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Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Stay Cool When The Power Is Out

Idaho can be home to extreme weather. Here in the Treasure Valley, it can be really hot or really cold. Having a power outage during either of those extremes could be very uncomfortable or in some cases, depending on a person's condition, even deadly. On average, in the United States, approximately 175 people a year die from extreme heat. Children, the elderly or those that are sick are at the highest risk. The summer of 1996 had blackouts of the electrical grid throughout the western United States, Canada and Mexico; as many as 7.5 million people were without power at any one time. Power outages during the summer months can and do happen. These blackouts leave people without air conditioning or electric fans. Without these modern conveniences, people can become exposed to extreme heat.

Go Green Now, Stay Cool Later

Staying cool when the power is out requires preparation. Your home can be a haven from the heat or an oven depending on insulation and shade. Here are some home improvement ideas that will save money and energy in normal times and help keep the cool in and the hot out when there is no power.

- ✱ Assess and install the highest functional level of insulation in the walls, floor and attic. This will vary based on construction type; you may wish to consult an insulation professional.
- ✱ Stop air leaks around doors and windows; use caulking or weather stripping as necessary
- ✱ Install high performance, energy efficient windows
- ✱ Install louver blinds, cellular shades or lined curtains inside windows
- ✱ Install sunscreens or awnings on outside of windows
- ✱ Plant a tree or trees a safe distance from the house to provide shade on the windows

Keep Your Cool

If the power goes out during the heat of the summer there are some things you can do to help keep cool.

- 1 Open windows at night, try to establish a cross breeze throughout the house
- 2 Shut windows as the day warms, close blinds, shades or lined curtains until evening
- 3 Do not cook inside, eat cold meals or use an outdoor grill or camping stove
- 4 Drink plenty of water, avoid caffeinated or alcoholic beverages
- 5 Dress in light cotton clothes, perspiration in cotton clothes can create an evaporative cooler effect
- 6 Soak shirt in cool water, ring it out and wear it until it is dry then repeat the process
- 7 Take a cool bath or shower during the heat of the day
- 8 Minimize physical activity
- 9 Use ice (if available) or cool water in a compress to dab wrists and other pulse points

It may not be possible to keep the entire house cool. If this is the case, find the coolest room in the house to stay in during the hottest times of the day. Lower floors or basements will be cooler. Create solar reflectors for the windows of this room by cutting cardboard the size of the window and covering the cardboard on one side with aluminum foil. Place the reflector, foil side out, inside the window frame during the day.

Food Minus Refrigeration

If ice or dry ice is available, then foods in the refrigerator and freezer can be kept cold that way. If it is not, then foods in the refrigerator should be consumed first, followed by food from the freezer. If the doors are left closed, a refrigerator will maintain the food for 4 hours. A full freezer can maintain food for up to 48 hours.



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