

Don't Be Left In The Dark Wondering What To Do

Those who were prepared when the pandemic hit did not have to panic anticipating toilet paper and food shortages. They felt empowered and at peace. The same can be true when faced with any emergency or unexpected challenge. Let's talk power outage.

After a few days without power social norms begin to disappear, and when a second storm has arrived — frustration. Neighbors are hungry, thirsty, cold and out of touch with family and friends. They begin to feel desperate and abandoned as they are helpless to help themselves. As anger builds, those who would never consider bad behavior under normal circumstances are now capable of behaviors that are completely out of character. Knowing what to do beforehand can minimize the negative. Let's take time to think through a power outage.

Once the power has failed it is time to take action.

1. Pull out your preparedness binder and access the article [An Emergency Most Will Face: Power Outage](#). If you have not yet copied that do it now.
2. Use the article to remind you of all you have on hand for this adventure, gather the items you prepared.
3. Designate a room or two to gather in during the day and sleep in at night, hereafter referred to as a "gathering room." Choose a room without large windows, but that also receives direct sunlight. If your only large room has large windows keep reading for how to take care of that.
4. Close off unneeded rooms. Take personal items from bedrooms and close the doors to keep them from stealing heat from the gathering room. Move personal items to your designated gathering room. The family should gather in one or two rooms and use only one restroom until power is restored. Tip: a [paint can heater](#) will keep a bathroom warm, just place on tile and extinguish when tooth brushing and bedtime is done.
5. Close off hallways by hanging blankets or other fabrics across them. Remember the draperies between rooms in the 1800s and even into the 1940s? These were closed to seal off rooms and keep the main rooms warm and draft free. To seal off a hallway hang a shower curtain rod as close to the ceiling as possible and then drape.
6. Determine which appliances or lights will be connected to the generator and hook them up now. A generator does not need to be run 24 hours to keep food safe. A well-stocked freezer and fridge will keep foods safe to eat with 8 hours on, and then 8 hours off. If your outage will be for several days to weeks cook meats and store them cooked.

7. Place a Do Not Open sign on the refrigerator and freezer. When it is time to prepare food or grab a snack make a list of items to be taken out before opening the door. If you have snow and ice outside, place ice or snow in a picnic cooler and place foods inside that will be accessed often such as milk, cheese sticks, or jam for PB&J sandwiches. With ice and snow outside there is no reason any food should spoil. They are nature's fridge. However, do not place foods directly in the snow as temperature changes during the day can affect the safety of the food.
8. Think Hot: When the weather is cold, it is important to eat and drink hot foods and beverages. Prepare an area for cooking and heating food and water. Dehydrated foods will dehydrate the body if not reconstituted, so do not snack on or eat them without added water.
9. Cook foods and heat water, but never use a barbecue or fire pit in the house. Heated party serving trays work well for warming foods. If you have an electric stove and no way to cook, paint can stoves, or Sterno can be safely used in the house.
10. Cook only in well ventilated areas if you do not have a gas stove. Your fireplace is vented which makes it perfect for cooking. Don't forget to open the flue and then close it when done cooking.
11. Stored canned foods are perfect during a power outage. These foods contain water or syrup which can help hydrate, and they can be eaten cold if necessary. Again, eating dehydrated or freeze-dried foods without reconstituting them may cause dehydration, and can lead to serious health problems.
12. Dress in loose fitting layers. Trapped air between layers helps to insulate, keeping you warm. As it gets dark and colder, add another layer of clothing to maintain a constant body temperature. If you don't overdress early in the day you can avoid overheating and then being chilled as the temperatures fall. Protect your internal organs by keeping your core chest area warm.
13. Wear a hat and gloves. As your body diverts blood to your core to protect organs, your arms and legs can suffer frostbite. If your hands are still cold remember—mittens are warmer than gloves.
14. Before the dawn of electricity and whole house furnace systems people would place hot coals in metal bed warmers. Why not follow the example? Warm a few rocks by placing them on the hearth in front of your fireplace. When rocks are warm place them in a metal container and in your tent or under your blanket. Be very careful when handling not to burn your hands. Place it far enough from your body so you won't accidentally roll into it when sleeping. Accomplish the same thing by using a hot water bottle in your bed.
15. Speaking of hot water bottles—don't limit their use to nighttime. Keep hot water bottles nearby to use as you read or play a game.

16. Zip two sleeping bags together and sleep two to a bag, if appropriate. The combined body heat will keep you warmer than sleeping alone. Contain your body heat as much as possible.
17. Remember when as children you built forts under a kitchen table covered with a large blanket? This is also a great way to contain heat. Drape the table with the blankets, canvas tarps, or bedspreads and then place throw rugs or even a mattress under the table, crawl in, and snuggle under a blanket. You will be surprised how warm you will be. Two and three-man tents set up in your designated gathering room can achieve the same result. Both types of “tents” are another great place to use your glow sticks as night lights.
18. If there is space, bring in your family-size tent and set it up in the room of your home that you are using as the gathering room. Play games in the tent during the day and sleep in it at night. If you have a fireplace in a bedroom prepare to sleep in that room. If you don't have a fireplace and want to sleep in your bed, place your tent on the bed. Now you have the comfort of the mattress and the warmth of the tent.
19. Do not drink alcohol or eat salty foods. They dehydrate the body, and your water supply may be limited.
20. Stay hydrated. Drink warm drinks and when drinking water do not add ice cubes. Hydration is important for maintaining body temperature.
21. Place rolled up towels and rags under and around doors and windows where weather stripping may not completely seal the area. Cover light switches and any other places drafts may be entering your home.
22. To trap cold air and slow it from coming thru the glass in windows, cover them with a mylar blanket from your kits. Tape mylar to the molding around the windows. This creates a pocket of air between the glass and mylar blanket. This will limit drafts but still allow light in. Dark rooms during an outage are very depressing.
23. Sit near a window receiving direct sun. Cover at night but keep uncovered, except for the mylar blanket, during the day.
24. As soon as the sun goes down, cover the windows in the gathering room. Use blankets, sheets, tarps, plastic sheeting and/or drapery to prevent drafts from robbing the heat in your home after dark. Newspaper in layers is a great insulator as well. At night, wind chill will become a real factor in keeping your home warm. Do all you can to keep the wind outside.
25. Games: Make sure games, books, craft supplies, and puzzles are easily accessible. Use them to help pass the time. When the sun goes down place a flashlight, battery-powered lantern, or glow stick in the middle of the floor and huddle around it like a campfire. Drink hot

cocoa and tell family stories or appropriate spooky tales (like Ichabod Crane and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow). By appropriate, go easy on the scary stuff with young children if you want a full night's sleep.

26. Stay indoors as much as possible. If you need to leave the house, open and close the door quickly, and keep it closed, not propped open while you carry something in or out.
27. If you have a well that supplies your water, it is extremely important that you have ample water stored. Even if you are on a water system you should be storing extra water. Water pipes can freeze, and if they do, turn off your water and do not attempt to unfreeze the pipes. Keep jugs of water stored for flushing toilets. You will also need water to drink, prepare meals, have water for pets, and for cleaning. Store wet wipes and liquid hand sanitizer for cleaning hands and conserving water.
28. Unplug appliances and devices that are not part of the plan for using your generator. If there are power surges, this will protect these items. Leave one ceiling light switched on to make you aware when the power returns.
29. Learn where public heating centers are open in case you can't keep an area of your home warm enough. Use these centers but be aware most are closed at night so prepare your home.
30. Use a thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer to know the temperature when the power is restored. Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color or texture. When in doubt, throw it out!
31. Check on your neighbors. Older adults and young children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures, and they may not ask for help.
32. Listen to HAM radio or emergency broadcasts to stay informed as to weather changes and power updates.
33. Bring pets inside or, if you cannot, keep pets in the garage, out building, barn, or in an enclosed area that can be warmed with blankets, newspapers, straw, or other items.
34. If you must leave the house beware of downed power lines. During a storm downed lines may still be active. Electricity can travel 30 feet from the line making the ground dangerous to step on.
35. Gas fireplaces will not provide much heat without a blower so don't depend on them. They do make a great vented area to use a camp stove for cooking. Do not use a propane stove if you cannot vent it.

Totally Ready

Prepped when it really counts

36. Think lighting. As the sun sets bring in outdoor solar lighting. Solar lights will stay lit all night and can be recharged the next day outdoors.
37. Pull glow sticks out of your kits and use them during the night as lighting in hallways and the bathroom. To increase reflected light, place a glow stick in a water bottle filled with water—they are waterproof. Glow sticks may also be placed in front of a piece of aluminum or mylar to reflect and increase the light. When purchasing, buy only white or yellow as they provide the most light.
38. When using candles, place in a jar to prevent an accident. Canning jars work well to contain candles. Never leave a candle lit if you are leaving home or going to sleep. Be aware scented candles can cause allergic reactions or breathing difficulties. Avoid using them for lighting.
39. Pull out flashlights and camping lanterns that run on batteries, not propane or kerosene.
40. Inflatable solar lights are LED and powerful. They are perfect for playing games and reading. Don't forget to put them out during the day to recharge.

With a little bit of preparation, a power outage can be a memorable adventure for your family, and not a big deal. Without planning, well, you might welcome a zombie apocalypse. Good luck!