

GROW Home, Garden & Outdoors

Plan ahead for power outages

Wallowa County Chieftain

Summer storms are often accompanied by damaging hail, high winds, heavy rain and lightning that cause widespread power outages affecting homeowners' peace of mind and their pocketbooks. Homeowners can prepare for possible power outages by establishing an emergency plan for their families.

Get ready for the chance of inclement weather ahead with these tools and resources:

First aid. Assemble a basic first aid kit with assorted sterile, compression and adhesive bandages, rolled gauze, adhesive tape, disinfectant, antibiotic ointment, tweezers, scissors and instant cold packs. Add pain relieving medications (including children's strength, if applicable) and a few days' worth of any regular medications you take.

Emergency kit. Include items such as a flashlight, battery-powered weather radio, bottled water, non-perishable snacks and personal hygiene items.

Don't forget extra batteries that fit your devices and keep a portable cellphone charger on hand.

Comfort items. What constitutes comfort likely varies depending on your family composition, but may include things like stuffed animals, soothing blankets or small toys for little ones and more practical items, including pillows and sleeping bags, for older family members.

Remember that a storm may leave you huddled in a confined space or without power for an extended period, so diversions such as



Courtesy of Getty Images

Summer storms can cause widespread power outages.



Courtesy of Getty Images

Get ready for the chance of inclement weather ahead with needed tools and resources.

travel-size games and cards can help pass the time.

Backup power. Portable generators provide a solution during an emergency power outage to power essential items, such as refrigerators, sump pumps and lights.

Some generators come equipped with a digital control panel that provides everything owners need to know, including the amount of power being used, total lifetime hours of the generator and maintenance reminders.

While portable generators can provide users with flexibility and comfort, homeowners and renters should only use portable generators outside in order to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

Visit TakeYourGeneratorOutside.com to learn more about portable generator safety.

Information guide. In the aftermath of a storm, having emergency information at your fingertips is one less stress to fight. Compile contact information for family members, friends and close neighbors, along with your insurance agent. Also include any relevant medical contacts or information.

Stash your guide along with your emergency and first aid kits so it will be within easy reach if you need it.

Seasonal weather can bring unpredictable dangers to your home and family, but assembling the right materials ahead of time will help ensure your family is well prepared to ride out the storm.

Small-scale home upgrades with a big impact

Wallowa County Chieftain

When it comes to remodeling, there are dozens of ways to improve your home's overall value and appeal without breaking the bank. Opt for projects that are manageable in scale, affordable and deliver benefits in multiple ways, such as aesthetics and energy efficiency.

Ditch uninviting doors

From the curb, doors can have a significant bearing on your home's overall appeal. Outdated or dingy doors, or doors that don't reflect the style of the rest of the home and landscape can drag down your home's appeal. Not only can a new door add character and brighten the overall aesthetic, freshly hung doors — whether at your entry or garage — come with the added benefit of new sealing. That translates into greater energy efficiency and savings on heating and cooling bills.

Take a fresh approach to lighting

Increasing the amount of natural light and fresh air that enters your rooms can transform spaces, making them seem larger, more airy and extra inviting. Skylights are a surprisingly affordable upgrade for the functionality and aesthetic benefits they provide. In areas where wall windows aren't practical or desirable, such as master closets or baths where privacy is paramount, skylights



Courtesy of Velux

provide an ideal solution.

Give your lighting and home value a boost with an Energy Star-qualified option such as solar-powered, fresh-air skylights, which let you adjust natural light and air flow, reducing dependence on artificial lights and fans, with the touch of a programmable remote control. For expanded control over the amount of light and warmth that enters or leaves your rooms, solar-powered skylight blinds are available in designer colors and patterns. Like the skylights, solar-powered blinds are operated with the remote. The solar products and installation costs are also eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit.

Expand livable space outdoors

A backyard oasis that expands your property's living area is a smart in-

vestment, no matter what climate you call home. This is one project that can scale up quickly, but it need not grow to extravagant proportions to make a noticeable difference in your home's value and appeal and offer a nice return on investment.

Some lush vegetation and cozy seating around a focal point, such as a fire pit, is a simple but effective entry point. As budget allows, additions like outdoor kitchens, water features and more abundant vegetation lend even greater impact.

Whether you're looking to make improvements for your own enjoyment or seeking ways to enhance your home's appeal to potential buyers, there are simple but effective options that allow you to make a meager investment for a great impression.



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