



## Power Outage Planning

On average, a New York State household experiences just under two hours of electric power interruptions per year, according to the New York State Department of Public Service. That doesn't sound like much at first glance, but plenty of "big ones" have rolled over Dutchess County in years gone by, leaving hundreds of thousands off the grid for days. These devastating storms can happen as early as October (1987) and as late as April (1997), and any time during the winter months in between.

"Be prepared" is the classic scouting motto, and you can apply it to your own home. The Dutchess County Division of Emergency Response and U.S. Department of Homeland Security offer the following suggestions:

### Before A Storm

**Plan for home, family and pets:** You'll need a plan for home and anywhere else you spend time with family. Share the information with each other so that you're all on the same page in event of emergency.

**Stay informed:** A battery-powered or hand-crank operated "weather radio" device helps you receive National Weather Service alerts in the event of outages or downed cell towers.

**Take an inventory** of the items you use that rely on electricity. Stock up on batteries and have one flashlight available for each person in your household.

**Will your home phone work?** Without power, a cordless home phone base unit will not work, and neither will a wireless handset. Digital voice service (FiOS, for example) can temporarily continue with battery backup, but battery life is

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### A Message from County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro



*Friends,*

*While Dutchess County's population has grown slightly in recent years, the way in which it's growing has changed in a new way. Dutchess has the fastest-growing population of adults over 85 in all of New York State, and the overall population of adults over 60 is growing nearly as quickly.*

*It's a challenge, to be sure. Even more importantly, it's a sign of success that so many are not only living longer, but living independently longer. OFA has emphasized the idea of "successful aging" for years, and the older adults of Dutchess County are showing that successful aging is...a success. If you've never heard the term "successful aging" before, it sums up all the things you can do to be able to continue functioning well - physically, psychologically, and socially. It means adapting to changes, accepting help gracefully when it's needed, advocating for policies favorable to aging, and much more. Take a look at Page 7 for the details, and if you're part of an older adults' group, contact OFA to schedule an in-person Successful Aging presentation.*

*Come 2023 you'll have a new county executive, Bill O'Neil. You'll also have a certain familiar voice in Washington advocating for older adults and caregivers throughout the Hudson Valley.*

*Will you still be seeing me at an OFA Picnic in the summer of '23? That depends on how many elected officials need singing lessons.*

*Stay safe, happy, active and kind!*

## Power Outage Planning (continued from front page)

only in the 8-hour range, if fully charged. Traditional landline service over a copper network will generally continue to operate through outages, so hang on to that old corded phone.

**Charge your wireless devices.** A car charger can keep your phone working when the charge runs down. USB ports to connect chargers are commonplace in cars built after 2010, and USB adapters are available for older cars that still have cigarette-lighter outlets. When communicating, try to do so via text rather than voice, text being less of a drain on batteries.

**Know your medical needs.** Talk to your medical provider about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity and refrigerated medicines. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures, and if it will need to be discarded in the event of extended outages. Get specific guidance for any medications that are critical for life.

**Know where your local heating locations are.** Check with municipal and county officials about heating locations near you. If you are an OFA Home Delivered Meals client, shelf-stable meals are provided in advance of predicted winter weather that can disrupt OFA deliveries.

### When The Power Goes Out

**Generator do's and don'ts:** Having a generator for the home can be a godsend, but if your generator is a portable unit, be sure everyone in your home knows how to operate it: always outdoors and at least 20 feet from windows to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Speaking of which, now's the time to test your home's CO detectors. Keep the generator under an outdoor shelter when possible, to avoid possible shock. Stick to the manufacturer's instructions, and let the generator cool off before refueling.

**Keep the freezer and fridge closed.** A refrigerator will keep food cold during an outage for about four hours, IF you keep the doors closed and don't peek. A freezer will keep its temperature for up to 48 hours if the door stays closed. Use coolers as needed. Follow the "when in doubt, throw it out" rule if food has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, along with anything that develops an unusual odor, color or texture.

**Switch off what you don't use.** You won't be able to predict when the power comes back on, and modern electronics can often be damaged by the momentary power surges that can happen when power returns. Turn off or disconnect what you're not using. If you own a computer, consider an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) that allows you a few minutes to safely shut down a computer in an outage. UPS devices also protect against power surges when electricity returns.

## THRIVE60+

(formerly Spotlight on Seniors)

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To be added to or removed from our mailing list, call 845-486-2544 or email [bjones@dutchessny.gov](mailto:bjones@dutchessny.gov).

# Staying Warmer Without Cranking Up The Heat

Heating your home is going to cost more this winter, no matter whether you use oil, natural gas, or electricity. Even if you use firewood, unless you still split your own.

Let's discuss some of the ways you can work to keep your heating bills more affordable with choices that require little in the way of discomfort.

## 1. Warm Up the House While the Sun Shines

According to the Department of Energy, we all have chances to keep our homes warmer simply by adjusting our blinds and curtains as the day goes along. Open your window coverings in the morning, especially where your windows face the sun. Then, when the sun passes to the other side of your home, close those blinds and curtains to keep the heat in.

Keeping your windows clean and taking the screens out for the winter will also let in more light.

## 2. Have You Been Drafted?

An old rolled-up towel along the bottom of drafty doors and windowsills will help. So will the interior window shrinkwrap commonly available at hardware stores and home centers. The plastic can also reduce condensation on windows that can lead to mold. Annoyance warning: Many cats find window shrinkwrap to be great fun and will tear up your handiwork, in which case you may want to consider exterior options like clear marine plastic that can take a beating from the elements.

## 3. Use Space Heaters Judiciously

Space heaters aren't meant to heat entire rooms, let alone houses; your electric bills are likely to soar if you try. But space heaters can help if you need something to keep you warm in one spot for a defined length of time. They work best when used with the other solutions in this article. Modern space heaters have important safety features like timers that will switch them off automatically.

## 4. Do Something Grate Today

If your home is heated with forced air, give the intake grates a good vacuuming to remove pet hair and dust.

## 5. More Blankets = Lower Thermostats

Your body's core temperature needs to drop a bit to assure restful sleep, so why not meet that need by lowering the thermostat to between 60 and 67 degrees Fahrenheit, which saves energy at the same time? Add anything to your bed from another flat sheet to a blanket or comforter. Sleeping under layers works the way wearing layers does in cold weather.

## 6. Don't Put Away Those Sweaters

Leave one in every room - blankets too - so that you learn to use them as the first option rather than raising the thermostat. Bonus: If you don't like folding laundry, you no longer have to!

## 7. Smarten Up Your Thermostat

If you have trouble remembering to turn the heat down, have a programmable thermostat installed. New models can even learn your schedule and adjust themselves accordingly.

## 8. Maybe You Need a HEAP of Help

The federally funded Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) can help qualifying older adults save on whatever they use to heat their homes. Some funds are available to improve energy efficiency. Regular 2022-23 HEAP got underway in November, and emergency HEAP begins on January 3rd, 2023.

Email [zserrano@dutchessny.gov](mailto:zserrano@dutchessny.gov) or call **845-486-2553** for more information about HEAP.

## January 1 - March 31 is Medicare Advantage (Dis-) Enrollment Season

When it comes to Medicare and Medicare Advantage, there are two separate enrollment periods. You're more likely to have heard of the Open Enrollment period that runs every year from October 15th to December 7th, but there's a second Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment period that may apply to you. It takes effect in 2023 on January 1st and continues through March 31st.

### What can I do during this period?

- If you're in a Medicare Advantage Plan (with or without drug coverage), you can switch to another Medicare Advantage Plan (with or without drug coverage).
- You can drop your Medicare Advantage Plan and return to Original Medicare. You'll also be able to join a separate Medicare drug plan.

### What can't I do?

- Switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan.
- Join a Medicare drug plan if you're in Original Medicare.
- Switch from one Medicare drug plan to another if you're in Original Medicare

Additionally, if you enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan during your Initial Enrollment Period upon turning 65, you can change to another Medicare Advantage Plan (with or without drug coverage) or go back to Original Medicare (with or without a drug plan) within the first 3 months you have Medicare.

### I understood none of that. Help!

That's why OFA has HIICAP, the Health Insurance, Information, Counseling and Assistance Program. HIICAP provides unbiased, non-sales-oriented assistance in getting your 2023 coverage sorted. Contact OFA to schedule your HIICAP appointment today; in-person and remote appointments are both available.

## 2023 New York State Medicaid Eligibility Expansion

If you live in New York State and have a limited income, you may be newly eligible to receive assistance with your health care costs, starting January 1, 2023. That's when eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) and Medicaid will expand for New Yorkers, under the terms of the state budget passed in April 2022. If you're already enrolled in either program, your benefits may become more comprehensive.

An MSP will help pay for your Part B premium, set at \$164.90/month in 2023. If you enroll in an MSP, you will also automatically get "Extra Help," the federal program that enroll helps pay your Medicare prescription drug (Part D) costs. Medicaid provides health coverage for certain people with limited income and assets. For services covered by Medicare and Medicaid, Medicare will pay first and Medicaid may cover your cost sharing, including co-insurance and copayments.

MSP income levels will be higher in 2023. How much higher depends on the Federal Poverty Level, which had not been announced when this newsletter went to print. New York State will announce expanded limits in January 2023. Below are estimated eligibility incomes:

2023 New York State gross monthly income

Program	Individual	Couple
QI-1	\$2,107	\$2,839
QMB	1,563	2,106
Medicaid	1,563	2,106

2023 New York State Asset Limits

Program	Individual	Couple
QI-1	no limit	no limit
QMB	no limit	no limit
Medicaid	\$28,134	\$37,908

QI stands for "Qualifying Individual" and QMB stands for "Qualified Medicare Beneficiary." Contact OFA with questions about your eligibility.

## Thanks But No Thanks: The Things Your Kids *Don't* Want

You can't take it with you, as the classic movie title says; but as older adults think about downsizing their homes, what happens with the lifetime's worth of keepsakes and other objects that have been accumulated?

If you think your kids and grandkids will want it, think again. Don't take it personally. Needs, tastes and safety standards evolve over the decades. Your descendents may have neither the space, time nor preference to accept what you offer.

You may be able to sell or donate certain items, but however you decide what to do, don't put off the decisions. The older you get the harder it gets to clear the clutter.

### **Old Books** - toss, or repurpose

Outside of first editions and full encyclopedia sets, most old books are not rare, nor are they in good condition. If you can't bear to throw away a book, they can sometimes be repurposed as everything from wreaths to planters.

### **Old Furniture** - sell, donate or repurpose

If you've got adult children and/or grandkids and you've seen their homes, think about how many china hutches you've seen there. The answer is probably close to zero. There's not much demand any more for bulky furniture to display fancy dishes, linens that need ironing, and silver that needs polishing. Your children might prefer well-built older furniture that'll get regular use, like small tables or bookcases. Those are sure to outlast a particle-board shelving unit.

### **Old Beds and Mattresses** - give away, maybe

You should be able to find a home for an old twin bed if you know any young families whose children are becoming old enough for that size. Otherwise, mattresses and frames will have to be in near-pristine condition with no stains or tears, if you expect takers.

### **China or silver** - sell or donate

If it's not dishwasher-safe, it's just going to take up space in younger people's homes. That said, a pattern-matching consignment service like **replacements.com** might be interested in what you have.

### **Tools** - now we're talking!

Garden and woodworking tools of yesterday can last for generations, and you don't have to be an expert to appreciate the design.

### **Family photos** - scan, then toss

Boxed-up photos and cards can be damaged by humidity over the years. Get them scanned so that you'll always have a digital record, but they're unlikely to be worth much.

### **Old rugs** - toss or donate

But that rug really tied the room together! Unless your Persian rug really is from Persia, it's not likely to find takers.

### **Baseball and trading cards** - anybody's guess

While a near-perfect 1952 Mickey Mantle rookie card recently sold for \$12.6 million at auction, don't get your hopes up about what's in your attic. A tiny fraction of cards hold any value, and getting each card professionally appraised is going to cost around \$15 per card, which may be a losing proposition for you. If you're sharing your love of the game with your grandkids, you may want to keep the cards.

### **Concert ticket stubs** - keep

Your grandkids need to know that you're cooler than they are. Hang on to these.

Adapted from *No Thanks, Mom: The Top Ten Objects Your Kids Do NOT Want (And What To Do With Them)*, by Elizabeth Stewart

## Friendly Calls Is A New OFA Volunteering Opportunity for 2023

If you received this newsletter in the mail or picked it up at your local library, chances are it got there thanks to an Office for the Aging volunteer.

If you've been a guest at an OFA picnic at any time during the past 30 summers, those were OFA volunteers setting up and taking down chairs, bringing you food and drinks, helping you park, and doing all the little things that made your picnic experience enjoyable. Maybe you saw some volunteers the same age as your grandkids.

How'd they find out about these volunteering opportunities? It wasn't complicated: They got in touch with OFA and asked how they could help. Easy as that.

If you're not physically up to volunteering on hot summer days or in the cold of winter, consider volunteering in a clerical capacity, or helping out at any of OFA's eight friendship centers in Beacon, East Fishkill, Millerton, Pawling, Pleasant Valley, Poughkeepsie, Red Hook and South Amenia.

If you like getting out of the house to go for a drive, think about joining us as a Home Delivered Meals volunteer in our Nutrition division. We have over 400 homebound older adults who rely on HDMs for nutritious midday meals, and you'd be doing double duty as a friendly face they can greet, often when no one else is home.

### And Now For Something New

Speaking of friendliness, OFA is offering something new for prospective volunteers in 2023: a "Friendly Calls" phone companionship program.

Loneliness and isolation among older adults hasn't been getting the attention it needs, even as growing evidence indicates that loneliness can have harmful physical effects similar to stress hormones that can lead to conditions like heart disease and diabetes. OFA wants to empower our volunteers to do something about it.

*Are you interested in helping?*

You'd be improving the quality of life of isolated older individuals throughout the county, just by saying hello. These conversations, that more connected people may take for granted, can mean the world to an isolated older adult. If they raise a concern about their living situation, you'll be able to direct them to OFA for more in-depth help.

You can find a printable OFA volunteering form at [dutchessny.gov/OFAvolunteer](http://dutchessny.gov/OFAvolunteer), which comes with a description of all the ways volunteers can help Dutchess County's older adults. You don't have to restrict yourself to one way of volunteering with us. We work with your schedule. If you'd like to provide phone companionship on Mondays and Tuesdays, and deliver meals on Thursdays, we'd be grateful for the help.

If you have follow-up questions about OFA volunteering, contact Outreach Coordinator Brian Jones at [bjones@dutchessny.gov](mailto:bjones@dutchessny.gov) or **845-486-2544**.

### Even More Ways To Volunteer

OFA's exercise programs can always use volunteer leaders, and you don't need to be any kind of exercise expert to lead. We offer basic exercise, Tai Chi, A Matter of Balance and Bingocize. Classes run year-round, except for "A Matter of Balance," which is a series of eight once-a-week classes that take place in the spring and fall.

If helping people make the right insurance choices interests you, our Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP) offers training for prospective volunteers.

And, of course, every single extra pair of hands at an OFA Summer Picnic is always appreciated. Picnic volunteering is also a good opportunity for student volunteers to meet their school or house of worship's community service requirements. Volunteers under age 18 require a waiver signed by a parent or guardian.

Contact OFA for more information.

# 13 Steps To Successful Aging



**1. Exercise** – Check with your doctor first. Aim for 2½ hours a week of a combination of weight training and cardio, but any amount of exercise is better than none. Join an OFA Exercise Class near you! Contact us for more info.

**2. Nutrition** – 25+ grams of fiber, 5-9 servings of colorful fruits and vegetables, lean protein, healthy fats, 100% whole grains. Try replacing unhealthy foods with beans, olive oil, nuts and fatty fish.

**3. Medical** – Keep in touch with your health care provider about preventative tests and screenings, vaccinations as needed, and the steps you can take toward improved health.

**4. Mental Fitness** – Try NEW things. You don't have to be good at it.

**5. Social Engagement** – Socialize everyday with as many people as possible. Join one of OFA's eight Friendship Centers, or a municipal friendship center in your home town.

**6. Resilience** – Adapt and cope with change, and you'll thrive mentally, socially and physically.

**7. Laughter** – Seek out people and experiences that make you laugh out loud.

**8. Nurture Something** – Do the creative things that make you feel good – take care of a pet, garden, bake, write, create art, etc.

**9. Give of Yourself** – Volunteering keeps you socially and mentally active. Contact OFA to learn more about volunteering opportunities.

**10. Scam Prevention** - If it looks too good or too scary to be true, it is. Remember that scammers succeed by manipulating your emotions.

**11. Personal Safety** – There are lots of simple steps you can take to make your life safer. Join an "A Matter of Balance" class. Contact OFA for more information about Spring 2023 classes.

**12. Plan Ahead** – Think about what you'll need as you age: legal documents, home modifications, transportation, etc.

**13. Advocate** – Let people know what you need to age successfully. Talk to elected officials about what steps can be taken. Contact OFA for a Successful Aging presentation for your group(s).

**....and Think Positively** – Have a positive attitude. Keep a gratitude journal. If you're not the journaling type, think of something positive at every meal.

**Dutchess County Office for the Aging**  
**114 Delafield Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601**

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## OFA Friendship Centers and Hours

Contact a Friendship Center near you to find out about meals,  
activities and more!

Beacon (Mon-Fri, 10a-2p) 1 Forrestal Heights, Beacon 845-838-4871	Poughkeepsie (Mon-Fri, 9a-2p) 114 Delafield St., Poughkeepsie 845-486-2564
East Fishkill (Mon-Fri, 10a-2p) 890 NY 82, Hopewell Junction 845-226-3605	Red Hook (Mon-Fri, 10a-2p) 59 Fisk St., Red Hook 845-475-1129
Millerton (Mon-Thu, 10a-2p) 28 Century Blvd., Millerton 518-789-3081	South Amenia (Mon-Thu, 10a-2p) 229 S. Amenia Rd., Wassaic 845-373-4305
Pawling (Tue-Thu, 10a-2p) 154 Charles Colman Blvd., Pawling 845-855-9308	Tri-Town (Mon-Thu, 10a-2p) 1576 US 44, Pleasant Valley 845-275-8565

For more information  
about the  
Dutchess County  
Office for the Aging,  
visit us online at

**[dutchessny.gov/aging](http://dutchessny.gov/aging)**

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We're open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Monday through Friday.