

# Preparing for and Responding to Energy Emergencies

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Because emergencies can happen under numerous circumstances, managers need to prepare for power outages and energy crises in a variety of ways.

Both natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes and human-caused hazards like industrial accidents or terrorism can disrupt electricity, petroleum, and natural gas distribution.

According to the Congressional Research Service in the article "Energy Emergency Preparedness: A Critical Federal-State-Private Sector Partnership," weather-related energy outages alone cost between \$25 and \$70 billion annually and also pose a threat to public health and safety.

The goal is to restore service to everyone quickly and efficiently, concentrating on emergency responders, medical professionals, and critical care facilities. The Department of Energy (DOE) and other entities have emergency response guidelines that could help leaders handle energy emergencies safely and efficiently.

Emergency management professionals need to know how occupational health and safety rules and regulations could affect their preparations. Pursuing an online emergency management degree can prepare them plan for and deal with energy emergencies.

## Energy Emergency Preparation and Response Plan for Local Leaders

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One of the best ways to respond to an energy emergency is to prepare for it. In "Local Leaders: Prepare for an Energy Emergency," the DOE lists several ways local leaders can prepare for an emergency.

One of the first steps is to identify the energy providers in the area. "These may include the owners/operators of power plants, electric transmission and distribution lines, natural gas, crude oil, and petroleum pipelines, and petroleum refineries, and natural gas storage and distribution network managers," the article said.

The next steps are:

- Establish a list of contacts: Have primary and backup contact information for key personnel.
- Understand the energy infrastructure: Know where energy supplies come from and how they're distributed.
- Determine vulnerabilities to that infrastructure.
- Review energy supply contracts: Know the terms and conditions that might impact emergency response.
- Identify and test backup power sources, including generators.
- Keep emergency plans up to date.

- Partner with other agencies and businesses to develop and maintain plans.

## Energy Emergency Preparation for Business Leaders

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The DOE offers additional advice for business leaders about preparing for and recovering from an energy emergency.

“Smart-business owners develop and test a written business recovery plan to support them through disasters and help them stay in operation. Planning ahead will help your company get back to business more quickly,” the department said in “Business Owners: Prepare a Business Recovery Plan.”

The plan should include:

- Learning the risks of how a disaster could affect business operations.
- Identifying the critical business functions and assigning employees who would be responsible for responding to them.
- Listing critical suppliers.
- Developing a crisis communications plan about how to get in touch with employees, customers, and suppliers. Leaders should store the plan and contact list in duplicate locations.
- Seeking out temporary locations if the business needs to relocate after an emergency.
- Having a technology recovery plan which includes backing up critical data and records.
- Reviewing insurance coverage and keeping records of materials and equipment.

## Responding to an Energy Emergency

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The DOE also provides some general advice for local leaders about what to do after an emergency, including:

- Using the contact list from the disaster plan and assess the damage and figure out next steps.
- Communicating with the public and about the scope, severity, potential duration of the energy emergency, and what local authorities are doing about it. Business leaders should do the same with their employees and vendors.
- Making sure essential services have backup power and fuel.
- Conserving energy until all services are back to 100%.
- Documenting damage before beginning to clean up or repair.

## Emergency Planning Advice to All Citizens

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An energy emergency can happen to anyone at any time. Some simple advice can make coping a bit easier:

- Install surge protectors to protect electronic equipment from power surges.
- Know how to turn off the electricity to the home or business.
- Have a plan for any essential medical equipment.
- Charge mobile devices and have external batteries and vehicle chargers available.
- Turn off lights and unplug items that were on when the power went out. Doing so can prevent overloaded circuits when the power returns.
- Stay away from work crews and power lines.
- Back up computer data and write down phone numbers.
- Have flashlights and extra batteries.

Online emergency management degree programs can help safety professionals understand how to implement new policies and procedures for their organizations to help prepare for and recover from an energy emergency.

## About Eastern Kentucky University’s Online Master of Science in Safety, Security and Emergency Management Program

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Students in EKU’s online emergency management degree program learn the essential components of safety, security and emergency management. The program allows students to customize their experience through a Multidisciplinary Track or concentrations in Corporate Security Operations, Occupational Safety, or Emergency Management and Disaster Resilience. The concentrations are also available as stand-alone graduate certificates, independent of a master’s degree.

EKU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Colleges. For more information, contact Eastern Kentucky University now.

## Recommended Reading

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Helping the Homeless Population During Natural Disasters

5 Tips to Building an Earthquake-Resistant Structure

Hospital Emergency Disaster Plan

## Sources

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Community Guidelines for Energy Emergencies: United States Department of Energy

Energy Emergency Preparedness: A Critical Federal-State-Private Sector Partnership: Environmental and Energy Study Institute

Hurricane Preparedness: Managing Your Utilities: FEMA

Local Leaders: Prepare for an Energy Emergency: United States Department of Energy

Homeowners: Respond to Power Outages: United States Department of Energy

Business Owners: Prepare a Business Recovery Plan: United States Department of Energy

Local Leaders: Respond to an Energy Emergency: United States Department of Energy