

February 26, 2014

Storms, wrecks, overloads, faulty equipment – just some of the reasons why our electrical service might be interrupted. Will we be without power for a few minutes, several hours, days, weeks? Who knows? Can we function without electricity? Sure, you can – with the proper planning.

I don't personally know anyone who WANTS to be without electricity for an extended period of time – unless they're out in the wild enjoying themselves on their own terms! Most of us depend on electricity to be there when we want it, or need it. Most of the time, it is. Sometimes it isn't.

I really appreciate the Entergy folks and their notification system for their customers. I have set up my account online and receive notifications when electrical service at my locations are interrupted, an estimate of when they should be restored, and another when my service is restored. I'm guessing that other providers have similar automated systems. When I'm notified of an outage, I can immediately activate my plan for "Going Off the Grid"! Yes, another plan! Can you tell I LOVE to plan?

First, let's gather our information about our utility companies. Write down or print information about each of your utility providers, such as the name of the company, service they provide to which of your locations, website, phone numbers, and where/how they circulate information on outages. Jot down phone numbers and links to information sources, such as the Madison County Office of Emergency Management Facebook page and Madison County website, the Madisonville Meteor Facebook page and website, the City of Madisonville website, North Zulch Municipal Utility District Facebook page, High Prairie Water, and City of Midway. Also gather information on local electricians and plumbers, just in case you need to get your service repaired before the utility can be reconnected. Be sure to register with each of your providers for notifications. Sign up on the Code Red link on the county website to register your cell phone, email, and/or home phone for reverse notifications from Emergency Management during emergencies or disasters.

Once you have recorded the information above, begin thinking about your neighborhood. Are there friends, family, or neighbors who might need extra support because of their functional or medical needs during a power outage? Does anyone in your neighborhood have special skills and can help others? Consider being neighborly by helping them prepare for an outage, too.

Since you have been keeping your emergency kit current, you should have supplies ready to go when the power quits. Plan to use the flashlights you have gathered and resist the urge to light candles, due to them being a fire hazard. Plan to use some of the ready-to-eat meals you have gathered that don't require cooking or cooling. Plan to utilize some of the frozen water bottles or containers you have been keeping in your freezer for such occasions. Plan to get your old, standard phone that doesn't require electricity out and plug it in. Plan to turn on the battery-operated radio you have ready with fresh batteries. Make yourself a reminder to be sure your stove range and oven are turned off. Any other appliances that might have been active before the outage may need to be checked and turned off, to be ready when the power returns. Know where your manual release is on your electric garage doors, if you have them. Write down reminders for yourself to use when you might not be thinking very quickly.

Once you have your plan written down, share it with your family, then store a copy on your computer and another hard copy with your emergency kit. Sleep better knowing you're a little more prepared, and Be Safe Out There!