

Staying Connected During a Disaster

Even on a normal day you may feel lost without a cell phone at your fingertips. With severe weather on the way, or in the midst of a natural disaster, it's even more important to stay connected. Here are some steps you can take to make the most of your cell phone battery and help keep the phone network free for emergency calls.

- **Turn your cell phone off.** If you don't need immediate access to your phone, turning it off between uses will conserve your battery.
- **Lower your display brightness.** Set your display brightness as low as possible to save power.
- **Use "airplane" mode to disable unneeded radios.** Connecting to wireless networks and Bluetooth devices is a drain on your battery that's best avoided.
- **Turn off "push" notifications.** That constant stream of updates from your social network is a constant drain on your phone's power. Disable social notifications and apps to save your battery.
- **Speaking of apps, make sure they're closed.** Be sure to turn off any apps that are running in the background, as these drain your phone's battery. It may be tempting, but avoid playing games also, as these can use a lot of your phone's resources and drain the battery quickly.
- **Charge your phone and other electronic devices as much as possible.** If you have time to prepare, top off the batteries on your devices. Remember, you can charge your phone using your laptop or tablet battery through a USB connection.
- **If you're driving, you can use your car to charge your phone.** Do not use your phone while driving and obey all traffic laws. Especially during a disaster, you will need to be aware of driving conditions and emergency traffic changes.
- **Avoid network congestion.** If your call doesn't go through, wait at least 10 seconds before trying again. During and after the disaster, avoid using streaming services.
- **Consider using social media to reconnect after the disaster.** If you need to update friends and family, the data network is usually less congested than voice calls. Posting a status update to your social network or sending a text can be a good option for nonemergency communication.

References

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2021). Get Tech Ready. <http://www.ready.gov/get-tech-ready>

Barker, A. (2021). How to keep your phone charged during disasters. <https://www.click2houston.com/tech/2017/08/24/how-to-keep-your-phone-charged-during-disasters>