

Power outages can and will occur unexpectedly. For most folks, a power outage is an inconvenience. For a person relying on electricity to power a life support system, it can be an emergency. The Kingman area emergency planners identified the need for education and support from citizens who are reliant on home oxygen.

If you have life support systems which rely on electrical power, you should have an emergency plan to follow when there is a power outage. If you are dependent on supplementary oxygen and you don't have such a plan, here are some suggestions.

1. Contact your power company and tell them you are oxygen dependent. Register with them. Ask what kinds of services you can expect during an outage? Will your home receive priority service? Will you be informed frequently about repair progress? If the outage is long, will you be provided with a generator? Ask them what the average frequency and length of power outages is in your area and what you should do to prepare for them. You might not receive assistance from emergency services depending on the situation. Your best path is to plan and have your own resources for such emergencies.

2. Contact your oxygen provider and ask it how much oxygen it needs to place in your home so that oxygen flow is uninterrupted, even during a power outage or snow emergency. This length of time is dependent on a number of factors, including how easy it is to get to your home. Remember, it is the obligation of your oxygen provider to keep you supplied, during emergencies. Ask them what their plan is during times of crisis to keep you supplied with oxygen.

Your oxygen provider may set up one or more large compressed oxygen cylinders in your home for emergency use. These cylinders may consist of an M, M60, M90, MM, or H. Running continuously at 2 Lpm, these cylinders will last 11, 14, 20, 55, and 55 hours, respectively (double the time if you are on 1 Lpm or halve it if you are on 4 Lpm.). If you receive regular deliveries of liquid oxygen, your provider may choose to set up additional reservoirs, topping them off periodically. The reservoirs will probably be 30Ls which will last the 2 Lpm user about 200 hours. When the concentrator stops, you will need someone else to switch you over to the emergency oxygen. Train that person Now.

You will want to know how long the cylinders last. Have your oxygen provider label the cylinders now with the number of minutes each will last at your flow rate. The Kingman Fire Department recommends a minimum of 48 hours of back up oxygen supplies.

3. If you are remotely located or are in an area where there

are frequent or long-lasting outages, perhaps you should consider purchasing and installing a generator.

Preparing in advance requires additional effort on your part. You will be glad you did it when the power goes out. Remember, no one knows how long an outage will last, perhaps for hours or days. Immediately call your power company and register the outage. They do not know you have lost power unless you tell them. So your oxygen provider can better plan emergency deliveries, call and tell them how much oxygen you have on hand.

Please visit the FEMA website for more information on disaster preparedness.