

## WHAT TO DO IF THE LIGHTS GO OUT

Power outages can lead to not only the loss of lighting, but to the disablement of heating and air conditioning systems, most cordless phones, refrigerators, gas pumps, ATM machines, power dependent gates and doors, special medical equipment, traffic control devices, elevators, and many other electronic devices that we take for granted.

A short-term power outage is certainly an inconvenience, but a longer outage can become life threatening.

The right blackout protection can keep you safe, comfortable, and in touch with the outside world.

Here are some guidelines on some products available, that will assist you in coping with a blackout.

### GENERATORS - THE ULTIMATE PROTECTION

Simple gasoline-powered generators can make a blackout more bearable. Some popular brands made by Honda, Coleman and Generac supply the 5000 watts or more needed to run heating systems and other essentials and cost about \$600.00. They run on a fuel system that uses about one-half gallons of gas per hour.

To estimate how much wattage you want, or need, use the chart below.

SYSTEM/APPLIANCE	RUNNING WATTS	STARTING/SURGE WATTS
Gas furnace/blower	700	1,400
Lights	Listed on bulb	Listed on bulb
Microwave oven	1,000	1,000
Radio	50-200	50-200
Electric Range	1,000-2,500 per burner	1,000-2,500 per burner
Refrigerator	800	2,300
Well pump	750	2,000
Electric water heater	5,000-10,000	5,000-1000
Sump pump	750	750
Computer	250-300	250-300
Color TV set	115-300	115-300
Small room air conditioner	500	1,000
Space heater	1,500	1,500
TOTALS		

- Total the running wattage of what you will power.
- Separately total the starting or surge wattage for refrigerators and other devices with a motor.
- Choose a generator that supplies enough wattage for items you want to run.

NOTE: GENERATORS SHOULD NEVER BE USED INDOORS BECAUSE OF THE CARBON MONOXIDE IN THEIR EXHAUST FUMES.

## AC POWER INVERTERS

These inexpensive devices connect to a car's battery and can briefly power some lights and a small appliance or two. Models that produce up to 300 watts cost less than \$100.00 and you won't have to run the car's engine for short use of the device.

## PORTABLE CAR BATTERY BOOSTER DEVICES

The devices, used for starting a car battery, can also be used indoors to power an AC inverter (see above). These portables cost less than \$100.00 and will run a 19-inch color TV for about four hours.

## FLASHLIGHTS

New model flashlights include models with xenon, krypton, and halogen bulbs designed to provide more light than conventional flashlight bulbs. Generally, the larger the battery size, the longer the light will last. Alkaline cell batteries are the most common type and last longer than other types. There are also some hand-cranked flashlights on the market.

## COMMUNICATION

Make sure you have at least one corded telephone, which is powered by the phone line. Cordless phones require AC power, so most won't work during a power outage, although some cell phones can accept a battery that will power the phone in a pinch. Another development in cell phones is a keypad that allows you to enter a short text message that is likelier to get through if an emergency overloads voice circuits. Some handsets allow you to use preset messages, such as "I'll be late."

## OTHER REMINDERS

- If a member of your household uses a battery-operated wheelchair, is on life support, or requires other power-dependent equipment, contact your utility company and indicate that during an outage they need to be reached quickly. Most power companies provide this service.
- Make sure you back up your computer files and operating systems regularly. Turn off all computers, monitors, printers, scanners and other devices when not in use; if the power goes out, you won't have to worry about lost files.
- You can also protect files by getting an uninterruptible power source. These devices cost about \$100.00 and provide temporary power for a few minutes so you can save your work and shut down your computer safely.
- Consider the use of a surge suppressor which protects computers and other appliances from damage from voltage surges that can occur during blackouts or when powering devices with a generator.

Sources: FEMA, Consumer Reports Magazine, LA DWP.

