BE SAFE AND PREPARED FOR THIS HURRICANE SEASON

JUNE 1–NOVEMBER 30

severeweather.ocalafl.org | 352-629-2489
There are real benefits to being prepared.

Being prepared for any type of event can reduce fear, anxiety, and losses that accompany disasters.

In our 160 square mile service area, OEU maintains 1,136 miles of power lines, over 40,000 power poles, 589 miles of water distribution lines, 24,500 water meters and 4,090 fire hydrants.

A strong commitment from utility employees and our 50,000 educated and well-prepared customers will ensure minimal impact and fast restoration from disaster.

Knowing what to do and when to do it will help us help you.
Severe Weather

Hurricane season begins June 1 and ends November 30. Hurricane awareness and preparation can reduce the damaging effects of a hurricane. Storm surge, heavy rainfall, inland flooding, high winds, tornadoes and rip currents are all types of hurricane hazards. Know your risks and what actions you should take.

It is essential that your family is ready before, during, and after a storm approach. Storm conditions can vary based on the intensity, size and even the angle which the tropical cyclone approaches your area. Make sure you understand what the forecasters and news reporters are telling you.

**Tropical Depressions** are cyclones with winds of 38 mph. **Tropical Storms** vary in wind speeds from 39-73 mph while **Hurricanes** have winds 74 mph and greater. Typically, the upper right quadrant of the storm (the center wrapping around the eye) is the most intense portion of the storm. The greatest threats are damaging winds, storm surge and flooding. Here are some important terms you may hear:

- **Tropical Storm Watch**: Tropical storm conditions are possible in the area.
- **Hurricane Watch**: Hurricane conditions are possible in the area. Watches are issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical storm force winds.
- **Tropical Storm Warning**: Tropical storm conditions are expected in the area.
- **Hurricane Warning**: Hurricane conditions are expected in the area. Warnings are issued 36 hours in advance of tropical storm force winds.
- **Eye**: Clear, sometimes well-defined center of the storm with calmer conditions.
- **Eye Wall**: Surrounding the eye, contains some of the most severe weather of the storm with the highest wind speed and largest precipitation.
- **Rain Bands**: Bands coming off the cyclone that produce severe weather conditions such as heavy rain, wind and tornadoes.
- **Storm Surge**: An often underestimated and deadly result of ocean water swelling as a result of a landfalling storm, and quickly flooding coastal and sometimes areas further inland.

During a watch, prepare your home and evacuation plan in case a warning is issued. During a warning, carefully follow the directions of officials, and immediately leave the area if they advise it. In the event of an **Extreme Wind Warning/Advisory**, which means that extreme sustained winds of 115 mph or greater are expected to begin within an hour, immediately take shelter in the interior portion of a well-built structure.
THE POWER “GRID” EXPLAINED

Essentially the electrical system is a complex network of interconnected conductors. The neighborhood conductors feed from distribution substations located relatively close to their respective customers. These distribution stations are fed from sub-transmission substations, which are in turn fed from transmission lines that interconnect throughout the state.

Protective devices installed on the system cannot prevent the initial fault (problem) from occurring. However, they are intended to help minimize the amount of damage experienced during the faulted condition and to minimize the number of customers affected.

Distribution feeder circuits have a breaker in the substation that will respond when a fault occurs. Depending on the settings and the type of fault, this breaker may open and close several times to allow the condition to clear itself before opening and remaining open. This is the blinking of the lights we occasionally experience. If the fault fails to clear and the breaker remains open, this outage will tend to affect 1,000 to 3,000 customers.

Laterals (lines that are fed from the distribution feeder circuit) have protective devices of their own. If a fault occurs on the lateral, its protective device will open. Under that circumstance, the distribution feeder circuit will remain functional while the lateral and its downstream customers will be off. These types of outages can affect several hundred customers.

It is not uncommon to have laterals and sub laterals feeding throughout a neighborhood. Each sub lateral has its own protective device allowing for minimizing the number of customers affected by a single incident.

When a circuit outage occurs: A crew is dispatched to ride the circuit to ascertain the cause. Once the cause has been identified the crew leader determines if the damage can be cleared in a relatively quick manner or if the damage needs to be isolated from the system. For instance, a tree limb (not a tree) can usually be cleared from the line in a matter of minutes and the entire circuit restored to normal at one time. A broken conductor or pole will take more than a few minutes to repair. The crew then isolates the damaged area by opening switches on either side of the damage site. Once the damage site is isolated from the system the circuit breaker can be closed back in and usually another switch can be closed to feed the other side of the damage from an alternate source. This redirecting of the system will allow us to restore power to a large percentage of the customers on that circuit. At this point our crews can safely make repairs to the damaged area.
When a lateral goes out: Lateral lines aren’t intended to have alternate sources the way feeders do. When the crew determines the cause of the outage they will attempt to isolate the damage if possible. Of course, there are many variables involved in what can happen and how much a crew can do to restore power to as many customers as possible while they are making repairs to the damaged section.

It is our goal to restore power to as many customers as practical and keep our lines safe for our crews to work.
Critical Generator Safety

A generator may be able to save food in your refrigerator or freezer during a prolonged outage, let you keep your home office running or power other essential equipment. Generators can be expensive and noisy. They can also pose serious safety hazards to you and to others, so please follow all safety instructions provided by the manufacturer.

The law requires customers with a permanently installed or portable generator to not connect another power source, such as Ocala Electric Utility power lines. If you own and operate a generator, you are responsible for making sure that electricity from your unit cannot “back feed,” or flow into power lines. For the sake of safety, be sure to use your generator correctly.

Permanent Standby Generators

When a generator is permanently connected to a customer’s electric system, it energizes the building’s wiring. This type of installation requires a device that prevents the generator from being connected to power lines.

Follow these safety tips:

- Only a qualified professional, such as a licensed electric contractor, should install a permanent standby generator.

- A double-pole, double-throw transfer switch is the required device to keep your generator from back feeding into the system. The switch also keeps power from re-energizing your house wiring while your generator is running, protecting your generator, wiring and appliances from damage when your service is restored.

- Have all additions to your house wiring inspected by your city or county building department.

- If you already have a permanently installed standby generator but you don’t know if it’s installed properly, call your local building inspector or a licensed contractor for help.

- You are responsible for any injuries or damage to your property, your neighbors’ property or the City of Ocala from an improperly installed or operated generator.
Critical Generator Safety

Portable Generators
Portable generators are designed to be connected only to selected appliances or lamps. Generators should not be plugged directly into a home’s main electrical system. This could potentially send an electrical charge back to the power grid, which could create an electrocution hazard for utility workers.

Follow these safety tips:

- Before starting your generator, carefully read and follow all of the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Be sure that the total electric load on your generator won’t exceed the manufacturer’s rating.
- Generators should be set up outside the home in a well-ventilated area. Do not run your generator in your house or garage.
- Use the lowest wattage light bulbs that provide a safe level of light, reserving power for additional lighting elsewhere or a small appliance. Remember that the greater the load on your generator, the more fuel it will use.
- Keep cords out of the way so they don’t present a tripping hazard especially in dimly lit doorways or halls. Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.
- Extension cords must be properly sized to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires or damage to equipment.
Before the Storm:

City of Ocala Municipal Government Facebook page is the official source of information during tropical storms, hurricanes, other crises, etc.
  - https://www.facebook.com/cityofocalafl/

Make-A-Plan
  - https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan

Sign up for Alert Marion
  - http://www.alertmarion.com/ to receive critical information quickly in a variety of situations, such as severe weather.

View current outages and sign up for power outage notifications

Prepare for power outages before the storm:
  - Anticipate power outages to be lengthy.
  - Restoration Personnel will NEED TO GET TO YOUR METER. Minimize obstructions. Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed and clear the area around your meter prior to the storm.
  - Learn what each circuit breaker in your home feeds. You will need to be able to turn off sensitive pieces of equipment. Customers may choose to turn off their main circuit breakers. However, when you turn your main circuit breaker back ON, you will want to start with lighting circuits only.
  - Make sure that you can find your emergency lighting supplies in the dark.
  - Establish an out of area relative or friend as your hub for communications and/or evacuation point.
  - Secure your home, close storm shutters, and secure outdoor objects or bring them indoors.
  - Turn off propane tanks before the storm.
  - Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water.
During the Storm:

If a hurricane is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio, watch tv and/or monitor social media for information before, during and after the storm.
- Turn off utilities if instructed to do so or if you have structural damage. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.

You should evacuate if:

- You are dependent on life-sustaining medical devices, OEU does not restore power to certain customers before others. Go to a shelter that can assist with your medical needs.
- You are directed by local authorities to do so. Be sure to follow their instructions.
- You live in a mobile home or temporary structure—such shelters are particularly hazardous during hurricanes no matter how well fastened to the ground.
- You live in a high-rise building—hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations.
- You live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river or on an inland waterway.
- You feel you are in danger.

If you are unable to evacuate, go to your safe room. If you do not have one, follow these guidelines:

- Stay indoors during the hurricane and away from windows and glass doors.
- Close all interior doors—secure and brace external doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed. Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm - winds will pick up again.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet or hallway on the lowest level.
- Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.
After the Storm

To Help Facilitate Timely Restoration:

- Don’t put debris in travel ways or around power poles.
- Keep your pets secure and away from access to power equipment.
- Don’t touch any downed lines, even if they’re laying across your home or vehicle. Lines can remain energized or become energized, even if they’re on the ground. Also avoid standing water.
- Avoid driving over any downed lines. Besides the possible electrical hazard, downed lines can get tangled with the vehicle and cause a severe accident and/or further damage to the electrical system.
- Don’t approach utility personnel for general questions.
- If the damage is widespread, please wait several hours before reporting your power outage. Do not call more than once. Calling in multiple times ties up our resources and hinders our restoration efforts.
- Please wait to report non-outage related incidents such as street and/or yard lights being out.
- In the event of any structural damage, Building Inspectors will need to approve any reconnection of individual service.

Customer Responsibility

Utility Responsibility
After the Storm

What you need to know when the power goes out.
- https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/needtoknow.html

Food Safety
- If the power is out for less than four hours, food in your refrigerator and freezer should be safe to consume. While the power is out, keep doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold.
- https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater/facts.html

Extreme Heat
- Be aware of the risk for heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and fainting. Heat stroke is the most serious heat illness. When the body can’t control its own temperature, sweating fails and the body cannot cool down. Body temperature may rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency care is not given.

If air conditioning is not available in your home:
- Contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.
- Spend some time at a shopping mall or public library- even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help.
- Take cool showers or baths.
- Don’t rely solely on fans to keep you cool. While electric fans might provide some comfort, when temperatures are really hot, they won’t prevent heat-related illness.
After the Storm

First Aid for Electrical Shock

If you believe someone has been electrocuted, take the following steps:

- Look first. Don’t touch. The person may still be in contact with the electrical source.
- Call 911 or emergency medical help.
- Turn off the source of electricity if possible.
- Once the person is free of the source of electricity, check the person’s breathing and pulse. If either has stopped or seems dangerously slow or shallow, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately.
- If the person is faint, pale or shows other signs of shock, lay the person down with the head slightly lower than the trunk of his or her body and the legs elevated.
- Don’t touch burns, break blisters or remove burned clothing. Electrical shock may cause burns inside the body, so be sure the person is taken to a doctor.

Power Line Hazards and Cars

If a power line falls on a car, you should stay inside the vehicle. This is the safest place to stay. Warn people not to touch the car or the line. Dial 911 and wait for help to arrive.

The only circumstance in which you should consider leaving a car that is in contact with a downed power line is if the vehicle catches on fire. Open the door. Do not step out of the car. You may receive a shock. Instead, jump free of the car so that your body clears the vehicle before touching the ground. Once you clear the car, shuffle at least 50 feet away, with both feet on the ground.

As in all power line related emergencies, call for help immediately by dialing 911. Do not try to help someone else from the car while you are standing on the ground.
After the Storm
THE POWER RESTORATION PROCESS:

As soon as it is safe, we will begin to assess damage. Wind speeds (including gusts) of thirty miles per hour prohibit crews from working safely. A single gust of wind can overturn our equipment.

Power starts at a generation station and then goes through various steps before reaching your home. The system is complex and interweaving. It is possible for your neighbor to have power, while you are still in the dark.

To make our restoration efforts efficient, it is important that we establish a plan. A brief period spent in planning will save us days as restoration is completed. Ocala Electric Utility has approximately 50,000 customers and it would be impractical of us to answer the phone when a large percentage of those customers are without power. Be confident that we are reviewing all calls. Our efforts are better spent responding to the calls than returning them.

Be assured that Ocala Electric Utility is working diligently to restore power to our customers as quickly and safely as possible. After any outage, Ocala Electric Utility restores power by following an efficient and effective process. First, crews quickly analyze and reroute power along undamaged circuits, bringing power back to as many customers as possible. Then, priority is given to essential services such as hospitals, shelters, and emergency services. After that, our crews work to restore power as quickly as possible to the remaining customers, typically making repairs that restore the most customers in the shortest amount of time.

To check restoration updates go to:  
  o severeweather.ocalafl.org

Assessment personnel will prioritize the work and then send in the necessary equipment as soon as practical. It is possible that you will see a tree crew or other support personnel one or more days prior to a construction crew being available.

Any damage to the meter can, wire and the pipe attached to the home is the responsibility of the customer and must be repaired by an electrician before the utility can restore power to your home.

Ocala Electric Utility, or any of our entities, will never ask to come into your home.

Refrain from reporting non-emergency or non-outage related problems for a few more days.

Please leave an outside light on to assist us in identifying individual problems. There is a great deal of “temporary” work that takes place during restoration. Though your power may be restored it takes a little longer for our system to be returned to “normal.”
How To Report a Power Outage

If you are an OEU customer, please subscribe to OEU Power Outage Notifications by texting “OUT” to 352-877-2211. It is very important that we have your current phone number and up to date customer information on your account. This will allow us to properly notify you of a power outage and when the power is restored.
Water Resources

The City of Ocala maintains generators at all our water facilities. If you are a City of Ocala Water Resource customer, in the case of a power outage, these generators will be engaged, and you will still have running water in your home. If you are a City of Ocala Water Recource customer and do not have water during a storm event, please call 352-629-2489.

Please make sure to follow the City of Ocala Municipal Government page on Facebook, as this will be the most accurate and timely form of information. If there is a problem with your public water supply or sanitary sewer system, updates will be posted in a timely manner. In preparation for a severe storm event:

- Turn off your irrigation system. This will not be needed during a storm event and could potentially cause unneeded stress to the water distribution system.
- Minimize showering, laundry, washing dishes, and flushing the toilet as the waste water system is severely impacted by large storm events. Notifications will be given to the public when water restrictions are lifted.
- Know who your water provider is. The City of Ocala may not be your water provider. There are private water companies within the city and there are residents on wells. Double check that you are aware of your provider and make sure to know their contact information. If you are on a well and lose power, you will lose access to your water supply.
- Tubs and sinks can be cleaned and used to store water. This water can be used to flush toilets and be used for sanitary reasons if you lose your water supply. If you are not on a public water system and are on a private well and/or have a septic tank:
  - If your well area is covered by flood water, do not attempt to use the well until the flood water recedes and you have your well water tested through a certified water lab. Contact the Florida Department of Health in Marion County (1801 SE 32nd Ave.) to locate the water lab closest to you.
- The American Red Cross recommends stocking a minimum three (3) days supply of water for emergencies, with at least one (1) gallon of water per person per day. Don’t forget to store potable water for your furry, feathery, or scaled family members as well.
- If flooding covers your drain field. Wait until flood water recedes to use your sinks, showers, toilets, dishwashers, and washing machines. It would be advisable to have your system inspected by your plumber before resuming use.

If you participated in the septic tank elimination program and had a grinder pump station installed:

- The City of Ocala will pump down the wet well in your pump station to help prevent sewer backups, as it will not pump if electricity is lost.
- Restrict water use to maintain a low level in your pump station.

To flush a toilet during a storm event if you have lost running water:

- Fill a bucket with water, potentially from your bathtub or pool
- Lift toilet lid and seat
- Pour water into bowl in one steady pour. This will provide enough force to create a strong flush
- Repeat as needed
Family Disaster Plan

- Discuss the type of hazards that could affect your family. Know your home’s vulnerability to storm surge, flooding and wind.

- Locate the various shelters in your area and arrange for family members to meet there in case of immediate need. Also select a backup shelter as an alternative.

- Locate a safe room or the safest areas in your home for each hurricane hazard. In certain circumstances the safest areas may not be your home but within your community.

- Determine escape routes from your home and places to meet. These should be measured in tens of miles rather than hundreds of miles.

- Designate an out-of-state friend as a family contact, so all your family members have a single point of contact.

- Make a plan for what to do with your pets if you need to evacuate.

- Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones and make sure your children know how and when to call 911.

- Check your insurance coverage - flood damage is not usually covered by homeowner’s insurance.

- Stock non-perishable emergency supplies and a disaster supply kit.

- Use a NOAA weather radio. Remember to replace its battery every six months, as you do with your smoke detectors.

- Take First Aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes.
Disaster Supply Kit

https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/disaster-supply-kit

- **Water** - at least one gallon daily per person for three to seven days

- **Food** - at least enough for three to seven days
  - non-perishable packaged or canned food / juices
  - foods for infants or the elderly
  - snack foods
  - non-electric can opener
  - cooking tools / fuel
  - paper plates / plastic utensils
  - garbage bags

- **Blankets / Pillows, etc.**

- **Clothing** - seasonal / rain gear / sturdy shoes

- **First Aid Kit / Medicines / Prescription Drugs**

- **Special Items** - for babies and the elderly

- **Toiletries / Hygiene items / Moisture wipes**

- **Flashlight / Batteries**

- **Radio** - Battery operated and NOAA weather radio

- **Cash (with some small bills)** - Banks and ATMs may not be open or available for extended periods.

- **Keys**

- **Toys, Books and Games**

- **Important documents** - in a waterproof container or watertight plastic bag — insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc. Make an electronic copy of all documents as well.

- **Tools** - keep a set with you during the storm

- **Vehicle fuel tanks filled**

- **Pet care items**
  - proper identification / immunization records / medications
  - ample supply of food and water
  - a carrier or cage
  - muzzle and leash
Critical Contact Information

City
- Ocala Electric Trouble Reporting: 352-351-6666
- Ocala Building Dept. for inspections: 352-629-2489
- Ocala Police Department: 352-369-7000
- Ocala Fire Rescue: 352-629-2489
- General City information: 352-629-2489

County
- County Building Dept. for inspections: 352-438-2400
- Sheriff’s Office Non-Emergency 24-Hour: 352-732-9111
- Marion County Parks & Recreation: 352-671-8560

Federal
- FEMA: https://www.fema.gov/ [800-621-3362]

For Emergencies Dial 911