

Stay safe when winter storms cut your power

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(HealthDay)—With a major winter storm bearing down on most of the U.S. Northeast, making a plan to keep your family warm and safe if power is knocked out is crucial.

That's true for any kind of big weather event, one expert said.

"Preparing in advance is especially important as climate change causes more extreme weather," Dr. Carl Baum said in an American Academy of Pediatrics news release.

"If you are stuck without heat for an extended period of time, consider bringing children to a neighborhood warming house or shelter, and be sure to bring face masks to protect against COVID-19," said Baum, a professor of pediatrics at Yale School of Medicine.

Here are some of his other suggestions:

If you have a gas or propane generator, operate it well outside the house and garage, and away from windows and air intakes in order to [prevent carbon monoxide poisoning](#).

If you have a back-up gasoline generator, remember that gas station pumps may not be running if there is a widespread [power](#) failure. Generators that run on [natural gas](#) or propane may be able to switch on during a [power failure](#).

Never use your car, gas stove or barbecue as a source of heat if your home's power goes out. They can produce dangerous amounts of carbon dioxide.

In short-term power outages, wearing extra layers of clothing may help keep everyone warm. But if the power is out for a long stretch and you need to take the family to another location where there is heat, keep in mind that the [extreme weather](#) that caused the power outage may also make travel treacherous.

Prepare in advance for the possibility of having to leave your home.

Have a "go bag" ready in case you need to go somewhere in a hurry. It should contain essential items for yourself, your children and your pets, such as medications, food, infant formula, clothing, diapers, toiletries, flashlights and batteries.

Have a list of places where you can go. Friends, neighbors or neighborhood warming centers may have power when you don't. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you should bring face masks for anyone over the age of 2.

"Mother Nature has never been predictable, but we've learned over time that there are simple steps we can take to make life easier during a power outage," Baum said. "We encourage families to prepare as best as they can in advance."

More information: There's more on winter storm safety at the [American Red Cross](#).

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