Your must-have list for a winter outage

The worksheet for "How to Heat & Power Your Home In a Long Term Blackout" with Nick & Lisa Meissner

Print this, grab a pen, and give it about 30 minutes. Page 1 is your must-have list, and page 2 is the winter part.

STEP 1 The 10-minute power-down walkthrough

Find your main breaker, flip it off for 10 minutes and walk through the house. Write down everything that stops working, and don't forget the winter things, like the furnace or a pellet stove. Then circle **M** for a must-have (health and safety), **N** for nice to have, or **D** for don't need.

Before you flip it, shut down a pellet stove that's burning, and have a backup ready for anyone on oxygen.

What stopped working	Where it is / why it matters	Circle one
		M N D
		M N D
		M N D
		M N D
		M N D
		M N D
		M N D

STEP 2 Your must-have list

Copy your M's here, most important first. For each one, get 2 numbers: the watts it pulls while it's running, and the kilowatt hours (kWh) it uses in a day.

#	Must-have	Watts running	kWh a day
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
		My daily total	kWh

How to measure. Plug a Kill-A-Watt meter into the wall and the appliance into the meter. Press Watts to see what it pulls right now. For anything that cycles on and off, like the fridge or freezer, leave it plugged in for 24 hours, then press kWh.

Can't measure yet? Ballpark numbers: a fridge 1 to 2 kWh a day, a chest freezer 1 to 1.5, an internet router 0.2 to 0.3, a CPAP 0.3 to 0.6, LED lights very little. A typical must-have list lands somewhere around 2 to 4 kWh a day.

Hardwired? The well pump, the furnace and anything on 240 volts won't plug into a Kill-A-Watt. A monitor that clips inside your panel, like the Emporia Vue, can read them.

Quick check. More than 8 items? Look again. Some of them probably belong with the nice-to-haves, and a short list is what keeps your backup affordable.

No number for the well pump or the furnace? That's exactly what we work through live inside the Academy (see page 2).

God provides. We prepare.

STEP 3 Your heat when the power's out

How do you heat now?

- ☐ Gas or propane furnace
- ☐ Heat pump or electric furnace
- ☐ Baseboard or space heaters
- ☐ Pellet stove
- ☐ Wood stove
- ☐ Other: _____

Does it need electricity to run? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure If yes, which part? _____

Watch out. Even a gas furnace goes quiet when the power does, because its blower and controls run on electricity. And electric heat drains a battery fast: a 1,500 watt space heater uses 3 kWh in 2 hours, a whole day's budget.

Heat that doesn't touch the battery

- ☐ An indoor-rated propane heater, like a Mr. Heater Buddy, with _____ propane tanks on hand
- ☐ A wood stove, with _____ cords of wood
- ☐ The one room we'd keep warm: _____

Stay safe

- ☐ Carbon monoxide alarms near the bedrooms and in the room you'll heat, with fresh batteries
- ☐ A window cracked for fresh air while a propane heater runs (check its manual)
- ☐ A spot for the generator outside, well away from windows, doors and vents (never in the garage, even with the door open)

STEP 4 Your level

Check the one you're on today. A level only counts when your must-have list actually runs on it.

- ☐ **Level 0 · Nothing yet.** When the power goes, so does everything on your list.
- ☐ **Level 1 · Bridge power.** Usually a small generator, preferably paired with a portable power station, keeps your must-haves running.
- ☐ **Level 2 · Whole home backup.** A large generator through a transfer switch, or a big battery charged by a generator, runs most or all of the house.
- ☐ **Level 3 · The grid is optional.** Solar, batteries and an inverter sized to run indefinitely.

My next step this week: _____

STEP 5 Your 2-week gas number

Let a power station carry the house, and run the generator a couple of hours a day to fill it back up.

My daily total from Step 2: _____ kWh

Power station size (at least 1 day of my must-haves plus a little extra, 2 is better): _____ kWh

Gas per daily charge: _____ gal × 14 days = _____ gal, + a cushion = _____ gallons

Test it. Run the power station down to about 5%. Fill the generator to a mark, charge the power station to full, then let the engine cool and refill it to the same mark. What it takes is your gas per charge.

Spec-sheet math on our older Honda: about 3 kWh a day takes about 2½ hours of charging, plus an hour for heavy jobs like laundry, or the well pump if the generator can start it. That's about 15 gallons for 2 weeks, or 3 five-gallon cans.

THE READY Life ACADEMY

Want a second set of eyes on your list?

Inside The Ready Life Academy, we're live on the Ready Roundtable most Tuesdays at 5 PM Pacific. Bring this sheet and your exact question, and get an answer that fits your house.

Join at TheReadyLife.com/PowerHelp

© 2026 The Ready Life · TheReadyLife.com

God provides. We prepare.