

IUB Frequently Asked Questions

Storm Safety, Outages and Restoration

Updated August 19, 2020

Emergencies and Outage Information

Q1. How do I report a utility emergency?

A1. If the emergency is life threatening, call 911. Downed power lines, hanging wires and medical conditions should be reported to your utility company.

Some common utility emergency situations are:

- A downed power line or low-hanging wire
- Medical concern due to long-term loss of power
- Loss of purification systems causing water contamination
- Overheating due to loss of air conditioning
- Smell of “rotten eggs,” a hissing sound from an exposed pipe or blowing dirt.

Emergency contact information for investor-owned utilities:

MidAmerican Energy: (Electric - 800-799-4443, Gas - 800-595-5325) You may also use the [online form](#) to report an outage. (Phone numbers are for emergencies only)

Alliant Energy: (800-255-4268, select option for emergency); if you are a US Cellular customer, dial #2-5-5. If phones are down, use the [online form](#) to report an emergency.

Black Hills Energy: To report a gas leak, call 800-694-8989.

Liberty Gas: To report a gas leak, call 855-644-8134.

If you are serviced by a municipal utility, please call your local utility’s emergency line.

If you are serviced by a rural electric cooperative, please call your local utility’s emergency line.

Q2. My power is out; do I need to report my outage to the utility?

A2. If your power does go out and your house is the only one in your neighborhood affected, please call your utility’s main number if it is not an emergency. Utilities use varying technology that can often detect real-time outages.

Utility Contact Information:

- MidAmerican Energy: 888-427-5632
- Alliant Energy: 800-255-4268
- Black Hills Energy: 888-890-5554
- Liberty Utilities: 855-872-3242

Q3. How do I find the latest updates on when my power will be restored?

A3. The following maps provide updated outage information for investor-owned utilities and rural electric cooperatives:

[MidAmerican Energy Outage Website](#)

[Alliant Energy's Energy's Website](#)

[Rural Electric Cooperative Outage Website](#)

The IUB issued orders on August 14 and August 16, 2020, directing the affected utilities on how to file required electric power restoration information, which is available on the IUB website homepage [here](#).

Q4. How do I access emergency information if I don't have power?

A4. If you have a battery-powered radio, tune in to the major news providers:

1040 AM WHO Radio in Des Moines

600 AM WMT in Cedar Rapids

640 AM WOI in Ames

WSUI 940 AM in Iowa City

Safety

Q5. How do I know if damage to my home will prevent the utility from reconnecting electricity?

A5. If your meter set or service attachment has been damaged, call your utility company or an electrician for further examination of the damage.

These graphics, showing above-ground electric line connections to a residence, can help determine whether the utility or the homeowner is responsible for repairs:

MidAmerican Energy: [Your electric service connection](#)

Alliant Energy: [Who should repair which equipment?](#)

Q6. What are the next steps once I have observed damage to my meter?

A6. If you observe damage to your meter set, (i.e., triplex service down, bent or broken conduit, or meter set torn from the house) inform your utility service provider about the outage and damages. Your utility provider will have additional insight on what repairs are needed. You will need to contact an electrician to make the needed repairs. Your electrician is still required to obtain a permit through the process identified by your local city government's ordinance or policy. Prior to your electric inspection, confirm your meter set is repaired, by contacting your service provider to have the meter energized prior to an inspection. The meter set will still have to be inspected following any repairs.

If the homeowner is knowledgeable enough to fix the electric issue, they should seek a permit prior to beginning the work. Permit application processes can vary by location; review your local city website or public works department.

Q7. How do I find an electrician/How do I know an electrician is certified to make repairs?

A7. Your service provider may have a list of qualified electricians in your area. Many electricians listed in the phone directory will state whether they are licensed and/or insured. Ask an electrician to provide this information, and ask for credentials when they arrive.

You can also go to iowaelectrical.gov link: <https://iowadps.force.com/LicenseSearchPage> and search by name, city, or county.

Q8. What do I do if I cannot get an electrician to my home within the week?

A8. The Iowa Utilities Board is aware of this issue and a resource link will be added here as it is available.

Q9. What do I do once an electrician repairs the damage to the electric lines in my home?

A9. Once the repairs are completed, contact your utility company to request restoration of service (re-energizing the line).

Q10. Can I connect my home to a temporary source of power?

A10. Yes, you may use a temporary source of power, such as a portable generator, but it is imperative that connections are only performed by an electrical contractor. Generators should never be connected directly into the wiring system; an improper generator connection can cause severe injury, death or fire. Transfer equipment installed by a qualified electrician is required in all cases. It is not safe to connect a generator to the utility meter terminals, clothes dryer receptacle or range oven receptacle.

Generators also can pose a carbon monoxide hazard if they are not located correctly. Locate any generator away from doors, windows and other building openings as specified in the manufacturer's instructions. Do not use a portable generator indoors.

Q11. What safety precautions should I follow when using a generator?

A11. If you use a standby generator, make sure it has a manual or automatic transfer switch. This switch will isolate your home circuits from power lines. A generator that does not have a transfer switch can backfeed electricity into main power lines, causing a shock hazard for you and utility crews.

Never run a portable generator inside or near a building or in enclosed spaces such as a garage or basement. Generators produce high levels of carbon monoxide quickly; you cannot smell or see carbon monoxide and it can be deadly.

Q12. What can I do to keep myself safe during a power outage following a large storm?

A12. Call 911 immediately to report emergencies, including downed power lines or low-hanging wires. Follow these additional safety tips:

- Never touch downed, low-hanging lines or metal fences. Always assume power lines are energized. Report the location of any downed or low-hanging line to your utility company's emergency line.

- Never try to repair your own lines; the utility's trained crews will repair their lines and a certified electrician should repair equipment belonging to the property owner.
- Never pull tree limbs off power lines as they could be energized.
- Never go into areas with debris or downed trees. Power lines may be buried in the wreckage.
- Never connect portable generators to your household electrical wiring. Connect only essential appliances like freezers and refrigerators directly to a generator, and keep the generator outdoors.
- Turn off and unplug heat-producing appliances (irons, hair dryers/straighteners, coffee pots, etc.) to prevent fires, especially if you plan to leave home during an outage.
- Use a flashlight rather than candles because of the fire risk.
- Turn off all but one light so you will notice when electricity is restored.
- Unplug electrical devices (power strips, TVs, computers and other sensitive appliances) to avoid possible damage when the electricity comes back on.

Digging and Repairs

Q13. What is required to make repairs to my property that involve digging and ground work?

A13. Call 811 or visit IowaOneCall.com to request a utility locate before starting any excavation or cleanup work on tree roots, fence posts and foundation repairs. Even if exposed there may still be underground utilities that have been damaged and moved from their normal placement. If disturbed, these could cause additional emergency situations.

One Call laws are not suspended, especially following times of large devastation. Utility locations should be requested 48 hours in advance of digging work (excluding weekends and holidays).

Q14. Extensive areas of Iowa experienced storm damage including uprooted trees, fences, and even buildings. Is an 811 call required before doing any of that repair work?

A14. Yes, Iowa One Call laws require that you request a utility location by calling 811 or clicking IowaOneCall.com before disturbing the soil. Underground utilities may have become entangled by tree roots or rest against building foundations or fences.

Assistance

Q15. How do I find out more information about disaster assistance and local resources?

A15. Dial 211 or visit 211Iowa.org. You can also text your ZIP code to 898211 to reach 211.

211 is a free, comprehensive information and referral system for health and human service programs, community services, disaster services and governmental programs, operated in Iowa in partnership with United Way and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Q16. What assistance is available to help me pay my utility bills?

A16. You may [qualify](#) for emergency funding through LIHEAP, a federally funded program designed to assist low income customers with paying their utility bills. This program is administered through your local [community action agency](#).

Telephone

Q17. What can I do if I do not have landline telephone service?

A17. You can reach out to local authorities for assistance in connecting you with emergency communications resources in your community. If you have access to a cell phone or service, notify your provider directly. If you have a health condition that requires landline service and you are unable to reach your telephone provider, please contact the Iowa Utilities Board Customer Service staff at 877-565-4450.

Other

Q18. I reported storm damage to my utility but have not heard from them. What should I do?

A18. Utilities are working around the clock to restore power to Iowans. Given the unprecedented number of outages, utilities must prioritize needs. Continue with attempts to contact your utility; if you have internet access, you can report storm damage to Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management via this link: homelandsecurity.iowa.gov.