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Hurricane Recovery Issue Paper Guidance for Turning the Power Back On

Homeowners that are unfamiliar with electricity or their homes electrical systems should contact their local power company or a qualified electrician to assist them in making their property safe from electrical hazards

Before confirming that the power has been turned off:

- Homeowners should heed the warnings and directions from their local and state emergency management officials and return home only after authorities advise it is safe to do so.
- Homeowners should follow the advice and precautions of their power companies.
- Beware of loose or downed power lines and be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard. Treat all loose or downed power lines as if they are energized; report them immediately to the power company, police, or fire department; and warn others to stay away.
- Never drive over a downed line. If you are in a car which has come in contact with a downed power line, stay in your vehicle. If you must leave your car, jump free keeping both feet together and either shuffle or hop to safety. A live wire touching the ground causes electricity to fan out and the action of running or striding allows one foot to move from one voltage zone to another. Your body then becomes the path for the electricity and electrocution is the tragic result.
- Do not enter a flooded or wet building if the power is on.
- If exterior electrical service equipment has been inundated with water, have the local power company remove their metering equipment prior to entering the building. Fire, explosion or electrocution can occur if power is inadvertently restored to inundated metering equipment.
- Turn off electricity at the main breaker or fuse box, even if the power is off in your community. Never attempt to turn power off at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so, call an electrician.

After confirming that the power has been turned off:

- Leave the electricity off until the electrical wiring or equipment has been inspected and repaired by a licensed electrician and approved by your local building inspector.
- Do not use candles or open flames indoors. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage.
- Never use a charcoal or gas grill to cook inside.
- Never go into a flooded basement unless you are sure the electricity is off.
- Generators used to power a house should not be connected until after all compromised wiring has been disconnected or replaced.



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- If you use a portable generator, be sure a manual or automatic transfer switch has been installed or connect appliance(s) directly to the generator. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, what's known as "back feed." Back feed creates danger for anyone near lines, particularly crews working to restore power.
- Back Feed from improperly installed generators can also energize neighboring properties. Even if commercial power has not been restored, all electrical equipment should be considered to be energized until measures have been taken to have your electrical system isolated from all potential power sources.

Before turning the power back on:

- Never attempt to turn power on at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so, call an electrician.
- If any electrical wiring, receptacles or equipment were submerged in water during the storm, you should hire a licensed electrician to inspect the equipment prior to returning it to service. In most cases, any electrical wiring that came into contact with salt water will need to be removed and replaced.
- Cord connected appliances should be disconnected from their outlets until they have been inspected, repaired and certified to be safe for service by a qualified service technician or licensed electrician. This includes large appliances such as washer and dryers, refrigerators, ranges and any other small appliances.
- Circuits containing permanently affixed appliances such as garbage disposers, dishwashers and built in appliances should remain off until the circuits and appliances can be certified to be safe by a qualified service technician or a licensed electrician.
- If water has entered your heating or mechanical equipment, be sure to have it inspected by a qualified service technician prior to returning it to service. Failure to do so could produce a shock, endangering your life and may destroy equipment.

After the power has been restored:

- If using electric yard tools in clean-up efforts, do not operate them if it's raining or the ground is wet, or while you are wet or standing in water. Keep all electric tools and equipment at least ten feet away from wet surfaces.
- Do not use any water-damaged appliance until a professional has checked it out.

Additional Guidance from FEMA:

<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4654>

Additional resources for Homeowners:

<http://www.ready.nj.gov/plan/hurricane-after.html>

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dob/downloads/pdf/storm_tips.pdf