


much natural light do you get, and what will this mean for your lighting needs? If your space lacks abundant natural light, you need to ensure you replace this with good ambient light. If that is a single light in the centre of the room, choose a fixture with multiple bulbs to maximize the light available. A series of recessed lights can also provide great, overall lighting. Under-cabinet lights are perfect for task work in those areas, and if you have a sink area or island, think about the task lights needed over these spaces to make working comfortable. As with all spaces, lighting at different levels is the key to getting good coverage.

And when you are fitting your bulbs, think LED. It wasn't long ago that these were harsh and uncomfortable to look at, but those days are gone. Energy efficient and long lasting, you can now get LED bulbs in warm white, neutral white and daylight. For kitchen use,

I'd go for the neutral, cool white for sufficient task work. Some even come in smart versions that have adjustable brightness, hue and even colour.

Like other elements in your kitchen design, lighting should match your overall kitchen style, and your home's age and look. See what is locally

available, and check online for other options as well. Think of the lighting as a finishing touch on your space, and give it as much design consideration as you give other major elements like your cabinets. If you create a beautiful kitchen space and toss in a bottom-of-the-line, bland light, it's like getting dressed for the red carpet and then slapping on a baseball cap. You may have a stunning dress or tux, but the baseball cap is where everyone will be furtively looking and wondering what you were thinking.

A kitchen renovation doesn't have to be a major source of stress. It just takes some forethought and planning before you make the investment. Finding some professional help will probably pay dividends in the end, so don't be afraid to reach out and get a bit of guidance. And when it's all done, invite me over for a cocktail. I love it when other people cook! 



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Empowered

Be prepared for winter power outages

■ Winter in Atlantic Canada involves power outages, sometimes lasting for days.

BY JANET WALLACE

January, 1917. After five nights of complete darkness, the flashing orange lights of three power trucks were a welcome light at the end of the tunnel. I stopped my car next to a man who shone a massive flashlight into dark woods. He wore the orange coveralls of a linesman with a hardhat and headlamp like a miner.

"When I drove by earlier," I told him, "a yellow birch was on the lines around the corner."

"We just cut that and freed the lines," he replied. "Power should be back on within the hour."

Relieved at this news, I thanked him and drove home.

I felt better than I had in days. That afternoon, my partner and I went to Moncton and shook off the cabin fever that had set in after five long days and nights without electricity. I showered at the YMCA, which opened its doors to

people without power. It felt so good to be clean. We picked up a pizza, non-perishable groceries, and headed home for yet another candle-lit dinner.

Be prepared

Winter in Atlantic Canada involves power outages. There's no way to get around it, particularly in rural areas. There are, however, steps to make the experience easier, safer, more and (dare I say) more enjoyable. For example, a woodstove will give you heat and a means to warm up food and water. Note that some wood furnaces and pellet stoves need electricity to run safely. Although power outages often occur during big storms, they can happen at any time. Remember, the Northeast blackout of August 2003? Keep an emergency kit (see page 83) on hand, which you can find when—not if—the power goes out.

Food safety

Power outages can lead to food poisoning. Food in the refrigerator may last for a day or two without power but it depends on the item and the warmth of the house. When an outage strikes, you can quickly take out the food you need. Put it in a cooler in a cold, protected spot such as your car. Avoid opening fridges and freezers but if you do, put a bucket of snow or ice inside. Insulate your freezer with blankets, heavy coats and/or sleeping bags.

After an outage or before plugging in a fridge or freezer into a generator, any room-temperature food should be discarded. I composted ours but neighbouring pig farmers accepted donations. Although I was taught that you can't safely re-freeze thawed food, authorities now say that if thawed food (even meat) is cold to the touch, it can be frozen again. The quality, however, may have deteriorated.

A safe option is to cook thawed food immediately. After the ice storm, I had a medley of thawed produce. My favourite creation was curried butternut squash soup with snow peas and goose-tongue greens.

Checklist for storm preparedness

When a storm is approaching, you can take more measures to keep safe and comfortable.

- Fill up bathtubs and buckets with water for flushing toilets and washing.
- Park your car as close to the road as possible (but safe from falling trees/branches). Fill up tanks in vehicles and jerry cans for generators, chainsaws, barbecues and snow blowers. Gas stations may run out of fuel.
- Charge laptops, cell phones, tablets and rechargeable batteries. A universal power supply can be charged to power various small appliances. If you need access to the Internet, get a



■ An instant-read food thermometer is crucial to determining food safety after the power comes back on. If refrigerated products are still below 4C/40F degrees, they should be safe. If frozen foods still have ice crystals visible and the temperature is below 4C/40F degrees, you can refreeze these foods.

Below: Brochures on preparing for power outages are available online.



data plan for a phone or tablet.

- Make sure you can get out of the house. At my place, nor'easters sometimes drift over the doors. When a storm is forecast, we keep a shovel and snowshoes inside. If the doors are drifted shut, we climb out a window, snowshoe to the door and shovel it out.

- Unplug as many devices as possible and turn down the thermostat. If the power goes out, unplug or turn off breakers for your fridge, freezer, hot water heater and other appliances. A challenge to restoring power is the surge of electrical demand as soon as power comes back. Turn on appliances gradually after power is restored as needed.

Generators are expensive, heavy and awkward but they can make an outage much more comfortable. The best (but most expensive) option is to have a generator wired into the electrical panel

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Emergency kit

- Drinking water for 72 hours (3 litres/person/day). Consider having more clean water on hand for washing dishes and hands.
- Non-perishable food for three days and manual can-opener. Include ground coffee or a manual coffee grinder. (The situation could get unpleasant if you have caffeine addicts without their fix.)
- Disposable dishes and napkins.
- Hand sanitizer or handy wipes (particularly important if you cannot boil water).
- Phone numbers of power company, fire department, doctors, insurance company, provincial/municipal Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) and neighbours. You might need to read this by flashlight so write clearly with large letters and numbers.
- Corded phone if you have a landline. Phone lines can go down in storms so a cell phone is valuable as well. Keep batteries charged.
- Cash. ATMs may be down and many businesses can't use credit or debit cards.
- Medications and first aid kit.
- Eyeglass cleaner. It is difficult to clean glasses well without running hot water.

- Buckets to collect rainwater or snow for flushing toilets and washing. A 10-gallon bucket of snow melts to 1 gallon of water; melting ice is more efficient.
- Playing cards and games.
- Wind-up or battery-powered radio.

- Flashlights with batteries including lantern flashlights to illuminate larger areas and small flashlights for everyone in the house.
- Small butane burner for heating food (outside).



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so you can simply switch to generator power. Keep in mind that you need to have fuel on hand but not in the house. To avoid carbon monoxide build-up, you must run generator outside. Portable generators are a bit trickier to use. When you see one in the store, the wheels may make it look very portable – imagine moving it during a blizzard with high snowdrifts.

Silver linings


A long outage can bring a community together. People with woodstoves open their doors to neighbours without back-up heat. A pick-up truck with a generator in the back is a common sight as people bring generators from neighbour to neighbour -- chatting while freezers, fridges and battery chargers get powered up.

On a snow day, kids are outside making forts and snowmen. During the long outage, a neighbour spent evenings playing games with her kids, who normally had a full schedule of sports and organized activities. Her daughter asked if they could have “family games night” every night.

Silence is another reward. There is no electrical hum – just the sound of the woodstove. Although there is wonderful music the day after an ice storm. Frozen droplets tinkle delicately as they

fall onto frozen surfaces. Wind in the trees creates a symphony resembling hundreds of wine glasses clinking as ice-covered branches sway and touch. Percussive crashes are followed by shattering when a branch or tree falls.

A power outage allows us to slow down and focus on what is local and real. It can be a wake-up call – making us aware of our dependence on electricity and the external stimuli provided by TVs, computers, tablets and cell-phones. It can make us more grateful for what we often take for granted.

After the long outage, I was thrilled to have electricity restored. Running water was a treat – hot water a luxury. A fridge and freezer made life simpler, as did the ability to use phone, Internet and my computer. A bonus is free firewood – wood from downed trees will keep me warm next winter. Meanwhile, I’m getting more prepared for the next outage. 

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