Prepare for Power and Natural Gas Failures

By Gemie Martin

Any number of things can cause a disruption in our electrical power or natural gas systems. Here are some things you can do to be prepared:

* Post the phone numbers you would call if your electricity and/or natural gas service is disrupted in a place where family members can find them easily.
* Store extra blankets and sleeping bags in case you lose heating in the winter.
* Have a good space heater for use if natural gas fails. Consumer Reports suggests, “When you shop for an electric space heater, look for a label from a recognized testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratory), ETL (Intertek) . . . verifying that the heater’s construction and performance meet voluntary U. S. safety standards.” **Make sure you follow all safety instructions.**
* Store flashlights and battery powered lanterns to use as sources for light in your home. Make sure to store batteries for these.
* Candles may come in handy during power outages. Make sure these are attended constantly when in use. Matches and/or lighters are also necessary storage items. Store them out of the reach of children. Flameless candles, powered by batteries are great to have on hand.
* Have a supply of food on hand that needs no cooking or refrigeration.
* According to [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov) you should have thermometers for both your freezer and refrigerator. Food should stay below 40° F for the refrigerator and 0° F for the freezer. In case electrical power fails, keep your refrigerator and freezer shut. The food in your freezer will stay frozen for at least 24 hours if your freezer is half full, 48 if it is full. If frozen food has not gone above 40 degrees and still has ice crystals, it can be re-frozen. Throw out any perishable food that has been above 40 degrees for two or more hours. For more information see: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/power_outages.html>.
* Have a few emergency cooking options such as an outdoor grill, solar oven, apple box oven, propane (or other safe type of fuel-powered) camping stove, and etc. Have a variety in case one type is not a good option. For example if you are depending on a solar oven for your emergency cooking and must cook at night, that would be a problem.
* Store fuel in the form of propane canisters, charcoal briquettes, wood logs, Duraflame® (or similar) logs, and etc. for use in emergency cooking. Wood logs and Duraflame® logs can also be stored and burned to produce heat from your fireplace if you have one that burns wood.
* Consider getting a gas fueled generator to power your refrigerator, freezer, and small electrical items during a power outage that lasts more than 24 hours.