The Outage Checklist.

Get your home ready for when things stop working.

Power. Signal. Payments. Water. The voice on the phone.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Print it. Fill it in by hand. Put it in the bag.

General preparedness information, not professional, medical, legal, or financial advice. Baseline kit items follow Ready.gov and the American Red Cross. Scenario claims follow public guidance from the FBI, FTC, FCC, and CISA.

Kit checklist, by scenario.

Tick what you already have. The rest is the shopping list. Weather still happens, so the basics are in here too.

01 · Power

The power goes out

- [ ] Crank and solar NOAA radio
- [ ] Headlamps and spare batteries
- [ ] Power banks, charged every 3 months
- [ ] Manual can opener

02 · Signal

Internet and cell go down

- [ ] Paper road atlas
- [ ] Two-way radios for the block
- [ ] Phone numbers written on paper
- [ ] A meeting place everyone knows

03 · Payments

Cards and banking stop working

- [ ] Cash in small bills
- [ ] Fireproof document bag
- [ ] Copies of IDs and insurance

04 · Voice

A scam call comes in

- [ ] A family safe word, said out loud
- [ ] The call-back rule (sheet 02)
- [ ] This packet in the bag, not only on a phone

05 · Information

Bad information spreads

- [ ] NOAA weather radio
- [ ] Printed list of trusted sources
- [ ] County alert signup, done today

06 · Accounts

You get locked out

- [ ] Two security keys per adult
- [ ] Encrypted USB backup of documents
- [ ] Recovery sheet: where the codes live, not the codes

07 · Supplies

Deliveries slow down

- [ ] Two weeks of food you already eat
- [ ] Stored water, dated (1 gallon per person per day)
- [ ] Buy one extra, use the oldest first

Any outage above can slow deliveries. Red Cross: 3 days of supplies to carry, 2 weeks at home.

Family safe-word protocol.

A voice can be copied. A word nobody wrote down can't. The FBI's advice is a secret word or phrase with your family.

SET IT UP

1. Pick a phrase. Three random words work. Not the dog's name.
2. Say it out loud to everyone who might call asking for help. Kids, parents, grandparents.
3. Don't text it. Don't post it. Don't write it anywhere a phone backup might copy it, except the line below, by hand, on this paper.
4. Agree on the rule: no word, no money.
5. Practice once every three months. One person asks. The other answers.

Safe word (write by hand) _____

Write it once, on this sheet, and put the sheet in the bag. Don't store the word in a notes app or a group chat.

WHEN A CALL FEELS WRONG

The call-back rule

The pattern is the tell, not the voice. Urgent. Secret. Pay in a way that can't be undone: wire, gift cards, or crypto.

1. Money, gift cards, crypto, or "keep this secret"? Slow down.
2. Ask for the safe word. No word, no money.
3. Hang up. Call back on the number you already have. Not the one that called you.
4. Can't reach them? Call someone else in the family.
5. Report it at ReportFraud.ftc.gov or ic3.gov.

Sources: FBI PSA I-120324-PSA (Dec 2024). FTC consumer alert on family-emergency scams. FCC guidance on grandparent scams.

Offline contacts, cash, and documents.

When the phone dies, the contacts list goes with it. Write numbers by hand.

HOUSEHOLD AND MEETING PLACES

Person 1 _____

Person 2 _____

Person 3 _____

Person 4 _____

Meet near home _____

Meet outside the neighborhood _____

Out-of-area contact _____

Their number _____

Doctor / pharmacy _____

Vet _____

CASH AND DOCUMENTS

- [ ] Cash in small bills, enough for a few days of food, fuel, and a room
- [ ] Amount decided, and where it lives: _____
- [ ] Copies of IDs (driver's license or passport)
- [ ] Insurance cards and policy numbers
- [ ] Birth certificates or copies, if you keep them
- [ ] Encrypted USB with scans, in the bag
- [ ] Fireproof bag or a known box for the paper copies
- [ ] Spare glasses or contacts, and a written prescription if you have it

WHERE RECOVERY CODES LIVE (NOT THE CODES)

ACCOUNT	WHERE THE RECOVERY CODES LIVE	SECURITY KEY?
Email		
Bank		
Phone carrier		
Password manager		
Apple / Google		
Insurance		

Location of codes only. Never the passwords themselves.

Refresh schedule.

Kits go stale. Water needs rotating. Food bars expire. Batteries drain. Kids grow. Write the dates, or get free email reminders at nosignalkit.com/refresh.html. The builder can also give you a calendar file.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO	NEXT DATE
Every 3 months	Safe word drill. Ask one person, out loud. Not by text.	
Every 3 months	Charge power banks and device batteries. Test the crank radio.	
Every 6 months	Rotate stored water. Write the new date on the jugs.	
Every year	Replace expired food and first aid. Refresh meds. Update documents on the USB drive.	
When the household changes	Rebuild the list. New people, pets, prescriptions, or a move.	
Before your local season	Hurricanes, wildfire, or winter. Recheck the bag and the plan.	

TEN MINUTES TODAY, NO SHOPPING

- [ ] Sign up for your county's emergency alerts
- [ ] Find the water and gas shutoffs
- [ ] Write three phone numbers on this sheet
- [ ] Pick a meeting place outside the neighborhood
- [ ] Say the safe word at dinner
- [ ] Put this packet in the bag

TRUSTED SOURCES, FOR WHEN THE FEED IS LOUD

NOAA weather radio channel _____

Local AM news station _____

County emergency page _____

Official sites ready.gov, weather.gov, your county emergency page

Build your kit free at nosignalkit.com.