

# Preparing for a Power Outage

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The recent storms in Texas brought wide spread power outages, striking fast and unexpectedly, leaving businesses looking for answers. Often a result of extreme winter or other severe weather, a power outage can leave a workplace without the heat or lights on, and the impact can extend to employees' homes—and their personal safety.

Unfortunately, power outages can create challenges for communicating with employees, volunteers and vendors at a time when information is most critical, so it is important to prepare accordingly.

Here are some best practice tips you can use to prepare and plan for a power outage as well as other disasters.

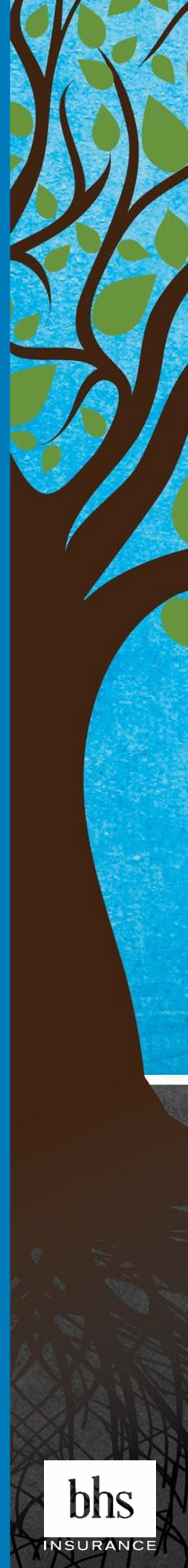
### **Create a Response or Crisis Management Team**

Responding to a crisis can require all hands on deck. Ideally, responsibilities can be shared by a ready team rather than lying with one person. A response team may be able to respond to power outages, in addition to other crises. This team does not need to be comprised purely of leadership, but rather can engage employees of all levels and all departments. This team can develop, execute and evaluate your institution's crisis response.

### **Create a Plan and Communicate With Employees**

In the event of a power outage, it's important to have a response ready for use. A plan should address topics such as:

- Identify risk factors that may cause damage to collections and property should a prolonged power outage occur.
- Freezing pipes will be a major concern. Open up outdoor spigots to flow any water out of pipes. Open faucets to slowly run water that will keep a continuous flow and avoid freezing.
- Shut off the water supply where possible.
- Have a supply of heat tape at the ready should you need to wrap around piping.
- Set up pre-arranged agreements with local vendors to deliver emergency generators to provide power for essential structures such as greenhouses and conservatories along with computer servers and communications.
- Determine how the decision will be made to close the garden and how to communicate the decision with the public as well as employees / volunteers.



Unfortunately, many employees may lack access to communication channels such as phone and email if they are impacted by power outages. Employees should be aware of policies and be prepared to respond, but employers should be proactive and communicate as early as possible. Employers should not wait until a crisis to ensure that employees are aware of any policies, plans, expectations and resources that address power outages and other crises. The best plans are tested before a crisis occurs.

### **Provide Resources to Employees**

While many employees may be well-equipped to navigate a power outage, others may lack information and safety best practices. Employees should be aware that personal safety should be their top priority during a power outage. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides [information](#) on what is important to know when power goes out unexpectedly.

Employers can educate employees on how to respond to a power outage, addressing topics such as:

- Gathering essentials
- Protecting a food supply
- Protecting a water supply
- Protecting essentials such as medications
- Conserving power
- Staying warm during extreme cold weather
- Avoiding hazards such as power lines and carbon monoxide

FEMA provides a useful information sheet for businesses and employees alike.

[BE PREPARED FOR A POWER OUTAGE \(ready.gov\)](#).

### **Workplace Safety**

- As power returns after an outage, workers may be at risk of electrical or traumatic injuries if they are in contact with or in proximity to power lines, electrical components and the moving parts of heavy machinery. The CDC provides [resources](#) on worker safety in a power outage, and recommends that employers and employees be aware of risks and take protective steps to prioritize safety.

Every public garden is different, and you should carefully evaluate and communicate how any changes will affect the garden and your staff. When preparing to navigate a power outage or other crisis, deliberate and thoughtful steps can help mitigate risks for employees and your institution.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

For more information, please call a member of the BHS Insurance Public Garden team at (800)350-7676

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