

Lights Off: How The World Could Change In 7 Days

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You might be thinking, hey, I've got this one covered! I've survived lots of power outages. If that is your thought process, you could not be more wrong.

Anyone who considers, even for a moment, how interconnected and interdependent our existence has become ... so full of overly-complex, over-engineered, over-automated systems driving every aspect of our increasingly fragile existence that is dependent on just-in-time inventory and shipping virtually everything we need ridiculous distances ... arrives at the same inescapable conclusion: that mankind has built a house of cards.

I doubt we could have created a more fragile world if it had been our aim from the beginning. We have painted ourselves into a corner and we are going to make a mess getting out.

Few analogies are as simple and powerful as tripping an electrical breaker to disconnect a building from the grid. One moment the building is alive, bright, vibrant, buzzing. With the flip of a switch, it lays still, cold and dead.

On/off.

Alive/Dead.

It is truly that simple. One moment we have juice, the next we don't.

The Chain Reaction

America's need for power outstrips our investment in our capability to produce it by 400%.

Yet the legislative branch of government points fingers and the executive branch (well, what used to be the executive branch before we turned the zoo over to the chimps, so to speak) sits in its tower considering "jobs for jihadis" and throwing lavish parties to congratulate and reward itself for scamming the rest of us out of our tax dollars.

Meanwhile, our electrical infrastructure continues its rapid decay and the nation's power grid slips and slides down a spiral water slide of demise. It appears that they could not possibly care less. Perhaps they figure somebody else will be in office to take the blame when the music stops.

But it is not just the US. The US economy affects the world economy and the world economy is feeling the pinch. You do not have to be a risk assessment genius to understand that a depressed world economy translates to more frequent power outages of increased duration and a weaker and more vulnerable power grid.

The grid is limping along on borrowed time. Through a combination of luck and the best efforts of the intelligence and military communities, we have dodged the CME/HEMP (Coronal Mass Ejection/High-altitude Electromagnetic Pulse) bullet ... so far.

But while clock counts down to the next time the sun lobs an X-class solar flare in the general

direction of our planet, the power industry has succeeded in using junk science generated by NERC (North American Electric Reliability Corporation) to pull the wool over the eyes of congress and emergency management bureaucrats alike, forestalling the Shield Act, which is our only hope to harden the grid against [the inevitable threat of EMP](#), be it geomagnetic or manmade.

The 2012 India Blackout affected 620 million people or 9% of the world population. India's engineers blamed in on a number of factors that were merely symptoms of the same illness that affects the US and most other power grids.

The chronic illness underlying the symptoms was that the industrial and technological revolutions have catalyzed humanity's explosive growth for far too long.

This has woven fragility into very fabric of world's power grids. This has become a growth bubble of epic proportions searching for a pin. Our sun and geopolitical climate has that bubble navigating terrain akin to the Sonoran Desert. In reality, it is not so much a desert, but a forest of cactus spines, fangs, thorns and stingers, all poised to plant themselves in passersby.

I am involved in emergency management and I am very blessed to have many good, competent government emergency managers all the way up to the state level. After that, it mostly government shills who fancy themselves emergency managers.

Especially at the Federal level, the US has fallen prey to a culture of academics who pretend to know inordinately more than they actually do. Rooted firmly in the personality ethic, "Fake it 'til you make it." is their motto, but they never do. Afraid of their own intellectual shadow, they fear embracing and admitting their own uncertainty, which is the first step to anyone truly learning anything. So they believe what is most convenient as opposed to what is true. In this case, it very convenient to have blind faith that the electrical grid, like everything else in their lives, is maintained by people and organizations more intelligent, wiser, more benevolent and more responsible than they are. "Move along, nothing to see here!"

Safe Electricity® Storm Safety Kit



Drinking water & food



Blankets, pillows, & clothing

Basic first-aid supplies



Prescriptions



Basic toiletries

Flashlights



Battery-operated radio

Battery-operated clock



Extra supply of batteries

Phone



Cash and credit cards

Emergency numbers



Important documents (in a waterproof container)



Toys, books, & games



Baby supplies

Pet supplies

dawsonpower.com

EMP is the stuff of Hollywood, not what our smartest scientists, the head of the CIA, and our best and brightest minds, and those of our enemies, seem to all agree is presently our single greatest known vulnerability.

Major vulnerabilities mean increased work load for emergency managers, and government shills resist having to actually provide a valuable service in trade for their salary.

Just this type of human debris, “working” for the City of Phoenix, Arizona concluded some years ago that an evacuation of Phoenix-Metro area is simply impossible.

So no such plan even exists. “Can’t win ... don’t try.” They look to Homer Simpson for guidance on important issues like emergency plans that affect the lives of millions of people, including themselves and their own families.

I sincerely hope they have since remedied the situation, but I was not going to hold my breath and relocated to someplace with better prospects and better leadership.

The Countdown to Disaster

In order to understand how to prepare for a protracted power outage, you should [understand the](#)

[sequence of events that will unfold after the lights go out.](#)

The electrical grid varies greatly from state to state and country to country, as do the threats to the grid, but here's a sample of past events and future projections in form of a timeline.

It is a simple matter to put together a plan based on your family or organizational needs once you have an idea of what you're preparing for so visualizing your mission and obstacles is sometimes more useful than the usual list of stuff you need have on hand and obligatory reminder to practice and train.

Immediately:

- Electric heating & cooling systems fail. In winter, homes will begin losing heat. In summer, many buildings dependent on air conditioning to maintain a safe temperature for occupants will be forced to evacuate.
- Many hospitals, radio stations, TV stations, telecomm systems and data centers switch over to emergency power but many lose air conditioning due to the expense of backup generators capable of supplying its heavy electrical load. Consequently, many data centers begin to heat up.
- Computers without uninterruptable power supplies or an integrated battery power lose power.
- Tall buildings reliant on most types of booster pumps lose water pressure past the bottom floors. Buildings with rooftop tanks have water until the tanks run dry.
- Entire cities lose water pressure forcing boil-water advisories into effect for any water that does make to you or that you manage to scrounge up. But without electricity, most households will be unable to boil water. The NE US Blackout of 2003 left millions of Michigan residents without any water.
- Many commuters are trapped on subways. Most electric subways and electric trains cease to function. Those that remain functioning reduce numbers of trains. In the Southern Brazil blackout of 1999, 60,000 commuters were on the subway system in Rio alone when it plunged into darkness. That blackout affected nearly 100 million people and triggered troop deployments. It was caused by neglect of the country's grid due to a depressed economy. The event was triggered by an everyday lightning strike. Likewise, the NE US Blackout of 2003, affected all Northern states from Michigan up to NY and portions of Canada. Some 600 trains were stranded and thousands upon thousands had to be evacuated or rescued from subways and elevators.
- Most traffic lights go dark or default to 4-way stops. Traffic snarls due to failure of traffic controls. Increased numbers of traffic accidents and delayed emergency response times.
- Slowed traffic and calls to rescue thousands of people in elevators slows emergency response times.
- Most credit card terminals and point of sale terminals are inoperable, limiting commerce. Some transactions continue on a cash only basis.
- Most banks and ATMs (Automated Teller Machine) close or are inoperable, impeding most cash withdrawals.
- In large blackouts, cell service typically goes down before land lines, large due to increased call volume and lack of power to form many cell towers to transmit, but keep in mind that voice, and text messaging operate on completely different frequencies and systems. Text messaging often works when voice does not. Also keep in mind that the landline system operates independent of cell service is more robust.
- The 2012 India blackout shutdown multiple airports.

- Refilling prescription medication instantly gets a whole lot harder. Refilling controlled medications becomes next to impossible for most patients.

4 hours:

- Backup batteries on most alarm systems fail. If you own a brick and mortar small business, you either have to physically guard it or leave it vulnerable. If you own both a business and a home and commute between the two, you will have a hard time guarding them both. Many criminals are well aware of this fact and that law enforcement response times are slowing. Burglaries increase.
- Small portable generators need to be refueled. This will become a constant chore, very expensive and noisy security risk, so you are better off putting in a renewable energy source and battery bank while it is still possible or planning to only run your generator at certain times and doing all chores requiring electricity while it is running.
- Store shelves of business still in operation begin to empty.
- Price gouging, profiteering, panic buying and hoarding cause panic to mount, tempers to flare. Batteries, bottled water, flashlights, ice, candles and fuel are hardest hit and profiteers begin selling them in the streets.
- If cell phones or social media are still up, heavily-populated areas will see some flash mob-related crime.
- Any previously working phone circuits will likely be overloaded by now.

6 hours:

- Long lines form at gas stations still able to pump gas with battery-powered pumps or hand pumps as increasing numbers of motorists run out of fuel and many gas stations lose access to underground fuel tanks. They will only be able to accept cash.
- GMRS (General Mobile Radio Service) and FRS (Family Radio Service) radios rendered ineffective by "bubble pack" radio users and children. They will remain unusable from this point forward in most cities and suburbs. Smaller towns with redundant band plans will fare better, but will not be without major problems.
- Most folk will have had to "use the bathroom" by now. Many will discover that their toilets no longer flush. Are you prepared for this eventuality?
- By this point, if are well prepared, you will very likely have determined the scope of the outage, its probable duration and cause. You will most likely determine this via your emergency radio equipment such as AM/FM/SW emergency radios, scanners or amateur radio equipment. Depending on the scope and cause, you might have found out or figured out whether the blackout is due to grid failure, a geomagnetic event or an HEMP almost immediately. Understanding its probable scope and severity, however, may take some time and the use of your noggin, your ears and possibly asking the right people the right questions if you have ensured your ability to do ahead of time. Emergency responders and knowledgeable amateur radio enthusiasts, especially those who are part of ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) will have a huge advantage over the average citizen when it comes to collecting and correctly interpreting intelligence about the emergency. If neither of these is your cup of tea, you might consider networking with someone so inclined ahead of time or you may find yourself doubly in the dark.

8 Hours:

- Utility companies set up generators to keep coms infrastructure up.

- People realize this is not just a minor blackouts where they will light some candles and play break out a board game for the kids.
- Small scale looting begins if hasn't already. What happened, the ability of emergency services to inform the public, what they choose to tell people or the people having to figure it out themselves, may all have a significant impact on crime.

12 Hours:

- By the end of the first business day, blackouts cost gas stations and restaurants as much as \$20K a day. Grocery store? Try more like 60K per day.
- Most refrigerators are now useless under normal usage patterns so most insulin-dependent diabetics lose the means to cool insulin.

Night fall:

- CPAP and oxygen concentrator users who have not invested in an alternative power solution will wake up fatigued at best and run the risk of not waking up at all.
- Crime rate goes up when the sun goes down.

Day 2:

- State of Emergency Declared. Troop deployments likely, if available. The Disaster Recovery Personal Protection Act of 2006, passed in 2007 specifically prohibits government officials from confiscating firearms in the aftermath of certain emergencies and natural disasters. Anyone who lies, cheats and steals their way into power these days seems to interpret the Constitution and Bill of Rights so broadly as to not apply to them or interprets one wiretap warrant to apply to hundreds of thousands of people. One such crook, former New Orleans police chief Eddie Compass, ordered police and National Guard units to confiscate firearms in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. To prevent this from happening again, The People passed a law specifying penalties should some future tyrant try it and manage to survive long enough to stand trial. This is very probable in Eastern US or the People's Republic of Kalifornia, but I imagine anyone who tried that in most Western states would end up at the long end of a short rope shortly after the words exited his pie hole. So, will there be firearms confiscation? Probably not unless a state of martial law is declared, and then only in areas firmly under government control. But depending on how that administration uses that power, it might precipitate a premature "leadership vacuum."
- Fuel rationing begins. Trucks start pumping out gas stations and truck the fuel to priority skeleton infrastructure.
- Freezers begin to thaw. Many people begin cooking thawing meat to preserve it or at least prepare it before it spoils. BBQ's use far more propane to cook than camp stoves.
- Do yourself a favor plan involves a bug out and clean out your fridge before you leave. If you come back, you will wish you had. If you come back to warm fridge after an extended absence, don't bother opening it. Just tape it shut, haul it to the dump and buy a new one. You'll save yourself a lot of grief.
- Casualties and fatalities due to heat or cold exposure increase.
- Casualties and fatalities due to lack of access to healthcare and medication increase.
- Stores are likely cleaned out or soon will be.
- By this time, lacking passive solar design features, alternative energy sources, wood stove, kerosene heater or the like, your home will likely be getting pretty close to the same temperature indoors as out of doors minus the wind chill. In some climates, this is no big deal.

In other climates this is a death sentence. Plan accordingly. You will need a whole lot more clothing than in a climate-controlled home. If it is cold, create a micro-climate in a single room or fewer rooms. It will be way easier to keep one room warm than a whole house. If you have vaulted ceilings throughout your entire home, set up a cabin tent in the living room and line it's walls and roof with reflective blankets.

Day 3:

- 72 Hour Kits or typical bug out bags are used up or close to it. The average "prepared" citizen (as per FEMA's over-optimistic recommendations based on past averages minus hurricanes, tornados and any other serious event because it is impossible that anything like that will ever happen again) runs out of emergency supplies and fuel to boil water.
- As fatigue, injuries and concern for their families takes a toll on first responders, law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMTs (Emergency Medical Technician), nurses and doctors begin to stop showing up for shifts.
- Rise in violent crime.
- Looting picks up momentum.
- Cases of waterborne and hygiene-related illness start to mount, further straining medical resources.
- Some better-organized cities set up mobile morgues in refrigerated reefer trucks. It might sound a little morbid, but it is a whole lot better than the alternative.

Day 4:

- Exhausted first responders and emergency personnel, nursing home staff and others have to prioritize dwindling resources where they can do the most good for patients with the best chances of recovery or survival.
- Once you start using your food stores, the type or types of food you chose will have a huge impact on the amount of fuel needed to prepare it. Soaking dry packed legumes and grains prior to boiling can help reduce fuel consumption, but it takes a lot more fuel to cook from scratch than it does to prepare a freeze dried meal or heat up an MRE (Meal Ready-to-Eat).
- By this time, cash may have substantially less purchasing power and barter, mostly in the form of food, will eventually replace it.

Day 5:

- Hospitals are forced to consolidate. Smaller hospitals and urgent care facilities are forced to shut down and must be evacuated, causing healthcare workers or volunteers to face difficult choices and patients to suffer the consequences.
- Looting starts to die down because there isn't anything left to loot.

Day 6:

- As reality sets in, doctors do the unthinkable and begin euthanizing patients they feel have low probability of survival. As demonstrated in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, this is considered acceptable practice and they will face no legal recourse if the blackout ends and society recovers. Due to limited quantities of medicine, no access to computerized medical records, lack of familiarity with the patients and lack of experience performing euthanasia, many of these attempts will fail, resulting in prolonged suffering, asphyxiation and hypoxic brain injury of patients who survive the attempt(s). This is sometimes due to the fact that

patients with genetic tolerance to opioids and chronic pain patients undergoing opioid pain therapy will survive dosages far greater than a typically lethal dose.

- Some elderly patients in nursing homes were simply abandoned and left to die of dehydration and exposure during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. If you have loved ones in such a facility, you might want to keep this in mind.

Day 7:

- Cholera outbreaks and other serious fecal contamination-related and waterborne illness not seen in the US for decades or centuries begin to ravage cities, especially the large, coastal cities on the East Coast located far downstream from large populations. A protracted power outage will churn out epidemics, so it is prudent to plan for the eventuality.
- Unleaded and diesel-only generator owners who can still find fuel available are feeling the pinch as gasoline is many times more expensive and less available than natural gas in the majority of outages. Propane is cheaper than gas, but usually less available unless you have large capacity tanks.
- Some people that had been getting by looting businesses decide to give homes a try. Some see that the empty homes will soon run out and decide to transition straight to home invasion of occupied homes.
- If martial law has not been declared yet, they may give it a shot, but this would depend on the scope of the outage, prospects for recovery, political motives, geography, etc.
- If the power is still out and there isn't a firm projection of restoration, you will likely be needing body bags soon if you have not already. Bodies can become a very serious microbiological threat and need to be properly handled and disposed of.

Are you prepared to face this?



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