

FCC/FEMA Tips for Communicating During an Emergency

Preparing for an emergency:

1. **Know what type of landline telephone service you have.** Some newer forms of telephone service will not work without electric power. Understand whether you have this newer type of service, such as Voice over IP (VoIP), which is provided over broadband connections, or more traditional telephone service, which typically is powered over copper telephone lines. Ask your service provider if you are unsure.
 - **If you have newer telephone service** that works with battery backup equipment during power outages, test the battery periodically, understand how long it should last, learn how to replace it, and consider having a spare battery that you can charge before a storm. If you do not have battery backup equipment, ask your provider if they can supply it or if it is available elsewhere.
 - If your electricity goes out and you don't need to use the phone right away, you can disconnect the battery to prevent it from draining and plug it back in when you need to receive or make calls. Once power is restored, plug the battery back in so it can recharge.
 - **If you have traditional telephone service**, it may work during electric power outages – but you may need to use a "corded" phone. Remember that many cordless home phones rely on electric power to operate.
2. **Charge your wireless phone if a storm is coming.** Also consider keeping an extra battery and a car charger on hand.
3. **Charge your laptop or tablet computer if a storm is coming.** If your electricity goes out but secure WiFi is available in your community, you may be able to use your computer or tablet to go online and send emails. You may also be able to use the battery power in these devices to recharge your wireless phone using a USB cable, but be careful not to drain the battery power of your computer or tablet if you need to go online.
4. **Broadcasters are an important source of news during emergencies**, so consider keeping a battery-operated, solar-powered, or hand-crank-operated radio or portable television for use during power outages. Make sure you have charged or fresh batteries if needed. Some hand-cranked radios can also be used to charge cell phones, but check the instruction manual before assuming this is the case.

During an emergency:

5. **Limit non-emergency phone calls.** This will minimize network congestion, free up "space" on the network for emergency communications, and conserve battery power if you are using a wireless phone. If you do need to make a call, try to keep it brief and only convey vital information to emergency personnel and/or family.
6. **For non-emergencies, try text messaging from your wireless phone.** In many cases, text messages to other wireless devices will go through when your call may not, though there may be

a delivery delay during times of network congestion. (In most locations you cannot send a text message to 911, however.)

7. **Adjust your wireless phone.** Check your wireless device or manual for ways to conserve battery power, such as dimming the brightness of your display screen and disabling certain applications. If you have difficulty accessing your wireless network, consider connecting to WiFi service if your phone is WiFi-capable. If the wireless network in your area is damaged and you do not see any signal bars on your phone, consider turning your phone off to prevent the battery from draining as your phone seeks a usable wireless signal.
8. **Call 911 only for emergencies.** Learn and use the designated number in your state for highway accidents or other non-life-threatening incidents.
9. **Wait 10 seconds before redialing a call.** Redialing a wireless call multiple times in quick succession can increase network congestion, further limiting the ability of all users to place calls. If you must make a call, space out your call attempts.
10. **If you have call forwarding on a landline phone at home, consider forwarding those calls to your wireless number,** particularly in the event of an evacuation, so that you can continue to receive incoming calls to your home telephone number; and
11. **If you do not have electric power in your home and are using your car to charge wireless phones or listen to news on the car radio, be careful.** Don't try to reach your car if it is not safe to do so, and remain vigilant about carbon monoxide emissions from your car, especially if it is in a closed space.

Find more information at www.ready.gov, <http://www.redcross.org>, or www.fema.gov.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at www.fcc.gov/consumers.

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