

Utilities

We often take our utilities for granted as we use them day-to-day. Water, Natural Gas, Electricity, Sewer and Telephone are the most common utilities. Some homes may also have cable television, internet connections, cell phones, VoIP phones (phone numbers via the internet) and cordless phones.

- Locate the main electric circuit breaker panel. The main shutoff may be at the box by the electric meter or inside your home. Do not confuse "sub-panels" for the main panel. Learn how to turn off these breakers.
- Locate your water service main valve. The valve may be inside your home or out side in a ground vault. You may need a standard or special wrench to turn off this valve. Make sure you have the appropriate tool(s) nearby and dedicated to this function.
- The natural gas main valve is located at the gas meter on the outside of your home. A standard adjustable wrench will usually work to turn the valve 90 degrees which will shut it off. Make sure you have the necessary tool nearby and dedicated to this function. If you are using propane gas the valve will be at the tank.
- Teach all responsible family members on how to turn off each of these key utilities.
- Remember; turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged or if you are instructed to do so. If you turn the gas, water or electricity off, you will need a professional to turn it back on.
- During an emergency, cell phones will often not work or be overwhelmed. If you have cordless phones at home, they will not work without electricity. Some systems have short-term battery back-up. A traditional phone plugged into a phone jack will often work even though your electricity is off. Part of your emergency supplies should be an inexpensive corded phone. This is also true for VoIP phones if you lose your high-speed internet connection.
- Make sure you have a battery operated radio to monitor for emergency information if your television is out. Don't forget the extra batteries!