







PREPARING FOR

SHORTAGE

How to Prepare for an Electricity Shortage

Electricity is an essential part of our lives today. So much so, that when we are left without it we can have a very hard time getting by. And yet electricity shortages happen all the time. During extreme weather events power lines can be affected, or areas will shut off electricity to try and keep everyone safe. Sometimes our energy provider will shut off our electricity due to changing wires, unpaid bills, or even a simple mix-up. From time to time we may actively go somewhere without electricity, such as going camping, too. Sometimes we will get fair warning that our electricity is going to be shut off, but most of the time? Most of the time there is no warning at all. So what can we do to make sure we are ready for an electricity shortage, no matter what the reason? There are a few essential measures we can take to prepare for a shortage.

Have alternative light sources

The very first thing we will notice during an electricity shortage is that the lights don't work, possibly just at home, but possibly anywhere. It is hard to understand how much we rely on electrical lighting until we aren't able to use it. So make sure to be prepared. Candles are a good conventional source of light, but wear down fast and carry the risk of fire. Make sure you have some, just in case, but prioritize some high quality, battery-powered LED torches. LED torches last a very long time, just don't store them with batteries still inside them, and keep your batteries in their original packaging, in a Tupperware box, to avoid discharge and damp damage.

Keeping tech charged



Make sure your tech stays charged, especially your phones, as they can be a life saver, especially if the phone and internet signal is still going strong. Invest in a good power bank to keep your phone charged in case of an emergency. Keep your power bank topped up by charging it every three months or so. You may also wish to consider getting a spare, low-energy phone, like a non-smartphone, or a very low end smartphone, and keeping it on PAYG with a tenner of credit and all important numbers saved on it.

Keeping food from spoiling

During a brief electrical shortage, it may be that your fridge or freezer will recover power in time to protect your food. But if you want to maximize your changes, make sure to keep things as cold as possible. Make sure your freezer is mostly full, and if it isn't full enough, add two liter bottles, half full of water, to bulk it out. The more compressed your freezer is, the less heat leaves it. And during an electrical outage, put fridge items in a cooler bag with 1-4 of these two liter bottles, to keep it cool and fresh.

Keep your car fueled



During an electrical shortage, two things happen which will affect your ability to fuel your car. Firstly, most gas pumps are electric, so nothing can be got from them. And secondly, even at older pumps that may still be active, there will be high demand from people seeking fuel to get them to see loved ones, to power generators, etc. So, hedge your bets and keep your car fueled, and maybe a spare tank of fuel, at all times.

Getting a generator

Speaking of generators, they are an amazing idea if you are very reliant on electricity. If,

for example, you have a machine which is keeping you alive, then you absolutely need a generator. However, in less extreme situations, such as having to deliver work during a local power outage, a generator will still come in useful.

Finding a source

When we're looking at a large-scale shortage, such as during a natural disaster, there will often be a supply of electricity provided by the government. Find out where your electric hotspots are and keep a record of them. When in doubt, use your charged PAYG phone to call emergency services and ask for advice.

How to Prepare for a Fuel Shortage

In the case of a fuel shortage, many of us are woefully unprepared. This is because although electrical outages are common parts of our lives which we have learned to adapt to, and food and water shortages are common enough that we have at least considered them, most of us have never had to consider the risk of a fuel shortage.

However, fuel shortages are very much possible, and are indeed common in other parts of the world. Things that can cause a fuel shortage include:



Disputes between fuel providers and their suppliers or employees

A long term, large scale electrical shortage causing the shutdown of gas stations.
The slow reduction in fossil fuels creating physical, financial, or legal restrictions which will stop us using fuel.

In these situations, there are no ways of acting suddenly, so it is vital to be prepared well in advance. Here are some things we can do to prepare for a fuel shortage.

Use less fuel

If the shortage looks like it will affect you for more than a few days, work out how to use less fuel. For example, if you live far out consider buying in a month or more of groceries and focusing on frozen, freezable, or tinned good, to minimize shopping trips. If you live in an urban setting, walk to the shops and shop little and often. Consider working from home if at all possible, or condensing your work days so you have to travel less. Carpooling and public transport are also great ways of splitting fuel costs.

Have a low-fuel or fuel-free transport alternative



If you really need to get around but your regular vehicle uses a lot of fuel, consider keeping an alternative which uses less fuel. What your alternative is will depend on where you live. If you live in the city and are close to the places you need to get, a bicycle is a good choice. But if you live far out in the country and need to cover greater distances, a low-fuel motorbike or scooter could be a life-changer. Some people who live rurally will also benefit from using horses or cattle for travel. If you don't have your own livestock, make arrangements with someone who does in case you need fuel-free transport urgently.

Keep a stockpile of fuel

This is a very clever idea, but many people get it wrong. The common mistake is to buy a pile of jerry cans, fill them, and stash them away long term. Petrol or diesel in a jerry can in

your garage only has a healthy life of three to six months before it becomes useless. If you intend on keeping a stockpile, fill up jerry cans with 4 month's worth of regular fuel use and cycle them. That means keeping a date sticker on them, when your fuel is low topping up from the oldest can, and filling a new one. This cannot be done as effectively with more sensitive engines, though, as it can wear them down.
Always keep your tanks full

A simple way to make sure you are ready for a brief fuel shortage is just to keep your vehicle/s topped up. Again, you rarely get much warning when a fuel shortage hits, it is generally well into it that most people find out, and by then it is too late to fuel up. By never letting your tank drop below half full you can make sure you have enough to keep you moving if there is a brief fuel shortage. This could make the difference between getting things done and not getting things done in a fuel shortage, or between running out of fuel fast and having enough fuel to get you to an area where the gas pumps work again.

Have wood burning and coal burning heating options



Finally, if your home uses gas, petrol, or diesel to run your heating, then you will need to have a few alternative options. A simple metal stove which burns wood or coal, has a chute to direct smoke out the window, and warms up the room quickly, could be a literal life saver if you need fuel to heat your home.

How to Prepare for a Food Shortage

Food shortages can happen to any of us, for whatever reason. It is easy to think that a food shortage will only happen to other people, but the fact of the matter is that natural disasters, losing a job or our homes, or even running out of food at the wrong time can

affect any of us without warning. For this reason, we need to be prepared in case a food shortage hits us and we don't know what to do.

Keep a stockpile

The first and easiest step is to keep a stockpile at home. It is estimated that most houses have 3-30 days worth of food at all times, so we need to make sure our food allocation is closer to the 25-90 day area. If you have enough space, try and keep it all at home, somewhere hidden in case of looters. If you do not have much space of your own, talk to neighbors about starting a collective stockpile for a few of you, or even for your street. This would be kept somewhere secure, nearby, that you all have access to, but which is out of sight from the street.

Important stockpile goods are all things with a long life. This means we want to avoid anything fresh, or poorly sealed goods such as part-baked breads. A minimum 2-3 year shelf life is required. Good ideas include:

- tinned goods
- jarred goods
- dry pulses
- dry fruit and vegetables
- whole grains
- pasta
- flour
- dried, sealed meat and hard cheese



And don't throw tins or jars out just because of their best-before date! This date means

nothing regarding how edible the food is, it just refers to taste, consistency, etc. Any food that can be safely stored in a can or jar for over two years can be stored pretty much indefinitely so long as the container is not damaged.

Be wary of damp as well. Any food which is in a metallic container must be elevated away from the ground and stored away from water leaks. Food in paper containers is completely useless and must not be stored. Unwrapped foods are also useless, especially if you can't check on them regularly. Make sure as much food as possible is in water-tight containers, such as plastic bags.

Picking the right type of food



Make sure you have a wide variety of foods. Tinned and jarred meats, tinned and dry fruit and vegetables, grains and pulses in plastic bags, are all excellent for nutrition, and if you can keep some shelf-stable supplements this is very important too. But don't forget that you will need plenty of pure and simple calories too, so don't skip chips, sweets, and chocolates. They have a long shelf life, come wrapped tightly in plastic, and are loaded with calories whilst taking up very little space, making them great emergency foods.

Finally, typical bulk buying strategies of getting large containers are not a good idea. Why? Because once they've been opened these containers are useless, cause vermin, fungi, and damp can get into a container once it is opened. So unless you plan on eating 25lbs of lentils, or 1lb of ravioli, or 5kg of sugar all in one go, try and keep your stockpile in small containers which cover one or two meals for your family at the most.

Grow your own and know where food grows

Fresh food can be very hard to get by during times of crisis, so it is important to have access to your own fresh food wherever you are. Growing some food in your garden or an allotment are great ideas. But if you can't grow your own, consider finding out about community gardens, ornamental edible plants people grow, and local wild edibles. Don't go for anything that is questionable, but crab apples and blackberries are safe bets.

Learn where collection zones are

Finally, it is highly important to remember that in the event of a crisis, personal or widespread, there are NGOs and government official schemes designed to deliver food to people who need it. If you find yourself suddenly without food, find out where your nearest food bank is and see if they have anything to help you out.

How to Prepare for a Water Shortage

Lack of water is not something we think of as affecting first world nations, but developed countries can and do suffer water shortages in many situations. During natural disasters water may be very scarce, or at least clean, fresh, healthy water may be. Often whole cities are supplied by a single reservoir too. Should there be a problem with this water supply, such as drying up or contamination, then you will need to find water elsewhere. And finally, during droughts it is not rare for local governments to enforce restrictions on how and when water is used, to help it go further.

So what can everyday people like you or I do to ensure that we have enough water to last us during a shortage? There are several ways of prepping for such an event:

Do not overuse the water you have

It should go without saying, but if you are short on water, you need to use it carefully and cleverly. We all know the basics: don't wash your car, don't water your lawn, etc. However, there are other ways of using water efficiently. For example, when washing the dishes fill two small tubs that fit in the sink, one with soapy and one with clean water. Use the soapy water for washing and dip in clean water to rinse. Or when cooking vegetables or pasta, save and refrigerate the water and reuse it for up to 48h, at which point finish by making a stew. Having a very shallow bath rather than a shower can help too. You won't be immersed, but just sat in the water and you can use a jug to pour it over yourself.

Keep a rainwater collector

Just because the water reservoir has dried up doesn't always mean it will have stopped raining. So set up a large rainwater collector to grab as much water as humanly possible. If you have methods for purifying water, then there is another trick you can use. The bigger the surface of the collector, the more water it collects per minute. So your house is a huge rainwater collector. Keep your gutters clean and place barrels underneath them to gather water. At the very least, you will have some water for cleaning outside, watering plants, or giving to pets. But, if you can purify it, you will have washing water, or even drinking water, for free.

Keep water filters

Whether you plan on collecting your own water or not, make sure to make use of a water filter, or store them in case you need them. Home water filters are an amazing tool, and very advanced in this day and age. So much so that you can get systems which will all but completely eliminate toxins, bacteria, and parasites. Shop around and find yourself a very good one. Water filter systems mean that you can safely drink rainwater, or purify contaminated water which is coming out of your tap, or even recover water which has been left in a jug and gone a bit stale.

Stockpile sugary drinks and mild alcoholic beverages



It is ordinarily very bad advice to drink sugary drinks and alcoholic drinks instead of water, as they will slow down how quickly you hydrate. But when we are facing a long term water shortage, slow hydration is better than no hydration. Fresh or bottled water has a nasty habit of going stale very quickly, and can grow bacteria of all kinds. Sugar and alcohol will help keep bacteria at bay if you really have no other options.

Buy and eat watery fruits and vegetables

Finally, often when there is a water shortage the rest of life carries on as normal. But what do you buy when the supermarket is all out of drinks? Simple: watery plants. Many plants have a high fluid and mineral content which makes them excellent for hydration. So buy up cucumbers, oranges, tomatoes, radishes, pineapple, coconut, all kinds of melon, etc., and try and use them to stay as hydrated as possible until water is available again.