

6. HOUSE WARMING

Developing alternative heating sources

WHY ACT?

There are several ways to keep the chill off during a power outage or any loss of your heat source. Power can go out at any time, and having a Plan B for staying warm is essential for self-reliant living. The most important thing is, whatever you do, do it safely. See the important safety information at the end of this action.

PREPAREDNESS ACTION

Step 1: Assess your basic energy needs, considering the length of time for which you want backup and how much you wish to pay for it.

Step 2: Consider your energy options. Every resident is entitled to heat and hot water. Tenants without adequate heat should first speak with the building owner, manager or superintendent. If the problem is not corrected, tenants should call 311. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) will attempt to contact your building's owner and do whatever is required to get your heat restored.

Option 1: Insulate.

Step 1: Hang curtains or bedspreads over windows.

Step 2: Hang blankets over doorways to create smaller living spaces, which are easier to warm.

Step 3: Insulate windows with plastic and install door draft stoppers.

Step 4: In multi-family settings, meet with your neighbors to consider pooling resources to heat a single area that can be shared by many. You'll be amazed by how much simple body heat can warm a small space.

Step 5: As the previous action indicates, warm clothing will hold you over.

Option 2: Electric heater. If the electricity is on but your building is out of fuel, having an electric heater will provide a backup.

Step 1: Do the research to find a safe unit that best serves your emergency purposes.

Step 2: Purchase the unit, read the safety regulations and use appropriately.

Option 3: If you have a working fireplace in your home it can become a welcome emergency heat source. Here are a few steps to increase fireplace safety.

Step 1: Before using your fireplace, be sure the flue is open. You can check by looking up the chimney to see if you are able to see daylight. If there are any obstructions, remove them.

Step 2: Burn safe logs or wood. Artificial logs made from wax and sawdust should only be used one at a time. Don't burn pressure-treated wood; it contains toxins that if burned could make you sick. Don't burn newspapers or other trash in a fireplace because they burn too hot and can ignite a chimney fire.

Step 3: Have a responsible person attend the fire. NEVER leave children or pets alone with open flames.

Step 4: Each year have your chimney inspected and cleaned by a professional to maintain safe use.

Option 4: Electrical generator. For single-family households, an electrical generator may be an option. Consult a professional to determine size and type of generator you need.

Step 1: If you wish to plan for a power outage of about three days, go to the hardware store and purchase a basic emergency generator. Cost: \$500 to \$1,000.

Step 2: Only an experienced electrician should install a generator.

MATERIALS

Variable, depending on your needs and desires.

TIME

A few hours to several days.

RESILIENCY GAIN

The ability to stay warm – and perhaps share your warmth with neighbors – is a cornerstone of being self-reliant.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

- The NYC Fire Department has expressed great concern about the hazards associated with home generators. Improper installation and storage of fuel can create safety hazards that greatly outweigh the advantages of these backup sources of electricity.
 - ▶ If you install a generator, get professional help to make sure it's done safely. They must never be used inside, always outside.
 - ▶ Only use for essential items such as lighting and medical equipment. Overloading can cause a fire.
 - ▶ The electrical cord must match the generator in terms of voltage and amps. The generator should always be fueled outside. All safety precautions should be observed as outlined in your generator safety manual.
- Do not burn charcoal indoors. Without proper ventilation it can create carbon monoxide.
- Do not increase the chance of fire by using your kitchen gas range, oven or open fires to heat rooms.
- Space heaters need space. Portable space heaters need a three-foot clearance from anything that can burn and should always be turned off when leaving the room or going to sleep.