

## Help and assistance

Major storms and cyclones can cause widespread power outages, leaving Aucklanders facing days without essential household needs. This is distressing, stressful and can be lonely and frightening for vulnerable or isolated households. We've put together some useful information on how to cope during a power outage and who to contact for help.

Remember, you are not alone, there are many people to help you or provide advice.

## Let's help each other out

Think about visiting neighbours, friends and family that could need your help.

Perhaps take some comfort items with you, like a thermos of hot water for tea and coffee, hot water bottles and extra blankets, a camp stove and fresh food, spare batteries for torches and radios, and an alternative power source to charge a mobile phone.

If you are concerned about a neighbour, friend or loved one, let one of the support agencies in this brochure know and we'll see what we can do to help.

## Heating, lighting and cooking

It may be summer right now but home heating is still a consideration for some people. DON'T be tempted to use unsafe ways to heat your home. Only use fireplaces that have been safety checked, follow the manufacturer's advice when using gas heaters, NEVER use outdoor gas heaters inside or try to use your BBQ for heating.

DO boil water on your camp stove or BBQ for hot water bottles, wear extra layers of clothing and use extra blankets, close internal doors and curtains to retain heat.

Use camp stoves in well-ventilated places and make sure food is cooked thoroughly before eating.

Take care with candles or use battery-powered lanterns or torches instead, to prevent fire risk.

If using a generator, ensure you have enough fuel to keep it going.

## Contact us

### Auckland Emergency Management

For help with urgent accommodation and welfare needs, and urgent flooding issues (building and infrastructure) phone us on **0800 22 22 00** or visit [aem.govt.nz](http://aem.govt.nz).

 @aklcdem  @AucklandCEM

### Auckland Council

To report trees down on public land or problems with council-owned assets or infrastructure, visit [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) and log your issue with our **Report a Problem tool**, or phone us on **09 301 0101**.

### Ministry of Social Development

For financial assistance, Civil Defence payments and accommodation advice phone **0800 400 100**.

### Lifeline and counselling

Phone or free text any time for support from a trained counsellor on **0800 543 354** or text **4357**.

**Or Need to talk? Free call or free text 1737.**

### Healthline

Are you feeling unwell but not sure whether to see a doctor? Do you need advice about a friend or family member who is sick? Healthline nurses can help at any time on **0800 611 116**.

**If life or property is at risk, phone 111.**



Auckland region floods and Cyclone Gabrielle

## Helping you cope during a power outage

February 2023



## Medical help and advice

Contact your GP if you're concerned about health issues. Contact your health provider if you need support like home support services, including those you currently receive.

If you rely on electricity for medical devices, like oxygen and dialysis equipment, stay in touch with your health provider and your electricity provider and arrange a back-up power supply or contingency plan.

## Hot water

Electric hot water in some parts of Auckland is on a separate network of lines to electricity. This means some people may have power but no hot water. If your power has been restored but you have no hot water, phone your power company.

## Toilet facilities and drinking water

If you rely on electricity to flush your toilet and don't have toilet facilities or drinking water, phone us on **0800 22 22 00** to see if we can help.

## Animal welfare

Pets are just as likely to become unwell by consuming unsafe food. If you are disposing of food due to a power outage and it is not safe for you to eat, it's not safe for your pets to eat. If you are boiling water to drink, do the same for your pets.

If your stock drinking water supply is reliant on power to fill troughs, you will need to keep an eye on stock water levels to ensure it doesn't run out.

## Security and crime prevention

Unfortunately, emergency situations can also prompt criminal activity. Check that neighbour's properties are secure and remember, if you see anyone committing a crime or behaving suspiciously, phone **111** and report it to Police.

If they are in a vehicle, write down the number plate, vehicle description and any other information. DO NOT put yourself in harm's way.

If it is not an immediate emergency, you can contact Police on **105** or report the incident online at [police.govt.nz/use-105](https://www.police.govt.nz/use-105).

## Staying up to date and in touch

Listen to the radio for up-to-date news and advice. If you don't have a battery-operated radio, perhaps listen in your car. Conserve phone battery, limit mobile phone calls and data use (which drains your battery). Follow us on Facebook and Twitter (see over) and visit [aem.org.nz](https://www.aem.org.nz) for information.

## Use local community facilities

Drop into your local library or community hub to charge your phone. Libraries also have free Wi-Fi and a warm place to sit. Auckland Council leisure centres may offer hot showers. Be aware that these sites may also be affected by the storm and have to closed or be used as welfare centres too.

## On the roads

Limit travel where possible during cyclone and storm conditions. Never drive through flood waters and check roads are open before you set out. If you're driving and traffic lights are out, remember to follow the road code and give way rules.

## Financial and housing assistance

The Ministry of Social Development may be able to help with urgent or unexpected costs like petrol, food or furniture, living expenses like medical costs, house repairs or maintenance, appliance replacement, bedding, food, rent and power bills. You don't have to be on a benefit. Phone **0800 400 100** to discuss your situation.

## Insurance

Many insurers cover food spoilage (as a result of power outage) and may also cover temporary accommodation if you can't stay at home. Check your policy, phone your insurer and take photos of the items you're claiming for – even spoiled food.

## Food safety and illness prevention

Take care with food from your fridge and freezer to avoid food poisoning and manage spoilage issues. After more than two days without power, perishable foods may not be safe to eat.

- Throw out rotten or contaminated food quickly so it doesn't spoil other food in the fridge.
- You can still eat raw vegetables, cheese and bread.
- Dispose of food from the freezer which has thawed and been at room temperature for two hours or more.
- When the power comes back on, do not refreeze (and use) defrosted food.
- If frozen food has ice crystals and packaging intact, it can be refrozen.
- If you're unsure, look closer and smell, if the colour has changed, it has a slimy texture or smells off, it probably is.
- If you eat food that has gone off, you can risk infection from Salmonella, Campylobacter and a range of food poisoning bacteria.

Managing hygiene around food preparation and cooking requires more thought than normal.

- Always wash and dry your hands before preparing food. If water is in short supply, keep some in a bowl with disinfectant.
- Ensure all utensils are clean before use.
- Cook food thoroughly.

## Water supply

Auckland's water network is very resilient however if it is affected by storm damage, follow advice from Watercare ([water.co.nz](https://www.water.co.nz)). If you're on tank supply and need help, phone AEM on **0800 22 22 00**.

