, these steps are often done by a single crew and can be accomplished very quickly. In major outages, however, several parts of the company become involved.

### **Step One: Assessment**

The first step of restoring service is always investigating the situation to understand what we are dealing with. We need to determine the extent of the damage, what repairs are needed and what resources—crews, trucks and equipment—will be required to fix it. In a large outage after a major storm or other emergency with so many situations to investigate, this assessment period may take 24 hours or more.

## **Step Two: Planning and prioritizing**

The second step is to plan and prioritize our restoration process. Every situation is different, but we follow a specific set of guidelines to determine the order of what gets fixed first.

MGE follows this order when restoring power:

1. Situations that could endanger public health and safety such as live, downed wires.
2. Vital public services—hospitals, police and fire departments, sewer and water facilities—that everyone needs.
3. Damage to a transmission line or substation that sends power into the distribution system.
4. Main distribution lines that feed the lines serving your neighborhood.
5. Overhead or underground lines on an individual street.
6. Service wire to a single home or business.

## **Step Three: Assembling and deploying resources**

Then we assemble the resources—collect equipment, load the trucks, assign the crews and provide instructions—and deploy them into the field.

## **Step Four: Restoration**

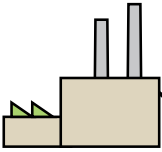
Once our crews are in the field, they provide updates to our Distribution Operations Center as they begin the physical restoration process.

## **Step Five: Evaluation**

After every major event we review what was done well and what could have been done better so when the next situation arises, we will improve our restoration process.

## How electricity flows to your home

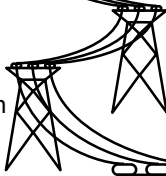
1) Electricity is produced at a power plant.



5) A transformer reduces the voltage to a level you can use. A service wire carries electricity to your home.

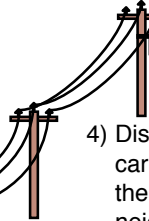


2) Transmission lines carry high-voltage electricity from a power plant to a substation.



3) A substation reduces the voltage for distribution lines.

4) Distribution lines carry electricity from the substation to your neighborhood.



*Note: A storm or accident that affects any part of the path to your home can cause an outage.*

## Cleaning up after a storm

High winds during a storm can severely damage trees near MGE's power lines and other equipment. Your home and other property may even be damaged. There are several important things to remember when cleaning up after a storm.

### Tree limbs

- MGE will remove tree limbs tangled with wires. Never try to do this yourself.
- You are responsible for cleaning up other fallen limbs from trees on your property.
- Always wait until MGE removes downed wires from the limbs and conditions are safe.

### Tree trimming

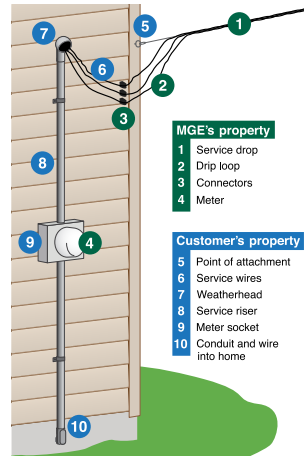
Tree-trimming crews must remove limbs and debris from damaged lines before MGE linemen can repair them. We have contracts with tree-trimming companies to do this work.

Tree-trimming crews cannot work on power lines or restore your service. However, it is critical that they clear debris from the lines so MGE crews can work on the power lines.

## Equipment on your house

You own some of the equipment that brings electricity into your house (see illustration). If any of these items are damaged, call an electrician to fix them immediately.

MGE crews cannot repair the equipment you own. However, these repairs must be done before our crews can restore your service.



## Food preservation



During a lengthy outage, you should take extra precautions to preserve food in your refrigerator and freezer. MGE is not responsible for any loss of food you might experience.

Here are basic tips for keeping food safe:

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
  - The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
  - A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
  - Buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot fully-stocked freezer cold for two days.

- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while it is still at safe temperatures, it's important that each item is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present is destroyed. However, if at any point the food was above 40°F for 2 hours or more—discard it.

### **Cold weather storage**

If outside temperatures are below 32°F, frozen foods may be stored outside or in an unheated garage. To store foods outside:

- Wrap frozen foods in new plastic garbage bags and store them in a container.
- Cover the container with several layers of newspapers or heavy blankets.
- Be sure food is protected from damage by animals, exhaust fumes and moisture.

### **Once power is restored**

You'll need to determine the safety of your food. Here's how:

- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40°F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 °F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours and the refrigerator door was kept shut. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40°F for two hours or more.

Keep in mind that perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked.

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Hot-weather outages

A lengthy outage in the summer requires you to take extra precautions to cope with the heat. Hot weather can place a dangerous strain on your body, especially your heart.

Prescription drugs for high blood pressure, nervousness, depression, poor circulation or insomnia may make you more vulnerable to the heat. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking medicine for any of these conditions.

### Ice

Bags of ice may be bought at grocery and convenience stores. Check under “Ice” in the yellow pages of your telephone directory for a list of places to buy larger quantities of ice or dry ice.

Remember, dry ice must be handled very carefully:

- Wear gloves.
- Use in a well-ventilated area.
- Follow other safety tips provided by the seller.

### Hyperthermia

As the temperature rises in your home, you may be at a higher risk for developing hyperthermia. This means that your body temperature has increased from being exposed to the heat.

The best way to prevent hyperthermia is to stay cool.

- Spend as much time as you can in cool areas: a cool room in your home, the library or a shopping mall.

- Close drapes and shades during the hottest part of the day to block the sun's rays.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight cotton or cotton-blend clothing.
- Drink plenty of nonalcoholic liquids.
- Take cool baths or showers or place wet towels on your body to cool it down. This provides more relief from the heat than cool air.
- Slow down. Physical activity produces body heat.

### **Signs of Hyperthermia**

- Headache
- Muscle cramps
- Weakness
- Profuse sweating
- Confusion
- Nausea

## **Cold-weather outages**

An extended power outage in the winter presents a challenge for coping with cold-weather conditions. Be prepared to take additional precautions.

### **Heat**

- A fireplace or wood stove provides the best source of heat in an emergency.
- Use camp stoves or LP heaters only with proper ventilation and safety precautions.
- Never use a charcoal or gas grill in your home.
- Never use a gas oven or range top for space heating.

### **Hypothermia**

If the temperature in your home drops below 70°F during an extended outage, you may be at a higher risk for developing hypothermia. This means that your body temperature has been lowered from being exposed to the cold.

You may be at special risk if you are 65 or older or if you have a medical condition that requires specific temperature settings. Check with your doctor.

The best way to prevent hypothermia is to stay warm:

- Wear several layers of clothes. Loose clothing is best because it traps more warm air around your body.
- Keep your clothes dry.
- If your hands and feet are cold, put on a hat. Your body will send more warm blood to your hands and feet.

Hypothermia may cause confusion. This often prevents people from recognizing the danger and seeking help. Some other symptoms are listed below.

### **Signs of Hypothermia**

- Shivering
- Cold, pale or blue-gray skin
- Lack of interest or concern (apathy)
- Poor judgment
- Mild unsteadiness in balance or walking
- Slurred speech
- Numb hands and fingers and problems performing tasks

### **Water (hot or cold weather outages)**

- If you have a private well, using water will drain your system and may result in losing the prime on your pump.
- If you have advance warning that a severe storm may hit, fill the bathtub with water for later use and store water in plastic or glass containers for drinking.
- Toilets can be flushed by pouring a bucket of water into the bowl.
- If it's extremely cold outside, turn on water faucets to trickle to prevent frozen or broken pipes, especially those on outside walls.



- If the temperature in your house drops below 40°F:
  - Collect water in clean containers to use for drinking and cleaning purposes.
  - Turn off the water main.
  - Open all faucets.
  - Drain sinks, tubs, toilets, sump pumps and floor drains.
  - Add antifreeze to standing water in toilets and floor drains.

If any pipes freeze, contact a qualified professional to thaw them. Never use a torch or open flame to thaw pipes.

## Natural gas leaks

Natural gas has a distinctive odor for your safety. If you smell natural gas, you should act immediately.

Here are some safety tips to remember.

### Indoors

If you smell a strong gas odor, follow these safety steps right away:

- Put out all open flames.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't light matches.
- Don't touch any electrical light or appliance switches.
- Don't use your phone; it may cause a spark.
- Leave the house and call MGE from a neighbor's home, away from the gas odor.
- Call 252-1111, MGE's gas leak emergency number, or 1-800-245-1123.
- Stay away from your house until you've been told that it's safe to return.

## Outdoors

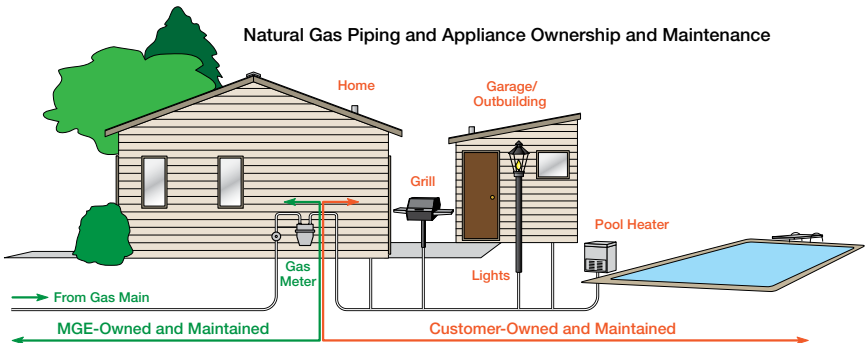
If you smell natural gas outdoors, call MGE immediately. We will locate the problem with gas detection equipment and make repairs.

If there is a major leak, such as one caused by a severe storm or contractors damaging a gas line, follow these steps:

- Call MGE immediately.
- Notify the police and fire departments.
- Warn others to stay away from the area of the apparent leak.
- Put out all open flames; don't smoke or light a match.
- Don't start any vehicle or electrical equipment near the area. Try to keep others from entering the area.
- If the escaping gas is burning, do not try to put out the fire.
- If you smell gas inside nearby buildings, follow the steps listed under "Indoors."

## Customer-owned natural gas pipes

While MGE owns and maintains the natural gas piping from the street to your meter, you are responsible for maintaining any natural gas lines from your meter to the point of use.



## **Customer-owned piping**

People using natural gas have pipes from the gas meter to the point of use. These lines may be above or below ground. For example:

- To a detached garage, shed or workshop.
- To a swimming pool heater, gas light or outdoor gas grill.
- Under some manufactured homes.

In all cases, customers are responsible for maintaining the gas line beyond the meter, NOT MGE.

## **Buried metal piping will corrode**

Natural gas pipes that are buried in the ground can leak and metal pipes deteriorate with age, causing a potentially dangerous situation. For safety's sake, have your gas pipes inspected periodically, and repair them as needed.

You can find a contractor who will help you locate your underground lines through the Diggers Hotline website. Please dig carefully, by hand, to avoid damaging the line.

Your plumbing or heating contractor can provide assistance with inspection and repair. MGE will be happy to discuss your situation with you.

## For more information

In the Madison area, call MGE at (608) 252-7222.

Elroy gas customers, call 1-800-887-8454.

Prairie du Chien gas customers, call 1-888-326-2417.

Viroqua gas customers, call 1-877-388-3139.

## Call us if your power is out

During an emergency, our call center may receive thousands of calls. When this happens, our automated voice response system provides additional support, taking your calls and providing you



with outage information.

If you get a busy signal,

it indicates that many outage calls are coming in.



## Resources

### Electrical Safety Foundation International

[esfi.org/index.cfm?event=homesafety&pid=10434](https://www.esfi.org/index.cfm?event=homesafety&pid=10434)

### Dane County Emergency Management

[countyofdane.com/emergency/](https://www.countyofdane.com/emergency/)

### American Red Cross Emergency Preparedness Checklists

[redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family](https://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family)

### Center for Disease Control-Generators

[cdc.gov/co/pdfs/generators.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/co/pdfs/generators.pdf)

## **listening. learning.**

MGE takes responsibility to provide information and education to serve our customers and stakeholders. We educate customers today to help inform their decision making. We educate tomorrow's stakeholders so they can help plan our energy future.

If your power is out, call us. Your calls are extremely important in helping our restoration team assess the extent of damage.


*Working together we can make a difference.*

Contact us for emergency service (24 hours):

- Gas odor/leaks 608-252-1111 or 800-245-1123.
- Lights out/other emergencies 608-252-7111 or 800-245-1123.

Get more energy information at:

- [mge.com/home](http://mge.com/home).
- Billing and general information 608-252-7222 or 800-245-1125.
- Home Energy Line 608-252-7117.
- Business Help Line 608-252-7007.

 printed on recycled paper



**your community energy company**