How to prepare your home for a blackout

Energy Savers Blog

Summer may best be known for lounging poolside, family vacations, and neighborhood barbeques, but there's a darker side to summer, too. The United States' largest blackout occurred in the dog days of August in 2003 and affected an estimated 50 million people in Canada, Ohio, Michigan, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York.

High winds from hurricanes and thunderstorms can knock out electrical lines, and high temperatures can create demand that overloads the electrical grid, causing blackouts like the one that occurred in 2003. Here are a few tips from the California Energy Commission Consumer Energy Center [1] on how you can prepare your home and office to safely navigate a blackout.

- Keep a flashlight in each room of your house and in your office. Keep plenty of batteries on hand, too, or consider a "shake it [2]" flashlight that does not need batteries.
- Keep candles and/or oil lamps on hand for light. Don't forget matches! Also, do not light candles and/or oil lamps if there is a possibility of a gas leak in your home.
- Keep the emergency number for your electric utility handy in case you need to call.
- Keep an ice chest available to store medications that must remain cold. Store an ice pack in your freezer and ready for the ice chest if you'll need to keep any medication cold.
- If you use electricity for your water, such as a well with an electric pump, have enough water available to last a couple of days. You should have at least a gallon of drinking water a day for each person in your house for drinking and cooking.
- If you want to have a backup generator, make sure it is installed by a licensed electrician. Check with your local building department to see if a permit is needed. Make sure the system has an automatic breaker that disconnects the house from the power company's regular electricity lines when it is running. This prevents electricity from leaking back into the grid and making it dangerous for utility workers.
- Keep a household first aid kit and a disaster preparedness backpack kit (the American Red Cross offers this kit for sale [3]) in case something happens.
- Have a household disaster plan that you and your family can follow if something occurs.

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http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2012/08/how-prepare-your-home-blackout?qt-video_of_the_day=0

Links:
[1] http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/tips/beprepared.html
[2] http://www.ehow.com/how-does_4605338_shake-flashlights-work.html
[3] http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/tips/images/Backpack_Disaster_Kit.jpg