

Totally Ready

Prepped when it really counts

Don't Be Left in The Dark Wondering What to Do ~ Summer Version

Due to all this stress on our power grid we need to prepare for summer outages. There will be whining and frustration but there are things we can do to minimize the stress. I had the opportunity to visit an elderly friend a few years ago during a heat wave. I hung mylar blankets in all the windows receiving direct sun. She was amazed what an immediate difference it made to the temperature in her home. There are things we can do to be more comfortable during a heat wave whether or not we have power.

Following are a few steps you can take to help a summer power outage or heat wave a little more bearable:

1. It's O.K. to raid your Emergency kit... That's right, Five Day kits are not just for earthquakes and hurricanes but for any emergency. Your kit should include Instant Cold Packs. Place them on the neck or forehead for the best results. Mylar Blankets placed to cover the sunniest windows will cut down on the heat entering your home. These blankets are also large enough to cover a sliding door without piecing. You will be amazed at how quickly the temperature in a room will drop when you cover your windows with these blankets. You can also use aluminum foil however you can see thru a mylar blanket but not foil. Mylar blankets are also great to use outdoors to create shade as they reflect the sun's rays. If you don't have mylar blankets get them now and if the power fails, you will be able to keep your home cool longer. Other items in your kit may include hats, sunglasses, sun screen and more.
2. Create shade. Remember not only do the sun's rays create heat in your home but so do all those hard surface areas such as patios, walkways and driveways. As these surfaces heat up they raise the temperature in your home. Shade those areas to keep your hard surfaces cool. Place your outdoor umbrellas outside the windows receiving direct sun. Outdoor canopies, tarps, and dining flies also work well.
3. Get wet. Take a shower and don't dry your hair, take a dip in the pool and don't dry off (if the pool is in the sun don't stay in too long), run through a sprinkler, keep a spray bottle nearby and mist your face (also great for your complexion), use wet compresses on your neck or head, keep a wet washcloth by your bed to cool yourself through the night, wrap your head in a wet bandanna, or soak your feet.
4. Drink lots of water, lemonade, or juices, but never anything with caffeine or alcohol as these will raise your body temperature. Sodas will only increase your thirst. Popsicles are also a great way to stay hydrated, eat them first before they defrost. If you are thirsty, you have waited too long to drink.
5. Eat cold foods. This is the time to eat sandwiches, salads and other foods that are not heated. Avoid large portions of protein foods as they will increase body temperature. Eat smaller, more frequent meals.
6. Cook outdoors if you feel you must have a hot meal.
7. Move activities, including eating and sleeping, to the coolest room in the house. This will normally be on the lowest level of your home and in a room with an exposure that does not receive direct sunlight.
8. Play board games or read, but don't be too active.

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9. Wear loose fitting, light colored clothing.
10. Sit next to a battery powered fan. Remember fans do not cool the air, they only move it so don't leave them running when you leave the room. You become cooler as the moisture on your skin evaporates. This is the reason you want to stay wet!
11. Skip the exercise routine and working outside.
12. Go Shopping! No kidding. Go to the grocery store or mall and window shop. Taking in a movie or going bowling are also "cool" pastimes IF they have power.
13. The elderly, young children, pregnant women, and those taking diuretics are most vulnerable to heat related emergencies. If a member of your family is taking any medications, check with your doctor or pharmacist to determine if they are more susceptible to the affects of the heat.
14. Check on housebound and elderly - neighbors and friends - and get them to a cooling center. Be sure there is a plan for their care when the cooling center closes. Many centers close for the night. Nighttime can be the most dangerous time of the day. Cooling centers can be found by calling the police department. We assume the temperature will be lower at night, but this is not always the case - especially in the city. All those roads and sidewalks retain heat during the day and as they release it at night the temperature remains high. Same thing for suburban congestion - several homes on an acre of land with homes just a few feet from each other is a bad idea when trying to survive heat.
15. Visit a friend or relative out of town. The temperature in the city is usually several degrees higher than the temperature in a country setting.
16. Watch for signs of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.
17. When it cools down at night, if it cools down, open all the windows. Close them again mid morning as it starts to heat up.
18. Never leave children or pets in a parked car, even with the windows open. The temperature in a car, with the windows open, can reach 120° F within a few minutes.
19. If you are stranded in your car, place mylar blankets on the roof and over the windshield and rear window, on the outside of the car. Weigh them down with rocks or anything you have on hand. You can also secure them by closing them into the door. Keep the windows open. The mylar blankets will reflect the sun, greatly reducing the heat.
20. Remember your pets. Bring them inside or place them in a shaded area that catches breezes. Be sure they have plenty of water available for them to drink and hose them down regularly.
21. If you need to go outside, wear a wide brimmed hat and sunscreen.
22. Turn down the air conditioner when anticipating a summer storm. Keep your home as cool or cooler

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than usual so you are sure to start with a cool home when the power fails. We often turn off the air conditioner when leaving home. Do not do that if there is any chance of an outage.

23. Keep blinds and curtains closed during the day.

Heat-related emergencies are very serious. Add a power outage and the results are deadly. Protect yourself now by accumulating items that will help you get through the emergency and learn how to use them. Teach your family members the dangers and warning signs for medical emergencies now.