

## Household Solutions When You Aren't Prepared for a Power Outage

The past year has been filled with disasters. We have experienced a pandemic, and we are still experiencing a change in our lifestyles and shortages in the grocery store and pharmacies. We have experienced the worst fire season on record and the worst hurricane season in decades. We have witnessed a derecho in Iowa that generated winds of up to 140 mph (225 kph) and flattened millions of acres of crops. We have witnessed rioting unlike any since the 1960s. We have witnessed a deep freeze in Texas with many deaths and much suffering. It has been a hard year. Most recently we have witnessed flooding in Kentucky that has destroyed entire small towns in one of the poorest areas of our country. It is not just the United States. Disaster around the world have also been record breaking.

I recently asked family, friends, and readers to tell me where they thought they had preparedness needs unmet. I will address those needs in various ways in the next few weeks and months. Today I would like to address one that has been mentioned over and over; power outages. In December of 2020, I published articles on power outages so today I would like to specifically deal with what can be done and made at home to deal with heating and cooking when you are unprepared.

### First Heating:

#### Flowerpot Heater

You should have most if not all items needed to make Flowerpot heaters. Be VERY cautious as they will get very hot. Keep them out of the reach of children.

Gather:

2 Un-Glazed Terra Cotta Flowerpots one 8 inch and one 10-inch pot  
2 Empty and cleaned tuna or other small cans  
Unscented tea light candles  
Wooden cutting board or piece of scrap wood  
2 landscaping bricks  
Cooling rack like you would use for cooling cookies  
Small piece of aluminum foil

1. Place tuna can in center of wooden board.
2. Place 2 or 3 tea lights in tuna can.
3. Place a brick on either side of tuna can.
4. Set cooling rack on top of the bricks to prevent heater from tipping over.
5. Place small pot upside down over candle
6. Place larger pot upside down over small pot.
7. Crumple foil and place in the drain hole in the larger pot completely sealing it.
8. Remove tuna can, light candles and gently return between the bricks.

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To replace the candles use tongs to slide out the tuna can. Be careful, the can and pots will be hot.

After use clean any candle wax that may have formed inside the pot.  
NEVER leave the heater unattended when candles are lit.

## Paint Can Heater/Stove

You will need:

new paint can with a lid or a clean number 10 can (these do not work as well)  
1 roll toilet paper  
1 quart bottle rubbing alcohol

1. Remove the cardboard roll from the center of your TP.
2. Squash the toilet paper and force it into the paint can.
3. Pour entire bottle of alcohol over the paper.
4. Cover with lid and seal tightly.
5. That's it. You are ready to go. When you need heat, simply light the alcohol. The alcohol will burn but the toilet paper will not. When the alcohol is gone simply cover with the lid, wait for the heater to cool down, and add a new bottle of alcohol. It is now ready to go again.

If you should put out the fire before the alcohol is gone, you will need to pour a small amount on the top to relight the stove but you will not need an entire bottle. The alcohol will burn for about eight hours.

If you are using a number 10 can, you will need to create a lid to put out the fire. You can use a cookie sheet or other metal sheet that will completely cover the opening of the can or a pot lid that is slightly larger than the opening. Your goal is to eliminate all air as fire needs air to burn.

If you are using cans without a tight-fitting lid, the alcohol will evaporate. Prepare the can as you did with the paint can but do not add the alcohol. Pour alcohol into the heater just before using.

While I would never use one of these in a car, they are a great addition to a car kit. They are easy to light in an emergency and the flame can be used to start a larger fire for warmth and cooking. They would also be appropriate to use in a shelter as long as you are awake. NEVER leave anything burning while you sleep.

Do not use water to extinguish the flame. This flame must be smothered, deprived of air.

Again, remember this will get hot so place it on tile or a fire-resistant surface.

You don't need to make everything. Just reimagine.

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Mylar blankets: You should have a stash of these in your kits and a few extra.

- Use as a blanket under a blanket or quilt.
- Cut into squares large enough to contain your foot. Place over your socks and then put on shoes or just tie on with a ribbon or yarn and keep feet warm while playing games, reading or sleeping.
- Use to line a sleeping bag that is not rated for very low temperatures.
- Hang behind paint can or flower pot heaters to reflect the heat into the room.
- Cut a slit in the center and wear as a poncho to keep warm indoors.
- Place over windows to eliminate drafts.

## Preparing meals:

### Make a Paint can heater and use as a stove.

You will need:

A grate or even a cake cooling rack to place on top of the can

Oven mitts

Long tongs

Pot and/or pan that can stand high heat (cast iron is great)

- Light paint can stove
- Place rack over flame
- Place a pot on the rack and you are ready to go.

This fire will be very hot so all foods will need to be closely watched.

Again, remember to use only on fire resistant surfaces. Placing on your counter near your stove is a perfect place as it is out of reach of children and within reach of utensils, spice, and other items needed to make a meal.

### Tuna Can Stove

This is an old idea but one that works very well. This is a great cooking source to have available in an emergency and it is virtually free. To use as a stove, follow the directions below.

You will need:

1 number 10 can

Metal cutting shears

Tuna can

Cotton string or candle wick

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Wax  
Cardboard  
Scissors

To Make:

1. Thoroughly wash a tuna can.
2. Cut an old cardboard box into strips the height of the can.
3. Place a piece of cotton mop or chord or an old candlewick at one end of the cardboard allowing it to hang over the end of the cardboard creating a wick. Roll the strips very tightly into a coil. You may need several pieces of cardboard.
4. Wedge the coil into the can.
5. In a double boiler carefully melt wax or the remains of old candles. You may want to use an old, clean can for this as it can ruin a pot.
6. Pour the wax over the cardboard allowing it to soak in.
7. Let the wax harden and place in a plastic bag in your Five-Day kit, Grab and Go Kits, Car kit and/or Office Kit.

Make the stove:

1. Take a number 10 can and fill it with water.
2. Freeze.
3. When the water is frozen use a large nail and hammer holes in the can about two inches from the base, every two inches.
4. Do the same measuring from the top of the can, two inches down and two inches apart.
5. As a last step punch holes in the center of the can. Your tuna can stove will need air to remain lit so be generous.
6. Remove the ice and your stove top is ready to go.

To use:

- Place the Tuna Can on a heat resistant surface and light it.
- Place the prepared number 10 can over the tuna can with the open side down.
- Place a pot or frying pan on top of the number 10 can.

Can will become very hot, and food will cook quickly.

Use oven mitts to remove the pot or pan.

Remove number 10 can and place a lid on the tuna can to extinguish it. Be careful when removing pot or moving your stove.

Tuna can stoves are also perfect for starting a fire. Use in place of kindling and add small branches until the fire is large enough for larger ones.

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## Thermal Cooking

Thermal cooking uses stored heat to cook. One method for thermal cooking is called Haybox cooking. This uses a small amount of fuel to begin the cooking process and finishes the cooking using insulation. This method was used extensively during World War II as fuel was rationed and in short supply. Haybox cooking is a great way to cook if living in an urban setting where fuel is scarce and/or you want to keep the fact that you have food unknown to others. Think of this as the first crock pot/slow cooker.

Step One: Choose a pot. When choosing a pot be sure you have one with a lid and that it is the appropriate size for the amount of food you will be preparing. The pot should be small enough so it is at least half full after all the food has been added. Pot should not have a long handle.

Step Two: Place all ingredients in pot. Meat should be cut into bite size pieces. Cover and bring to a rolling boil on the stove or grill or paint can stove. Simmer for 3 minutes after the temperature reaches the boiling stage.

Step Three: Place hot, covered pot into the insulated box you have prepared, and cover with insulating material. Cover insulated box tightly with a lid or piece of wood. Box should always be at room temperature when beginning.

Step Four: Food will take 4 times longer than the normal cooking time to be ready to eat and should be timed to finish in 4-6 hours or the temperature will cool down too much and the foods could spoil. If food needs to be cooked for a longer time, remove pot from the box, bring to a boil again for at least three minutes and return it to the box for the remainder of the cooking time.

Step Five: When food is cooked, remove pot from container and serve. Leave insulated box open so moisture can evaporate before storing.

Preparing your Haybox:

- 1) Choose a container that is at least four inches larger, on all sides, than your pot. Line the container bottom and sides with insulation. For the best results there should be four inches of insulation, or in other words, your pot should be at least four inches from the walls, top and floor of the container.
- 2) Make a "nest" in insulation for the pot.
- 3) Place insulation on top of the pot to fit snugly and eliminate any air pockets.
- 4) Close lid of the box, trunk, cooler, etc. you are using.
- 5) Do not peek! Every time you open the box it loses heat and effectiveness.

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## Supplies

Obviously, Hayboxes originally used hay as the insulation but there are many options.

If using large items such as blankets or sleeping bags I recommend placing towels around the pot first just in case you do have a spill. It is easier to clean a towel.

## Containers

Plan for the largest pot you anticipate using. It is also possible to use this method to stack Dutch ovens in your container. Any container should have a good lid. If your container does not have a lid you should make one of wood or a sheet of metal. You must have a good lid.

- A large camping cooler can be used with only 1-2 inches of insulation around the pot but any less and you could melt the cooler.
- Cardboard box
- Computer or appliance box (these are heavier cardboard and are great)
- Wooden box
- Plastic or metal garbage can (be sure to insulate plastic well or it will melt)
- Metal tub
- Trunk
- I have a thermal cooker I made out of fabric and Styrofoam pellets. I love it but it cannot be made quickly when you are surprised by a power outage or other disaster.

These are just a few ways to care for your family when the power fails unexpectedly, and you must make do with what you have on hand. Make a copy of this article and place it in your preparedness binder for reference. Remember when the power fails searching the internet is no longer an option.