



# Ready for Anything

LIPA's Guide to Understanding  
Electric Outages and Emergency  
Preparedness



[www.lipower.org](http://www.lipower.org)

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## Resources for Emergency Preparedness

New York State Emergency Management Office

1-518-292-2200

[www.semo.state.ny.us](http://www.semo.state.ny.us)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

1-800-621-FEMA (3362)

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

1-800-BE-READY (1-800-237-3239)

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1-800-311-3435

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

U.S. Department of Energy

1-800-DIAL DOE (1-800-342-5363)

[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)

National Weather Service

[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)

American Red Cross

1-877-733-2767

[www.nyredcross.org](http://www.nyredcross.org)

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*LIPA maintenance programs, such as line clearance and state-of-the-art line monitoring, have resulted in the highest reliability ratings in New York State. Even so, Mother Nature and other events can cause power outages. Let us help to ensure the comfort and safety of your family during electric outages or other emergencies.*

## **How Does Electricity Get to My Home?**

Electricity travels to your home through a sophisticated network of power lines. These lines branch out from power plants and channel the flow of electricity to homes and businesses in the Long Island community.

## **What is a Power Outage?**

A power outage occurs anytime there is a loss of electricity, momentarily or for a longer period of time.

Studies show that the top four causes of power outages in our area are:

- Storms (lightning, high winds, ice, snow and rain)
- Trees and branches (contacting electric lines)
- Accidents (cars hitting poles)
- Equipment failure (from corrosion, wear and aging parts)

The protective relay equipment on our power lines works like the circuit breakers in your home and safely and automatically cuts off power.

Automatically shutting off the power means everyone who is fed electricity by that part of the network loses power. Once we locate the trouble spot, many customers' service can be restored, even as repairs are being completed.

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## What is a Momentary Interruption?

Many times contact with a power line only lasts a fraction of a second and our relay system automatically restarts the flow of electricity. This wasn't a concern to homeowners for many years, but today a split-second loss of power is sometimes just enough to affect sensitive digital equipment and home computers, televisions and other communication equipment. Clocks on microwaves, VCRs, DVD players etc., blink from time to time because they are sensitive enough to detect momentary power interruptions. Look for appliances that have a battery backup to prevent this inconvenience. Usually, these interruptions will not damage your sensitive equipment, however, it is a good idea to install surge suppression equipment to protect sensitive electronics such as computers, televisions and other communications equipment.

## How Does Weather Affect Power Lines?

Long Island is surrounded by water and has many wooded areas. Many of our established neighborhoods have large trees that were planted years – even decades – ago that now envelope the power lines. This puts our electric system at risk during storms and damage caused by falling branches and trees.

During late summer and early autumn, we face the full brunt of Atlantic-based hurricanes. From spring to fall, Canadian cold fronts can lead to violent thunderstorms, lightning and high winds. Winter brings the additional threat of heavy snowstorms and icing. Long Island is also vulnerable to “Nor’easter” storms... rain, snow, and high winds. Storms can wreak havoc on our electric system. Because Long Island has so many trees growing near power lines, ice, wind, and heavy rain can make tree branches sag or fall on LIPA wires causing power outages.

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## Why Doesn't LIPA Put All Its Power Lines Underground?

Placing electric wires underground would reduce the total number of outages, but at a very high cost to customers. Such a massive project would take 30 years to complete at an estimated cost of \$33 billion. In addition, underground cables take two to three times longer to locate and repair than overhead wires. Where practical, we install underground cable in new housing developments.

## What is LIPA Doing to Prevent Outages?

LIPA's transmission and distribution system consistently scores high in delivering service reliability to our customers. Our goal is to further reduce the number and length of outages through an aggressive service improvement and maintenance plan.

- **Line Clearance** – Keeping tree limbs away from electric wires is our most effective method of reducing outages. We trim trees along 2,000 miles of lines annually. We also encourage the planting of shorter, “wire-friendly” trees near power lines.
- **Equipment Improvements** – We're upgrading lightning arresters, redoing wire splices on our poles using new equipment, and installing guards to prevent animals from contacting high-voltage connections.
- **Radio-Controlled Switches** – These remote controlled switches allow us to isolate electric line problems without dispatching a field crew, enabling our operators to restore service faster.
- **Reconductoring Wire** – We're replacing old wire with new wire that has a resistant plastic covering for use in heavily wooded areas.
- **Infrared Scanning** – Through helicopter and vehicle surveys, we're using infrared equipment to detect potential trouble spots before they can cause power outages. Approximately 6,000 miles of line are surveyed annually.

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## If Your Power is Out... Call 1-800-490-0075

To minimize some of the inconvenience power outages cause, we've developed a computer program that allows LIPA to provide information on approximately how long it will take to restore power to your home. Outages can be reported quickly through our automated Customer Callback System, by accessing the address of the outage by using your telephone number. Make sure the phone number on your account is correct for your address. It is essential for accurate reporting.

\*With our Customer Callback System, you can call us to report the outage, and we will call you back with an estimated restoration time. You can also request that we call you back when your service has been restored.

If we still have to assess the damages to our system, we'll call you back when we have a more accurate time. And, if that changes for any reason, we'll call you back again and let you know the new estimated restoration time.

*\*An accurate telephone number for your service location is essential to locate your LIPA account and track restoration time.*

## Emergency Preparedness

Planning ahead for emergency situations will keep you and your family comfortable and safe.

### *Have a Plan*

- Talk to your family about what to do in an emergency. Have a meeting place outside the home.
- Have a battery-powered radio or TV available to keep track of storm developments and LIPA's progress in restoring power.



Visit our Store  
[www.lipower.com](http://www.lipower.com)  
and track

- Keep a flashlight handy for each member of your family. Make sure the batteries are charged, and keep plenty of extras available. Do not use candles. They can cause fires if handled carelessly.
- Keep at least one gallon of fresh water for each family member and maintain a good supply of food that needs no refrigeration. Make sure you have a manual can-opener too.
- Tell us now if someone in your family uses life-support equipment. Call our customer service representatives at 1-800-490-0075.
- Place containers filled with water in the refrigerator and freezer. This chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold if the power goes out.



- If you use a computer, keep files and operating systems backed up regularly.

- If you have an electric garage door opener, find out where the manual release lever is located and learn how to operate it. You may need your car before the power is restored.

- Keep your car fuel tank at least half full; gas stations rely on electricity to power their pumps.

- Remember that equipment such as automated teller machines (ATMs) may not work during a power outage, so have cash on hand for emergencies.

- Many customers now use portable telephones, which are powered by electricity. Keep in mind that you will have no telephone service unless you own a “hard wired” telephone. In addition, if your telephone

rm Center at  
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service is provided by your cable company, your cable modem will not work in the event of an electric outage. (Modems are electrically powered.) So make sure you have an alternate method of contact...like a cell phone. And keep cell phone batteries charged if a storm is coming!

## After the Storm

- If your lights go out, call us at 1-800-490-0075. If you have access to a working computer or laptop, visit [www.lipower.org](http://www.lipower.org) and visit our storm center to track the power outages in your area. Please do not report your outage more than once unless your lights stay off when your neighbors' are back on.
- Never touch or go near any downed wires, even if you think they are safe. If you are in a car that comes in contact with downed wires, stay in the car until help arrives.
- When operating a portable standby generator, make sure it is not directly connected to your home wiring. Improperly connected generators can present severe hazards to our repair crews working on nearby electric lines and damage your generator.
- Don't use charcoal to cook or provide heat indoors – it gives off deadly carbon monoxide gas. Make sure all combustible-fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation, and never use your gas or propane oven as a source of heat.
- Disconnect appliances, equipment or electronics you were using when the power went out. Momentary spikes can damage equipment such as computers, and motors in appliances like the air conditioner, refrigerator, washer or heating system, when power comes back on.
- Leave the doors of your refrigerator and freezer closed to keep your food as fresh as possible. If you must eat food that was refrigerated or frozen, check it carefully for signs of spoilage.

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- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals will stop working during an outage.

For additional information about emergency preparedness, visit our Web site at [www.lipower.org](http://www.lipower.org).

## Home Generators

If you decide you need a standby generator in your home, have it installed and wired by a licensed electrician, and make sure it meets fire underwriter regulations. Have that person brief you on all safety aspects of the generator's operation. Make sure you keep the operating instructions in a safe place, and if a storm is predicted, review them in case you need to activate the generator.

- Notify LIPA when you purchase a generator. If you already have one and have not notified us, please call us at the location closest to you:

**Hewlett**      516-792-7112

**Hicksville**      516-545-2247

**Brentwood**      631-348-6044

**Riverhead**      631-548-7042

- A licensed electrician should install a double-throw transfer switch, properly grounded, between the generator and your LIPA power supply. This protects our workers and your generator.
- Place the generator on stable ground.
- Ask your electrician which appliances can be safely used within the generator's capacity.
- Plug in appliances only after the generator is on and running.
- Check the generator's fuel system for leaks and keep it clean and well maintained.
- Operate the generator only in a well-vented area, outside your home, to prevent buildup of harmful fuel vapors and exhaust.

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- Never fill the generator with fuel while it is running, and don't store gasoline in your home.
- You will not be able to use all appliances at once. You may have to turn off some appliances to avoid overload.
- Generators should be used for emergency standby power ONLY and for short periods of time.

## We're Prepared

Long before a major storm sweeps across Long Island, LIPA's meteorologists are busy tracking its progress; collecting and interpreting the vast quantity of information needed to forecast storm movement. We contract with independent research firms and the National Weather Service for maximum accuracy.

Preparations start several days in advance when we learn a major storm is headed in our direction. We put our employees, equipment vendors and neighboring utilities on alert to ensure that enough manpower and inventory is available to handle storm-related repairs and ensure your safety.

## The LIPA Restoration Team

Our entire work force is put to work if a major storm hits. Our work force is specially trained to respond to storm emergencies and are prepared to work around the clock, seven days a week, to restore your service.

Nearly all of our employees turn from their regular jobs to help restore electricity to our customers. We also bring in workers from neighboring utilities and contractors to supplement our crews and speed up the repair effort.

We mobilize 400 to 500 employees to staff our telephones at a centralized Customer Assistance Center. These operators can handle thousands of calls an hour. During a severe storm, when there are a large amount of calls coming in at the same time, we have an automated service that can log

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your outage. Please be patient while trying to reach us. Listen to local radio stations for regular reports on our repair progress.

The highest repair priorities are given to vital public services such as hospitals, police and sewage pumping stations. Next, we schedule repair work to restore service to the largest possible number of people at one time. This means that a repair which will restore power to 1,000 customers takes priority over one that would restore electricity to 100 customers. An outage that only affects a few customers has a lower priority. We keep going day and night until everyone has power once again.

## Reporting an Electric Emergency

To report an electric service problem, call 1-800-490-0075 and use our automated service.

Para Espanol? 1-800-490-0085

## Keeping You Informed

For more information on emergency preparedness, visit us online at [www.lipower.org](http://www.lipower.org).





[www.lipower.org](http://www.lipower.org)

1-800-490-0075

Kevin S. Law  
President & CEO



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