

Managing a vaccine fridge during a power failure

Power failures may occur for many reasons. How this is managed in your practice may depend upon the cause of the power outage, if you receive any prior notice of the power outage and the time of day the power outage occurs. The following steps and advice can help minimise vaccine loss and disruption to your business.

- Contact your electricity supply company to enquire about possible length of power outage.
 - If necessary begin preparations for relocating vaccines to cooler/s or for transfer to an alternative site that has monitored storage. Gather necessary equipment required to transfer vaccines. (Refer to information sheet 'How to pack a cooler' or 'National Vaccine Storage Guidelines (NVSG) – Strive for 5, 2nd edition pps. 34 to 38 * note error on p37, probe is placed in with vaccines the monitor is placed outside the cooler).
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What refrigerator do you have?

Purpose-built vaccine refrigerator

Once power goes out temperature is not held for very long (less than 30 minutes).

Keep the refrigerator door closed and monitor temperature frequently.

Covering a glass door with a blanket / polystyrene sheeting / thick cardboard may extend the time the refrigerator keeps temperature.

For any power outages be prepared to relocate vaccines to a cooler or alternative storage facility

Domestic refrigerators

For power outages of less than 4 hours keep the refrigerator door closed. Monitor temperature frequently.

Keeping the door closed during the power outage will help maintain a steady temperature.

For power outages of more than 4 hours relocate the vaccines to a cooler or alternative storage facility

When power goes off...

1. Immediately isolate the vaccines, keep refrigerated between + 2 °C to + 8 °C and put a sign on the fridge stating 'Power out – do not use vaccines'. Keep fridge door closed.
2. Begin frequent monitoring of refrigerator temperature.
3. Gather necessary equipment required to safely transfer vaccines to a cooler or another location. If the temperature rises +8° C, move vaccines to a prepared cooler/s. Ensure all of the vaccines are packed and monitored with a digital min/max thermometer. (Refer to information sheet 'How to pack a cooler' or 'NVSG – Strive for 5, 2nd edition pps. 34 to 38 * note error on p37)
4. If you do not have time to condition the gel/ice packs ensure they are wrapped in insulating material, you may consider dunking gel/ice packs in warm water to rapidly condition. Refer to NVSG pps 33-34.
5. Ensure you have a strategy in place for long-term storage

What to do when power is returned...

Refer to p30 of the 'NVSG – Strive for 5, 2nd edition p.30