# How To Heat Your Home Without Electricity

Without electricity or natural gas, heating a home (especially in colder climates) can be difficult. Most modern homes rely on one or both of these sources for all heating duties.

These conveniences only became mainstream within the last 60 years. Prior to that, people figured out ways to live comfortably in various climate zones. Even today, some people choose to live an off grid lifestyle and are able to do so without electricity or fuel supplies.

What do they use instead of electricity, and natural gas? Read this article to find out!

## Using Wood for Heating

In most areas of the country, firewood is readily available. A few days work chopping and splitting wood can yield a couple months supply, so read our article on the topic if need to delve into the practice of woodcutting and splitting your own wood.

There are certain types of trees that are more suitable for burning than others.  This applies for both heating and cooking purposes. Dense hardwood trees burn longer and more consistently than softwoods.  Softwood trees, like varieties of pine, are likely to have pockets of sap or air that can burst and spread fires to unwanted areas.

Read the article that we've featured here on Survivopedia on which types of trees or wood are best used for burning for extended info on the topic.

But you should be aware of the new EPA rules on wood-burning stones. They have issued new regulations, which limit the

amount of particulate emissions from new wood-burning stoves to 12 micrograms per cubic meter of air. This new regulation is a reduction from the old regulation, which allowed 15 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

Read our article on the new EPA rules here.

Wood Stoves

The easiest, and by far the most popular, method of heating your home in a survival situation is a wood stove. In a survival situation, versatility is essential and the wood stove has many uses in addition to its primary duty as a heater., it can be used to cook food and heat your home and water.

The hot outer surface of the wood stove can easily cook food using standard pots and pans. Copper tubing filled with water can be run near the furnace to heat up water for bathing. Typically made from iron, a single wood stove can heat an entire home.

Some wood stoves are placed directly in a central area of the home. This is the most effective method, especially when using a smaller stove.

The only drawback to this method is that sparks and burning embers can fall out of the stove and potentially cause a fire.

For this reason, it is best to place a wood stove in an area of the home that is a safe distance away from flammable furniture or upholstery.

The stove can also burn skin quickly; a consideration important for homes with small children.

In homes with a basement, the wood stove can be placed down there to reduce the risk of fires and burns. The heat from the stove naturally rises and can heat most homes even from the basement.

Many people have had success routing the heat from the wood stove through the duct system already in place for a standard furnace. Care must be taken that noxious gases are not being introduced into the home and some sort of forced air system would have to be installed to move the hot air through the house effectively.

If you are considering a wood stove, make sure you install a proper chimney to allow poisonous smoke to escape the home. Drilling a hole in the roof is the most common method. If you already have a chimney in your home, an insulated pipe can be run from the wood stove to the chimney instead of cutting a separate hole.

Wood stoves use a lot of wood; especially in the cold winter months. Even when you go to sleep at night, the fire often extinguishes leaving your house cool in the morning.

One way to increase the length of time between refills is to mix dry, seasoned wood with green wood. The dry wood will burn immediately and dry out the green wood as it does. By the time the dry wood has burned out the green wood is dry and burns easily. By mixing the wood in this manner, the stove can maintain a constant temperature output for longer periods of time.

Wood Furnaces

Unlike wood stoves which are designed for use inside the home, a wood furnace is a larger unit designed for outside use.

Due to their larger size, furnaces typically only need to be refilled once a day. The risk for fire or accidental burns is also minimized.

Heat from an outdoor wood furnace is transported into the home using ducts. These ducts should be buried underground for maximum efficiency in cold weather. Commercially available wood furnaces often have tubing integrated that is designed to heat your water as an added benefit.

The only drawback to a wood furnace is that if you have not already set it up prior to an apocalyptic event it is unlikely to be a practical solution for you. They are extremely large and heavy making transportation difficult at best.

However, if you install one now it will be ready for use whenever needed by simply lighting a fire.

Fireplaces

Traditional fireplaces have been used to heat homes for centuries. Unfortunately, they are better suited as an ornamental piece than as a serious home heating solution.

A fireplace is better than having no heating solution at all but they are known to be as much as 70 percent inefficient meaning that most of your heat is going up the chimney with the smoke and ash.

If you do plan on using your fireplace to provide heat, make sure you have a high-quality flue that can keep cold air out when the fireplace is not in use.

Also consider putting reflective material in the back of the fireplace. This helps to radiate heat back into the home instead of up the chimney and out of the house.

## Heaters and Power Generators

Ranging from refined fuels such as gasoline, diesel and propane, to natural resources including animal dung and coal, there are many other sources than wood available to use off-grid for heaters or power generators.

One note to consider: if you store enough fuel to last for months or years, you are storing a lot of potential energy in one place. Good fuels must store a lot of energy in order to be effective, and this causes safety issues when storing and using them. Whatever your choice is, be aware that fuels can harm you too, so you need to be really cautious whit the safety needs for this particular stockpile.

Gasoline

For powering generators or fueling cars, gasoline is great, but it presents a number of problems to the steadfast prepper: extensive treatment and refinement of crude oil, and also gas supplies are apt to be quite finite in case of SHTF. Typical shelf-life for gas with appropriate stabilizers is anywhere from 6 – 18 months, but gas can potentially be stored for 4 – 6 years under the best circumstances.

Diesel

While diesel, like gasoline, requires treatment and refining from straight crude oil, diesel is generally cheaper than gas and can usually be stored for 2 – 3 times as long as gas, or longer. Treated with stabilizers and other additives, diesel has been known to last upwards of 10 years while retaining good viability.

Biofuels

After disaster, traditional gasoline and diesel fuel will likely be scarce for a few days, or it may be months, years, or forever, but there are a few biofuel crops for survival that you can grow and convert into fuel on your own. Read here about them! Basically, if a crop produces an oil, it can be converted to biofuel, though yields vary drastically from one type to another.

To make biofuel from any of these products, you're going to need some type of natural oil, methanol, and lye. You'll also need the proper equipment to make it so study up on it.

Propane

Portable propane heaters also work well. But due to their reliance on fuel they are not considered a sustainable asset.

Propane can be stored for years without deteriorating unlike gasoline or kerosene making it the only viable choice if you decide to use fossil fuels at all.

Eventually even your propane supply will run out so this is best as a short-term solution or for situations when the wood stove isn't enough.

Coal

While it's mostly used for industrial applications and electricity generation, coal is still an immensely important fuel source to this day. Ranging in color from shades of brown to matte black and polished jet black, types of coal range from lignite coal to bituminous coal and anthracite.

Low-grade coal is typically used for heating or cooking, and for electricity production, but the highest grade anthracite coal is generally used for industrial purposes like smelting metal.

Animal Dung

Dried animal dung has been used throughout history in many cultures as a source of fuel for heating and cooking when other fuels were scarce or unavailable.To this day, animal dung is regularly used as a fuel by billions of people worldwide for heating their homes and cooking their food, a practice that is not only effective but also economical.

As a natural byproduct of owning or managing livestock, animal manure is also a renewable resource.

## Using Nature's Power for Heating

Solar power is the most well-known alternative energy source, but it is not always a viable option for everyone, especially those who live in northern climates where daylight hours are short or sunlight is scarce.

If you live closer to the equator and have sufficient sunlight and the necessary do-it-yourself skills, though, solar power can be some of the cheapest of alternative energy systems to set up.

Read this Survivopedia article to find out more about natural alternative energy sources!

Passive solar heating uses the intensity of the sun to heat homes quite efficiently.

Assuming you have a well-insulated home, you can take advantage of passive solar heating simply by opening the blinds or curtains of sun-facing windows during the day. Proper insulation – click here to read more on this topic – helps to keep that heat in during the night hours when the sun is no longer heating your home.

As for the solar panels, in addition to being lower cost and easier to set up, a standard array is very low maintenance and has an extremely long lifetime. Such panels can be left unmonitored for extended periods, their operation is silent

and unobtrusive, and they offer reliable, predictable levels of power output based on the amount of sunlight they receive.

As a do it yourself project, solar panels average $3.00 – $6.00 per watt or more to install. Small, preassembled solar panel kits are also available from many retailers and are capable of producing anywhere from 45 watts to 150 watts of energy, and range in price from $200 – $600 and higher.

The downside of having solar panels is that you need protection in order to keep them working after an EMP. To shield against the maximum theoretical electromagnetic pulse field (EMP) strength (50 thousand volts per meter) of known nuclear high-altitude EMP (NHEMP) detonations, we must shield our solar panels to 74dB over a frequency range below 64Mhz.

But let's be honest: shielding is something to take into account for all your electric gear, not only your sonal panels. And riding this Survivopedia articles on how to protect your solar gear in case of an EMP – Part 1 and Part 2 – will help you find a lot of answers!

## Heating Using Compost

The idea behind using compost or mulch for heating is to capture as much of the generated heat as possible and use it for various purposes around the house such as reducing your electricity bill, heating bill etc.

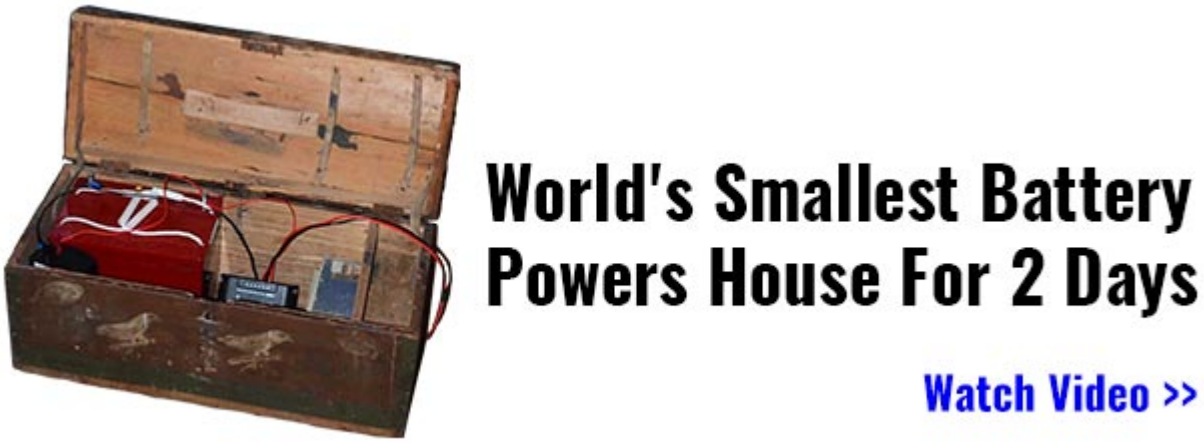
Biodegradation is the process that makes the magic things happen in your compost pile and that means that the trillions of microorganisms living in your compost or mulch must be "happy" if you want to obtain the best results.

The basic principle of compost-heated water is to use coils of plastic pipes driven through the compost piles, then pump water through them. The heat transfer occurs between the compost and the water and voila, you get hot water for free.

Read this Survivopedia article about heating using compost for more knowledge on the topic!

Home heating without electricity or gas may seem like a lot of work. The truth is that people lived in this way for thousands of years prior to the advent of modern technology and infrastructure improvements.

A serious survival situation will set society back to a more primitive state and heating your home with these methods is the only way to ensure long-term survival. So don't waste time and prepare for using at least one alternative source of heating for your house!

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