

7 Tips to Surviving a Long Term Blackout

<http://gravitygarden.com/Turn-the-lights-on/>



What would happen if you were watching the evening news, the kids were getting ready for bed and suddenly everything went dark? You found that all electrical power to your home had just suddenly stopped and your neighborhood was encased in utter darkness?

Would you be in a position to recover quickly when no electric power whatsoever is available to keep the lights burning, your food cold, and the heat on?

In August of 2003, the largest blackout to ever engulf the United States rolled across the Northeast states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut. This massive power outage affected millions of people for several days. During that time the sale of gas powered generators flew off the shelves of the local home improvements stores. [Preparation is key!](#)

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Will You Be Able to Turn the Lights on in a Power Outage?

Power outages are an occurrence where the infrastructure that supports electrical power to residential and business customers fail. In the particular case of the great power outage of 2003, no one could turn the lights on for at least a day and others had no power for several days after the massive power failure.

The power companies and local municipalities learned a great deal about the fail safe measures that were supposed to trigger during catastrophic failures. Many home owners also learned that they too are exposed when the blackout inevitably occurs.

People naturally take it for granted that their homes will always have electrical power to run their TVs. Refrigerators and Air conditioners, until the time comes that the lights have gone out. Our society is not prepared to handle long term power outages and should become more aware of the exposure.

There are [alternative sources of power](#) that can supplement or even replace the power received from local utility companies, but these are long term strategies that many do not plan for. Wind, Solar and other technologies are becoming more mainstream when people think of an increase in Oil prices, but do not necessarily rely on themselves to plan for extended power outages.

The threat of terrorist attack, human error or even natural disaster should tell us all that this is an important issue that everyone should be thinking about in order to keep themselves prepared.

Access to basic needs during these times will be crucial factors to our survival and the safety of our families.

In times of temporary power failures, there are devices that can provide basic power when needed to keep food from spoiling and

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drive basic light water pumps to keep the necessary appliances running. Gas, [solar](#) and other alternative fuel generators can be installed or made accessible in case a blackout does occur. There are many choices to select from when determining your budget and power needs.

In summary, each homeowner should look for ways to be able to [turn the lights on](#) when power is not available due to natural or manmade causes. It is a prudent to have a plan and the tools to be able to keep your home safe and secure when the lights go out for everyone else.

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Tip 1 – Develop a Strategy



In our current society, people typically take it for granted that electricity to their homes will always be available to run their TVs freezers and air conditioning units, until the time comes that the lights have gone out. Our society is not prepared to handle

long term power outages and should become more aware of the exposure.

There are [alternative sources of](#) power that can supplement or even replace the power received from local utility companies, but these are long term strategies that many do not plan for. [Wind](#), Solar and other technologies are becoming more mainstream as [new products](#) come to market to meet the demands of consumers.

Usually, people only think of [alternative methods of generating](#) their own power when Oil prices spike or there is a major catastrophe that happens somewhere else. If you are reading this article, you have at least thought about the potential for disaster and are educating yourself and hopefully researching ways to prepare for the inevitable.



[Gasoline Powered generators](#) are the most common form of power backup. Add fuel, start her up and you are able to run some of your electrical appliances. The size of the unit will determine how long you can run as well as how many electrical units you can power.

[Solar energy generators](#) can also be a source for backup electricity during blackouts. Again the size of the battery determines the

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amount of "juice" you will have to run the essential appliances until power is restored.

In conclusion, being prepared for the inevitable power failure is something everyone should do today. Having the ability to turn the lights on when the utility power is not available, is a unique position to be in and can provide a level of comfort knowing your family is able to withstand temporary power outages.

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Tip 2 – Create a Blackout Kit



Preparing for a blackout or power outage is one of the fundamental areas that many people avoid. Making your own blackout kit is a smart way to take steps in preparing yourself and your family for an impending power outage.

Power outages can be very disruptive and chaotic, and if not prepared, could lead to real safety issues for you and your family. Having a blackout kit is a prudent way to prepare for these types of emergencies if they occur. There are several areas to consider when defining your blackout kit; food, communication, water, light, and heat.



Food and access to fresh water are the two areas of highest concern. If an extended outage does take place, ensuring you have enough to sustain your family for the duration is the most important aspect of the blackout kit. Can goods and dry goods are commonly stored for this purpose. As your refrigerator and freezers begin to warm due to lack of electricity, these items will be consumed first, but if an outage lasts for several days, these items will eventually spoil. Bottled water is also important as some homes will be unable to provide water to faucets if the pumps that require electricity are inoperable.



The other basic items to store are the typical blankets, batteries, flashlights and radios. However, if a major disaster were to occur,

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battery powered items are only good for so long. It may be in your best interest to look at more reliable and sustainable sources of power in case the power outage lasts for longer periods. In the case of a natural disaster like hurricane Katrina, power was unavailable to many parts of the city for days and even weeks.

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Tip 3 – Standard Batteries will not last forever



There are newer technologies that can provide longer term power needs if this avenue is pursued. There are flashlights and radios that are not powered by traditional batteries, but generators that derive their power through a hand crank design. Once the crank is turned several times it stores the within an internal generator to power the device at will.

Access to sustainable electric power using standard D Cell batteries are not an option. Of course they are good in a pinch, for the short term, but long term outages require a more long term strategy. As panic sets in, a rush on the local stores for batteries and other items would be evident. Do not get caught in the herd.

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Tip 4 – Purchase a Power inverter



A power inverter may also be something that would be added to your blackout kit. This small portable device will take a normal DC battery from a car or boat and convert it into an AC current source of power sufficient to run items in your home like a microwave or other small appliances. This one from [Xantrex Technologies 813-5000](#)

[XPower 5000 Watt](#) can literally run some of your home electrical devices from your car, which can be important part of your strategy.

Another reason this device is a must for your blackout kit, is that some systems in your home may not run unless a small amount of electricity is provided. Even though you have a natural gas or fuel oil boiler used to heat your home, it may not kick on unless a small electric current is provided. The power inverter can supply the needed electricity to enable your boiler to operate. This alone would pay for the device, if your home is without power in the dead of winter and your heating system needed a small amount to warm your family.

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Tip 5 – Set aside an Emergency Storage Space

It is inevitable. The power you receive for your appliances and comforts of home could someday disappear for an extended period of time. Are you prepared? Make your plans now to prepare for the eventual loss of electricity to your home.



What you do today could return a great deal when you and your family are sitting in the dark eating cold beans out of a can. First and foremost, you need to take an inventory of the critical needs you will want to have access to if nothing worked.

Some of the categories that will need to be addressed will be food, communication, light and heat (depending on time of year). The outside temperature could be a big factor in your plan. Losing power in the summer is obviously more preferable, since it is easier to stay cool than to stay warm. Losing power in the winter is an entirely different matter. Generating heat in the winter without access to electrical power is crucial to keeping your family safe and comfortable.

Planning for a power outage is not that hard. Getting organized and building your inventory of items is easy to do once you follow the basic steps below:

Setting aside a space in your home to keep the necessary survival items is a great way to get started. Having a specific location to keep your inventory of blankets, batteries and can goods will keep things located in one area, which will be much better than trying to hunt down these items in the dark.

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Tip 6 – Stock up on necessary items

Inventory items that you should have for your emergency stockpile:

Water - Access to drinking water is crucial when your current system is down. Bottled water should be one of the major items you keep in your inventory. If your water supply is affected, you want to ensure safe water is available for drinking and cooking. Do not waste your drinking water for flushing the toilets. If they do not work during an outage, you can use water from your rain barrel as a source of water for your tanks. This may not be an option in the winter, due to freezing temperatures, so plan accordingly.

Can goods - Stock up on extra can goods when the local market is having special sales. This will allow you to build your food stock as can goods can keep food edible for long periods of time. Do not forget to add a manual can opener to the list.



Propane or Charcoal - Your gas or charcoal grill can be invaluable when your electric stove is inoperable. Of course, do not keep these items in the house for safety reasons. In the winter, you can also use this as a heat source in some cases if needed as long as safety precautions are followed. If you have a smoker, it is another tool that can provide a heat and cooking source if needed.

[Vegetable Garden](#) - This may not be as obvious, but starting and maintaining a vegetable garden can provide much needed food during an extended period of time. Of course, the local market may also be open but it would be prudent to have access to these foods in case the local market is not an option.

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Tip 7 – Plan to Eat Well During a Long Power Outage!

Planning now for that day could be the difference in making your family more comfortable for the long haul if power is not available for an extended period of time.

Of course your refrigerator and freezer will be the first things to be affected without power keeping your food cold. Having the standard thermal coolers available in your basement or shed should be one of the items to keep in your survival space. This will help keep food cold and insulated so that it will last longer and kept from spoiling.

Having the right food during a power outage should be part of your survival strategy. Can goods are the obvious choice to keep in your food pantry, but storing grains like rice or cornmeal in plastic 5 gallon containers may be something to consider as well. These grains can easily be part of your meal planning during a power outage. Do not forget to keep a manual can opener in your survival space.



You may be thinking about how these food staples can be prepared if you do not have an oven or stove. Your gas or charcoal grill is a great tool that can be used as a backup oven and stove when needed. Even though most people see a grill for backyard functions, most people have at least one in their backyard that can be used when needed while the oven and stove are out of commission. Your gas or charcoal grill can act as a temporary oven for baking breads and other meals during the period where the home power is disabled. Having spare propane or charcoal on hand is essential in being able to cook your food during this period.

