



Using Alternative Energy Sources: Keeping Your Family Safe.

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Extreme weather (blizzards, ice storms, lightning, etc.) and other unforeseen conditions can cause prolonged power outages. In these types of situations, people often look for alternative sources of power, light and heat (i.e., portable generators, candles, fireplaces and wood burning stoves). Albertans should take precautions and be aware of potential hazards associated with alternative energy sources.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Portable Generators

- Use the generator in a well-ventilated area (preferably outdoors), and
 - **do not** refuel indoors
 - **do not** refuel when the generator is hot or running
 - **do not** refuel near open flames and **do not smoke** when refuelling
- Store gasoline in approved containers, and
 - **do not** store gasoline in a dwelling unit
 - **do not** store more than 30L of gasoline in an attached garage or shed
 - **do not** store gasoline on exterior balconies
- Use an approved electrical transfer switch to connect electrical circuits to the generator.
- Use a qualified person for the electrical work.
- Obtain an electrical permit.

Alternative Heating

- **Never** use a gas range, barbecue or other portable gas appliance for space heating.
- **Never** bring a propane cylinder indoors.
- **Do not** burn charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal releases dangerous amounts of carbon monoxide.

Fireplaces and Wood Burning Stoves

- Burn small amounts of dry well-seasoned wood at frequent intervals. Large fires can set creosote (tar) in your chimney on fire. Fireplace and stove chimneys should be inspected and cleaned at least once a year.
- Don't burn paper, wrapping paper or pine boughs. This can cause sparks to drift out of your chimney and ignite your roof or a neighbour's house.
- Use a screen in front of the fireplace to keep sparks and embers in.
- Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids to light a fire as the vapours will explode.
- Get rid of ashes in a metal container and never store them in your home.
- Make sure the fire is out and embers won't re-kindle a fire before going to bed.

Candles

Remember a candle is an open flame. It can easily ignite any combustibles nearby.

- Avoid purchasing candles with flammable decorations such as paper spirals or foil.
- Mount candles firmly on metal or glass candleholders and place them in fire-resistant containers large enough to hold any melted wax.
- Keep lit candles away from paper decorations, curtains, clothing and spray from aerosol cans.
- Never let the candles burn down to the bottom.
- Never leave children or pets alone in a room with lit candles.
- Forbid children and teenagers from lighting candles in bedrooms where the open flame can easily start a fire or tempt misuse.

If you must use candles during power outages:

- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.
- Never use a candle for light when fuelling equipment such as a kerosene heater or lantern as the flame may ignite the fumes.
- Extinguish all candles when leaving the home or when going to sleep.

Flashlights and other lights generated by batteries are much safer light sources than candles. Lamps and lanterns used properly will also work well.

BE PREPARED

Smoke Alarms

- During a power outage wired in smoke alarms (required in homes built after 1977) requiring 110-volt power supply will be disabled. It is advisable to have smoke alarms with battery backup or additional smoke alarms that are battery operated.

Fire Escape Plan

- Draw a fire escape plan with participation from everyone in the household. Mark two exits from each room. Set a meeting place outside your home. Practice your fire escape plan.
- In case of a fire emergency, alert everyone in the household, get out of the building and call the fire department from a neighbour's phone.

Remember

Improper installation or operation of alternative power, light and heat sources can cause fires, shock, or exposure to carbon monoxide resulting in property losses, serious injury or death. Be aware of the potential hazards when using alternative energy sources.

Using an alternative energy source during an emergency can keep your family safe and warm if you follow the proper precautions.

For further information:

Alberta Municipal Affairs,
Safety Services
1-866-421-6929

Alberta Municipal Affairs,
Fire Commissioners Office
(780) 427-8392
(to call toll-free dial 310-0000 then 427-8392)

Or visit the Alberta Municipal Affairs web site at: <http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/>