FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED · PLANNING ONE-PAGER

The Community Lifelines at Home

FEMA tracks eight services after a disaster. Track the same eight at your house.

1. What are the eight lifelines?
2. Why does one failure spread?
3. What's our backup for each?
4. How do we report our status?
5. What do we do this week?

1 What a lifeline is

One of the eight basic services everything else depends on. FEMA uses them to measure a disaster by outcomes: is the water on, can people get care, are the roads open? Most state and local emergency managers use the same eight. In 2023 FEMA made **Water Systems** its own lifeline and renamed Food, Water, Shelter to **Food, Hydration, Shelter**. Learn the eight names and you'll understand every official update, and can report in the same terms.

2 Read the color code · the status colors FEMA uses

Green	Yellow	Red	Grey
Stabilized. Service available, maybe by a workaround.	Disrupted, but a fix is planned and under way.	Disrupted, and no solution yet.	Unknown. Nobody has checked yet.

"Stabilized" isn't "normal." Bottled water at a distribution point counts as green. It doesn't mean your tap works or help is at your door.

3 When one goes down, others follow · a typical power-outage chain. Your weakest lifeline sets how long you can stay home.

Power out — Energy goes red.

› **Hours** — Traffic lights out. Cell sites run on backup batteries. Gas pumps stop.

› **4 hours** — Fridge food no longer safe. Insulin and other cold meds at risk.

› **1–2 days** — Full freezer thaws (about 48 h; 24 h if half full). Well pumps stop.

› **Days** — Water pressure drops, a boil order follows. Sewer lift stations can back up.

4 Your household lifeline check · circle a score for 72 hours and for 2 weeks: G = we're covered, Y = partly, R = not at all

Lifeline	When it fails at your house	Your backup	Quick check	72 hrs	2 wks
1. Safety & Security police, fire, rescue	911 is busy or slow. Routine calls wait. Strangers on the street.	Smoke alarms, 2+ fire extinguishers, a way to see who's at the door. Know your neighbors.	Can we put out a small fire and secure the house?	G Y R	G Y R
2. Food, Hydration, Shelter	Stores close or sell out. Fridge food spoils. The house is damaged.	Food you already eat, 1 gal water per person per day, a way to cook, tarps, a place to go.	Days of food and water, counted, not guessed?	G Y R	G Y R
3. Health & Medical	Pharmacy closed, no refills. ER full. Oxygen or dialysis cut off.	Extra daily meds, a med list, first aid and bleeding-control kit, a cold plan for insulin and a power plan for medical devices.	How many days of meds does each person have?	G Y R	G Y R
4. Energy power and fuel	No lights, fridge, heat or AC, well pump. Gas stations can't pump.	Flashlights, batteries, power banks, a generator run outdoors only, fuel stored safely, blankets.	What runs, and for how long, with the grid down?	G Y R	G Y R
5. Communications incl. alerts, cards, ATMs	Calls fail, texts lag, internet down. Card readers and ATMs stop.	A PACE plan, an out-of-area contact, NOAA weather radio, GMRS or ham radio, cash in small bills.	Could we reach each other with phones down?	G Y R	G Y R
6. Transportation	Trees, floods or debris block your street. Bridges close.	Tank at least half full, two routes out, a car kit, get-home bags, bikes or good boots.	Can we get out two ways? Is the tank half full?	G Y R	G Y R
7. Hazardous Materials	Gas smell, broken propane tank, chemicals in floodwater, a spill nearby.	Know your gas, water and power shutoffs. N95 masks, gloves, absorbent, a shelter-in-place room.	Does every adult know where the shutoffs are?	G Y R	G Y R
8. Water Systems taps and sewer	Low pressure, boil order, no flush, sewage backing up.	Stored water, a filter and bleach, a source you can walk to, a bucket toilet with bags and litter.	How do we drink and flush with no water service?	G Y R	G Y R

Any R is a gap. Fix your three weakest lifelines first, not the most expensive ones. 90 days of food and no plan to flush a toilet is not prepared.

5 Report your status in lifelines

After an event, give your status one lifeline at a time: a color and the reason. It's fast, easy to add up for a whole block, and it's the language your CERT team, radio net and emergency office use.

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Harper household, 123 Main St, 0900 Sat
Safety G · Food G · Health Y insulin needs cold · Energy R no power, 2
days fuel · Comms Y cell spotty, GMRS ok · Transport Y tree across Elm
St · HazMat G · Water Y boil order
Need: ice or fridge space for meds by tonight
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Be honest. "We're fine" when someone needs care costs lives; "send rescue" when you need a tarp clogs the system. Call 911 only for life-threatening emergencies.

6 Where you are on the list

When help is short, responders work top down. Your house comes last.

1. **Life safety** — rescue, fires, injuries
2. **Stabilize** — stop it getting worse
3. **Key sites** — hospitals, water plants
4. **Mass care** — shelters, water, food
5. **Property** — tarps, debris
6. **Your house** — repairs, claims, aid

Plan for the gap. Expect to look after yourselves for at least the first 72 hours, and longer in a big regional event. You're not forgotten; you're just not first.

7 Your first week · one job a day, almost nothing to buy

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Count it Water in gallons, food and meds in days. Write it down.	**Score it** Fill in the table. Circle your three weakest.	**Water** Store water. Make a bucket toilet kit. Find a backup source.	**Power** Lights, power banks, a plan for cold meds and the freezer.	**Comms** Pick the out-of-area contact. Set up alerts or a NOAA radio.	**Block** Walk your street. Meet 3 to 5 neighbors.	**Family** One meal: rally points, PACE, shutoffs, kids.

Plan by threat level
Know when to step up with PREP-CON, and find your gaps with the Personal Preparedness Assessment.

Keep in touch
Build your Comms PACE plan, and read the rest of the Planning guides.

Send the report
Free Ready Messenger has a Community SITREP: all eight lifelines, tick-boxes, color, trend and ETA to green.

The full guide: *Community Lifelines*
fortunefavorsthepreparedcom/community-lifelines/

The QR code opens the guide. Based on FEMA's Community Lifelines (Toolkit 2.1, 2023), brought down to household level.

Remember, Fortune Favors the Prepared
Semper Paratus, Semper Gumby