

Note to Phone Customers: Power Outages and ECFiber Phone Service

Adverse weather conditions lead to power outages from time to time, and when they are sustained for significant amounts of time, they can lead to loss of telephone service. ECFiber understands that this can be very disturbing – the loss of critical connectivity, particularly during hazardous weather conditions, is a situation that requires adequate advance preparation.

This note is intended to provide some suggestions for maintaining connectivity during adverse weather conditions. Note that even conventional phone service is imperfect: FairPoint customers in rural areas can and do lose service for a number of reasons including the effect of weather on old and/or corroded copper facilities, power outages to service cabinets, faults in the network equipment etc. The principal reason why ECF customers may lose telephone service is loss of the Internet service to their homes. This can occur for several reasons, one of which is loss of power to the home. To deal with the latter, ECF provides subscribers with back-up batteries that automatically switch on in the event of a power outage. These batteries will last from 6 – 11 hours depending on how much calling a subscriber does during the outage, whether the subscriber is using the Internet for other purposes or allowing her/his computer to “sleep” when not in use, the condition of the battery and the nature of the equipment. After the battery runs out, phone service will be lost until power comes back on or some other source of electricity is found.

The most common back-up for loss of wireline service is temporary reliance on cell phones. However, many locations in ECFiber territory do not have good cellphone reception. Assuming that cellphone service is not sufficiently reliable to provide back-up to ECFiber wired service, there are a number of other options available to our subscribers:

a) ECF can install a secondary battery at an estimated cost of \$50 which will provide up to double the life of the principal back-up battery or a larger battery with up to three times the life of the principal back-up battery at an estimated cost of \$75.

b) Subscribers can plug the battery into a back-up generator. The cost of this varies enormously: i) if you already have a generator, the extra cost is virtually zero; ii) if you buy one for this purpose only, the smallest and cheapest will do fine. The advantage is that such generators can be used for many other things.

c) You can buy a standard “emergency battery” pack of the kind used for emergency jump-starting a car. These normally have a standard 110 outlet into which the ECFiber network battery can be plugged. Depending on the size of the battery pack and its condition this could extend the life of the network battery by up to 8 – 24 hours. Alternatively, you can buy a cheap inverter and attach it to a car battery and plug the ECFiber battery into that. This will have similar effectiveness as the emergency pack.