

SAFETY SENSE

Simple Steps Can Make The Difference When Disaster Hits



(NAPSA)—Make a kit and have a plan.

Those are the two simple steps emergency management officials and experts say families should take before the unexpected occurs, whether it's a hurricane, tornado, blizzard or power outage.

"As a company with a successful history of addressing emergency power needs, we've seen how planning ahead is critically important to ensure your family stays safe and comfortable immediately following a disaster," said Harold Redman, president of Briggs & Stratton Home Power Products Group, exclusive licensee of Standby Generator Systems by GE. Briggs & Stratton is also a National Preparedness Month coalition member, which is sponsored by the Ready Campaign.

The Ready Campaign, a national public service advertising campaign produced in partnership with Citizen Corps—FEMA's grassroots organization—and The Advertising Council, publishes a list of emergency kit essentials and necessary communications plan steps that emergency management officials are suggesting families review and implement before an emergency situation is at hand.

Make an emergency preparedness kit

Successfully overcoming an emergency weather situation or disaster can mean surviving on your own for a time. Water and food seem like no-brainers, but other not-so-obvious items on the list are just as critical. Here are the essentials the Ready Campaign suggests families pack in their emergency kit, should a disaster strike:

- Water, one gallon per person per day
- Food, a three-day supply of nonperishable food
- A weather radio
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- First-aid kit
- Whistle, to signal for help
- Dust mask
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to keep out contaminated air
- Moist towels, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench/pliers, to turn off utilities
- Can opener
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, if access to a portable generator is available
- Pet food and extra water for pets.

One way to simplify your power outage kit is with an automatic standby generator system. Standby generators keep the power on when a home's primary power source goes out, allowing homeowners to run appliances like air conditioners, heaters, refrigerators, clothes washers/dryers and lights. That means there is less of a need for things like nonperishable foods or flashlights in the event of a power outage.

"With 3.5 million Americans experiencing a power outage each week, oftentimes due to unexpected emergency situations, an automatic standby generator is the most convenient way to keep your family safe and comfortable when the neighborhood lights go out," Redman said.

Have an emergency plan

Because family members may not be together when disaster strikes, and communication lines could be fractured, it's important to have a solid plan in place to contact one another and regroup, the Ready Campaign suggests. It's best to make a plan ahead of time so everyone follows the same protocol and stays on the same page.

Some things to consider in your plan are:

- Establish a family emergency contact. That person can act as a point person for the family members who can coordinate subsequent directions.

- Identify an out-of-town contact. Depending on the situation, it may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than a call in town. The out-of-town contact could be in a better position to coordinate with separated family members.

- Ensure every family member knows your home phone number and has access to a cell phone to call the emergency contact.

- Teach family members how to use text messaging, which can sometimes get around phone network disruptions that can hinder phone calls.

- Subscribe to alert services if available. Many communities offer emergency alerts via e-mail or text messaging that inform users about bad weather, road closings, local emergencies, etc.

Visit www.ready.gov for more tips on keeping your family safe during emergency situations. Visit www.powermoreforless.com for more information about automatic standby generator systems.

