



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Omaha Public Power District has compiled information to help as you work to get back to some sense of normalcy following this devastating flood event.

### ASSISTANCE HOTLINES:

Who can I call for help?

- For cleanup help, contact **Crisis Clean-Up Hotline: 833-556-2476**
- Farmers in need of materials or volunteers, contact **Nebraska Department of Agriculture: 1-800-831-0550**
- Businesses in need of assistance: **U.S. Chamber's Disaster Help Desk for Business: 1-888-692-4943.**
- Those concerned about pets should call the **Nebraska Humane Society: 402-444-7800, ext. 1**
- For all other needs, call the **United Way hotline: 211.**

### SAFETY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

What are the dangers of entering my home if there's standing water?

We know it's tempting to rush into cleanup mode. But it's important to stay calm and assess the situation first. Not doing so could put you at risk of electric shock and even death.

Here are some tips to stay safe:

- If you've got standing water in your home, **make sure OPPD or a licensed electrician removes your home's electrical meter from its socket. This is the only way to ensure the electricity flow to your home is completely cut off.**
- Don't assume your circuit breaker will protect you. If it has been damaged by water, or is malfunctioning for some reason, it will not trip to a disconnected state.
- Even after your home is disconnected, do not go back inside alone. It's best to use the "buddy system" when you are walking in a water-logged area, especially a basement. It's dark and may be slippery. And you may find yourself in need of help.
- Use a portable gas-powered generator **outdoors** to power dewatering pumps when electrical safety is in question.
- Once you're able to pump the water out, you can assess the damage. Any electrical equipment impacted by water will need to be inspected by a qualified professional and most likely need to be repaired or replaced. This includes lights, switches, outlets, motors, fuse boxes and fuses, circuit boards, wires and cables.

- Check with a heating/cooling contractor to see if your heating and cooling equipment can be salvaged.
- Avoid standing water and floodwaters. They may contain sewage and other chemicals and materials that could make you sick. The water may also be touching downed power lines, which could cause electrocution. Such waters may also contain sharp debris.
- Caution should also be used when handling items that have been in contact with floodwater.
- It's a good idea to contact your health provider to check on the status of your tetanus vaccine. It is recommended that adults receive a booster every 10 years.

### Is it okay to use a portable generator for temporary power?

Yes, as long as you do so safely. Please follow these safety guidelines:

- The total electric load on your generator must not exceed the manufacturer's rating.
- Portable generators are designed for connection only to smaller selected appliances or lamps. **They should NEVER be connected directly to a building's wiring system or meter socket.**
- Portable generators should be kept outside during use to ensure the exhaust will vent safely. **(Use of a generator in an enclosed area may cause a buildup of carbon monoxide or other harmful exhaust gases.)**
- ALWAYS wait five minutes or more for the generator to cool down prior to refueling.

## POWER DISCONNECTION

### I have some flooding in my home. Should I disconnect power?

Every situation is unique. Contact a licensed electrical contractor for advice. Your local emergency management agency can also provide health and safety information related to flooding impacts to a home. **Do not attempt to disconnect power on your own.** This can only be done by a licensed electrical contractor.

### I want to disconnect my power due to flooding. How can I have this done?

- To request disconnection, contact OPPD directly at **402-536-4131** or toll-free at **1-877-536-4131**.
- Customers who wish to disconnect power due to flooding should be aware that they will be subject to a reconnect process, which includes an inspection.
- If OPPD cannot access a particular customer due to floodwaters or damaged roadways, the order to disconnect will be cancelled. If that should occur, power will remain on until OPPD is directed by the emergency management agency for that county. This is for everyone's safety.
- In cases where a customer's home is destroyed by flooding and the customer wishes to cancel service entirely, OPPD can end service as of the last meter reading.

## POWER RECONNECTION

### My power was disconnected due to flooding, can you turn it back on?

When floodwaters recede, customers must follow a process before reconnecting power.

- Customers **must obtain an inspection** prior to reconnection of electric service to ensure safety for all involved. This is required by local and state permitting authorities.
- Sarpy County requests that customers who have no access to their homes due to flooding, and who wish to apply for an electrical inspection in order to get a permit, visit their website, [www.sarpy.com](http://www.sarpy.com). The following URL will link you directly to the form needed: [www.sarpy.com/about/county-news/online-form-request-flood-related-electrical-inspection-2019-03-19t050000](http://www.sarpy.com/about/county-news/online-form-request-flood-related-electrical-inspection-2019-03-19t050000).
- Sarpy County residents who wish to request an inspection can also call: 402-593-1555.
- OPPD will not charge customers displaced by flooding to re-establish service if they are reconnecting within 12 months.

## ELECTRICAL PERMITS & INSPECTIONS

### Why do all customers that were in flood-related areas need to be inspected, even if there wasn't any apparent damage?

- Area inspection agencies have determined that properties that may have lost power due to concerns of flooding or were shut off due to the power line design will have an inspection. They will send reports to OPPD even if no repairs are required with an authorization that power can be reconnected.
- A list of electrical inspectors can be found on the state's website at: <https://electrical.nebraska.gov/state-electrical-inspectors>.
- If you are under the jurisdiction of a county or municipal electrical inspection program, you need to contact that jurisdiction. A list of these can be found at: <https://electrical.nebraska.gov/municipal-county-electrical-inspection-programs>.

### Does the state's Electrical Division have the authority to enter the flood area?

- No. They are not allowed to enter any area that has not been properly released from flood designation or approved by the proper authority.

### Can a homeowner perform the required electrical repairs?

- The state's guidelines tell us that if the property is your principal residence, then the answer is "yes."
- When filing for a permit, the homeowner will need to complete the homeowner verification form and send it in with a permit.
- If the property is a commercial property or a weekend home or rental property, an electrical contractor licensed in the state of Nebraska must perform the work and file the necessary permit application.

### **Can I apply for a permit online?**

Some of the electrical inspection and permitting agencies have web-based tools.

### **Once the permit is obtained, how long will it take for an inspector to get to the property to make the inspection?**

- Response times vary by inspection agency.
- They ask that you try to be patient. The inspectors have a large workload and will do their best to keep up with requests.

### **How much electrical wiring am I going to need to replace?**

- It's hard to say before the inspection occurs.
- Electrical devices and equipment that were below the high flood waterline will likely need to be repaired or replaced.
- Remember, every situation is unique. Please rely on the expertise provided by your inspection in order to stay safe.