



People you know. Service you trust.

N30 W5926 Lincoln Blvd., P.O. Box 767, Cedarburg, Wisconsin 53012-0767
Phone (262) 375-7650, Fax (262) 375-7655, E-Mail cedarburgutility@wppisys.org

RE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY DURING POWER OUTAGES

Dear Customer:

The wind storm of May 21st came through Cedarburg with wind gusts near hurricane strength causing trees to bend, break and be thrown like twigs in unimaginable ways.

I was helping teach an elementary class on energy conservation and electrical safety when the storm hit. What happened is something the kids will probably never forget ... nor will I. We were just talking about what causes lights to blink on and off, when BAM, the room went black! We reassured the kids everything would be fine and quickly found a flashlight, but it couldn't have been more dramatic. I quickly left the school to help our crews figure out what had happened. This was the first time I ever saw horizontal rain or a tree thrown across the road right in front of me.

Three-quarters of the city was without power. Residents without power for their sump pumps, or with sump pumps that just couldn't handle all the water, were quickly in trouble. It was wonderful to see neighbors helping neighbors and all the emergency response, city and utility crews doing their best to get Cedarburg back on its feet.

No one, to our knowledge, was seriously hurt during or after the storm, but there are some lessons to be learned that we want to share with you, specifically in the area of electrical power.

Downed power lines and restoration of electrical power can present some seriously hazardous situations. Please read on for important safety information ... and pass it on to your family and friends.

Sincerely,

CEDARBURG LIGHT & WATER UTILITY

Dale A. Lythjohan, Manager

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DOWNED POWER LINES:

- ⊙ **STAY AWAY – not only from downed power lines but also from objects *touching* a downed line (like a fence, tree or other object).** Assume any downed wire is energized, as even a wire laying perfectly silent and still may have high voltage running through it.
 - ⊙ **Report downed lines to us at 376-7656 and if anyone is in imminent danger, also call 911. Let experienced response personnel handle the situation safely.**
 - ⊙ Whether you are a professional tree contractor or a neighbor helping a neighbor, stay clear of areas where there are downed power lines or tree branches in suspended power lines.
 - ⊙ If you are near a downed power line, or something touching a downed line, **DO NOT WALK OR RUN.** Why? Electricity travels through the ground in all directions. The voltage decreases the further you are away from the downed wire. If you walk or run, you could conduct electricity in one leg at one voltage into the other leg at another voltage. This could shock or kill you. **SO KEEP BOTH FEET ON THE GROUND AND SHUFFLE WITH YOUR LEGS CLOSE TOGETHER** as you move away from the downed line.
 - ⊙ Be aware that downed lines can be lying in puddles or flooded areas – stay away.
 - ⊙ Do not touch someone who is being shocked by a downed line – you could be killed.
 - ⊙ Visibility of potential electrical hazards can be difficult during the day, and even more so at night.
 - ⊙ **If a line falls on your car, drive away if you can. If you can't, stay inside until trained help arrives.** Avoid touching any metal parts inside or outside your vehicle. If anyone begins to approach, warn them to stay away and not to touch your car – they could be killed.
- If you absolutely have to get out because of a fire in your vehicle or other danger, JUMP out of the vehicle without touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Then shuffle with your legs close together to move away from the vehicle. If you have a young child or infant in the vehicle with you and you must get out, hold them tight to your body while you hop out of the vehicle. Again, do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time or you will become the electricity's path to the ground.

OUR RESPONSE:

- ⊙ In a situation like we had on May 21st, most people are very understanding of the serious nature and magnitude of the damage. Over 500 residents and businesses reported loss of power to our office. Some also reported specific damage that they had seen or heard affecting our electrical equipment. This was helpful as we diagnosed the primary causes of the outage. ***Please note: While these reports of damage were helpful, we don't encourage residents to go out looking for damage, as in most situations, it is best to remain inside your home when there might be downed power lines outside.***
- ⊙ You can be assured our crews will report responsibly to your call. Hazards and emergencies that jeopardize safety will be our top priority. Next, main power lines and major equipment will be repaired. Troubleshooting of secondary lines and equipment will follow. You can count on us to restore your power as quickly as possible. *On May 21st, we even activated our mutual aid and disaster plan by bringing in crews from Plymouth Utilities and Asplundh Tree Trimmers to help due to the extent of the damage.*
- ⊙ The wires and/or conduit running up and down out of the electric meter are owned by the property owner. If these wires and/or conduit have been damaged, the owner will need to have repairs made by a licensed electrician before we will be able to restore power.

WATER IN THE BASEMENT:

- ⊙ Assume water that is in contact with an electrical outlet or appliance is energized.
- ⊙ If you are wet, never touch electric cords, switches or appliances.
- ⊙ Stay out of a basement that has standing water unless you are certain the power has been disconnected and will remain disconnected until you have returned to a safe location. Keep in mind the fact that even if your home is temporarily without power, utility crews will be working to restore power. You must contact an electrician to physically terminate the connection of power to your home in order to ensure your safety.
- ⊙ Don't run extension cords through a wet basement.

SUMP PUMPS:

- ⊙ Will your sump pump work when the power is out? Will you be home to bail the water if the sump pump doesn't work or can't keep up with the volume of water coming in? Here is some information to help you through.
- ⊙ Although sump pumps can be purchased with battery backups, this is not necessarily a standard feature. Battery backups help to ensure your sump pump will operate during a power outage. The typical sump pump with a deep cycle battery backup should run on battery about eight continuous hours.
- ⊙ If your sump pump is inoperable and you have to bail or pump water from the crotch to keep your basement from flooding, it is best to dispose of the water outside, away from your foundation instead of dumping it down the floor drain or into a laundry tub. This will help eliminate the possibility of sanitary sewer backups as water from the floor drain and laundry tubs are directed to the sanitary sewer and an overload of this facility can result in sewer backups.

GENERATORS:

- ⊙ NEVER connect a portable generator to your home's wiring without a transfer switch, or it could feed electricity back into the power lines and seriously injure or kill you or utility workers.
- ⊙ Understand the capabilities of your generator. An overloaded generator can be hazardous.
- ⊙ Only operate generators outdoors.
- ⊙ Keep a supply of generator fuel and any other necessary supplies safely on hand.
- ⊙ Ask us for information that will help you operate your generator safely.

PLAN AHEAD:

- ⊙ Prepare an emergency kit including a battery-operated radio, alarm clock, flashlights, extra batteries, candles, matches, blankets, a corded telephone (cordless phones won't work without electricity), manual can opener, blankets, first-aid supplies and a supply of drinking water and non-perishable food.
- ⊙ Tell your children and caregivers where the emergency kit is stored and what to do in the event of a power outage or other emergency.

PROTECT ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT:

- ⊙ When weather conditions are right for a power outage, such as during a storm, unplug electrical equipment and appliances. This will avoid damage that can be caused by lightning, or from variations in the voltage that can occur when power is restored after an outage. Warning: Don't unplug electrical cords if you are wet or are standing in water unless you know the power is off and will remain off until you are in a safe place.
- ⊙ Protect electrical equipment from damage that can be caused by variation in voltage by purchasing surge protection devices that are adequate for the type of equipment being protected. Consider having a licensed electrician install a "whole-house" surge-protection device. Also consider purchasing a battery-backup system (uninterruptible power supply) for critical or sensitive equipment.

CRITICAL NEED FOR ELECTRICITY:

- ⊙ Please notify us if you have a critical medical need for electricity.
- ⊙ We keep a record of customers with life-saving or life-monitoring equipment that requires electricity. During outages, we will attempt to notify these customers of the status of power restoration. *Although we will work to restore power as quickly as possible, customers with critical, medical needs for electricity must develop an emergency plan and alternate power supply for essential equipment.*

Hopefully, a storm like the one that occurred on May 21st won't come our way again anytime soon, but this information will help you be prepared and stay safe in the event of weather-related and other types of power outages. If you have any questions, please feel free to give us a call at 375-7650 or e-mail us a cedarburgutility@wppisys.org.