

A large, stylized blue circular graphic that frames the central text. It has a thick blue border and a lighter blue gradient fill.

Being Prepared

How to...

Manage essential power or equipment failure

It is important that you have plans in place to ensure your child's safety in a non-medical emergency, such as a power cut.

Power company phone number: _____

My alternative power sources: _____

Manual equipment location: _____

If power is not connected by _____ minutes/hours, my child needs to go to:

Location option 1: _____ Phone: _____

Location option 2: _____ Phone: _____

Torch and spare battery location: _____

Equipment provider phone number: _____

Hospital phone number: _____

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Introduction and general advice

Having a child who is reliant on medical technology presents many challenges for your family. This booklet will help you think through the possible non-medical situations that might happen once your child is home. It will help you feel safe by guiding you as you think about your options and plan how best your family can deal with any of these situations, should they happen.

The things we have included are a general guide, but your child's individual needs and your home may be different.

1.0 General advice

Every family should spend time planning for a variety of emergencies. These include a power failure, equipment breakdowns (including transport), house fires, and civil emergencies (floods, earthquakes, etc). Because your child relies on medical technology, your family may need a different plan or extra support.

For general emergency advice, get in touch with:



Fire and Emergency NZ for advice on making your home fire safe

<https://fireandemergency.nz/at-home/>



Civil Defence NZ for advice on planning for civil emergencies

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/>



You will need to adapt the advice and plans they provide for your child.

2.0 Power failure

Electrical power can fail at home at any time and for a variety of reasons including:

- Deliberate disconnection (power company)
- Scheduled works
- Electrical fault in home
- Electrical fault in suburb/district

Recommendations:

1. **Secure power:**

- a. Consider where you live. Is the power reliable?
- b. Have your home's wiring checked. Don't overload circuits.
- c. Use only good quality power boards.
- d. Notify your power company that you have a child dependent on medical technology. Do not use metered or pre-paid electricity accounts.

2. **Monitoring:** If your child is dependent on powered medical technology (e.g. a ventilator) it is important to have some warning when the power fails during the day or night. A variety of 'power failure' alarms are available. These may be part of a device (e.g. ventilator alarms), external (an additional device), or use other equipment (e.g. a phone app). Your health team will help you plan how you will detect a power failure.

a. **Power failure apps:**

If you have a smartphone, power failure apps may be available. For example, PowerAid causes your device to alarm loudly if power fails while it is plugged into a wall charger (e.g. overnight).

3. **Backup power:** Depending on your child's needs and technology, backup power (internal or external batteries) may be appropriate. Your health team will advise you. Make sure you keep batteries charged and in good condition.

4. **Manual equipment:** Manual (non-powered) medical technology may also be provided (e.g. a manual ventilation bag, manual suction) as backups for both equipment and power failure. Your health team will advise you. It is good to be familiar with these items and know where they are in your house, and how to use them if needed in an emergency.

2.0 Power failure (continued)

5. Alternative sources of power: Depending on your child's needs and your living arrangements, you should plan where you can take them if power cannot be quickly restored. This may be a friend's home or the local hospital, for example. There may also be alternative power available to you, such as a car power jack or home generator.

6. Other: Have a torch with fresh batteries.

7. Make a plan!

3.0 Equipment

Children vary in how dependent they are on specific technology. Medical technology is generally reliable and well made, but it can fail, either spontaneously or due to poor care (e.g. being dropped). According to 'Murphy's Law', this will tend to happen at the worst possible moment.

To plan for what to do if you have equipment issues, you need to think about how dependent your child is on each of their devices and where/when you can get them fixed or replaced. Your health team will help advise you on this.

1. Think about what would happen if a device failed and how long your child could do without it. It may be that your child is totally dependent on some things, but they may be able to go quite a while without other devices. Include things such as lighting (e.g. a torch).
2. Then think about where and when replacement(s) could come from (e.g. the hospital/your equipment supplier). Ask your health team how quickly things can be replaced.
3. For items that your child cannot do without for even a short period, such as overnight, you will need backup equipment at home. For the most crucial devices, you need to carry backup equipment with you wherever you go.
4. There may be some devices that your child can do without for a reasonable period but replacing them takes so long that it is better to have backups at home.
5. You also need a plan for where you can go if your backup equipment plan fails or you can't get replacements quickly. This will likely be your local hospital.
6. **Make a plan!**

4.0 Other non-medical emergencies

4.1 Fire:

See the Fire and Emergency website for general advice on how to make your home safe and having a fire safety plan. <https://fireandemergency.nz/at-home/>

Think about how your child's health needs and technology requirements would affect them in an emergency.

- How would you get them out of the house? Mobility, exit route
 - Do they have any additional risks (e.g. oxygen)?
 - What do you need to take with them?

****Note: oxygen is 'flammable'; circuits and tubing are vulnerable to heat**

4.2 Car/chair breakdown:

- Cars and mobility aids can break down. Think about how this would affect your child and how you would manage it.
- Would you have enough power/backup for their medical technology?
- What alternative transport/power could you access (car power, nearby house, etc).

4.3 Civil Emergencies – earthquakes, floods, etc.

- See the Civil Defence website for general advice www.civildefence.govt.nz/
- Consider how you would manage this for your child.
- What supplies might you need?
- How would you manage a prolonged power outage?
- How would you evacuate your child if need be?

4.4 Theft:

- Unfortunately families with children dependent on medical technology can also be victims of theft (from your home, car, the hospital).
- Pay close attention to your bags and gear. Try not to leave equipment unsupervised (in cars, etc).
- Consider what you would do if specific items were stolen.

How to...

Know your backup plan for each device your child uses

Device / equipment	Power failure		Equipment failure	
	Battery	Manual	Backup	Replacement
<i>eg Ventilator</i>		<i>Manual bag</i>	<i>Manual bag (with me)</i> <i>Spare ventilator (nearby)</i>	<i>Hospital</i>

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