

## Hurricane Irene: Lessons Learned

[This is a digest of a longer discussion posted to [thesurvivalistblog.net](http://thesurvivalistblog.net). This is a “prepper” website with much good information, but also with certain political and social leanings that some could find objectionable. I’ve digested what I think are the most useful components of the posting, but there are other considerations one might want to read in the original. KH]

“My cousin was lucky to have had a generator. We had to shuttle the generator back and forth between both houses because his parents refused to leave. Yes it would have been more convenient to have us all in one place and pool our resources. He was able to keep both his parent’s refrigerator and his own powered up long enough to keep their food cool and safe to eat. He wound up using about 2 gallons of gas per house, per day. Having enough fuel stored away would be a great idea but how much should you store? My Aunt and Uncle didn’t get their power back until the 8th day without power.

It all depends on what you are using the generator for. We used ours to mainly power the refrigerators and occasionally a couple of lights and a microwave oven.

We were again lucky that there were areas that had power not far away and we were able to get gas when we needed it. We had no troubles getting gas.”

[Note: gas pumps are run by electricity, as are the cash registers in gas stations. No electricity means no way to get gas even if supplies are available. Several years’ back during an ice storm, power was out in W-S, but since we’re near to Rural Hall we found a gas station just off Rt. 52 that still had power and could sell gas. KH]

“While I was in Ct we did all of the cooking at my cousin’s house outside on a propane gas grill. My Aunt and Uncle, having grown up in the Great Depression knew enough to have enough canned and dry foods to eat. They had no problem with their food supply, although they did ask us to power up their microwave on a couple of occasions. Hey you must have some things heated up, and at their age we could not say no to them.

Having a propane gas stove or a Coleman gas-fired camping stove would be a good choice.

While I was there in Ct, there were 144 communities that were ordered to boil their city water, with no power that has to be done either over a fire or some other heat source. A rocket stove made from some bricks or cinder blocks is very easy to make. It will save your propane gas for cooking your food.

Learn well ahead of time how to build a simple camp fire using different methods and practice with each one until you get proficient at making fires using each method.”

[In a wordy and rambling section, the poster mentioned the problem of water: there is potable or drinkable water, and utilitarian water. Utilitarian water can be used for cleaning, and more importantly, for proper operation of household toilets. With the power down, municipal water was also down for long stretches, which made it impossible to know when there would be enough water to flush toilets.

I pointed out that when water conservation is critical, there is a little saying: “If it’s yellow, be mellow: but if brown, flush it down.” The point here is that human urine, though unpleasant, is actually germ-free, and it is perfectly safe to hold off flushing. On the other hand, the products of the bowels are laden with pathogens and should be evacuated ASAP.

Since hurricanes are a slowly developing disaster, there is time to take some basic steps in preparation. Of course, one is to begin storing water (and one can freeze a good deal of water as a way to keep frozen foods safe when power is out), and the usual guideline is 1 gallon of potable water per person per day. To store a large amount of water that can be used for multiple purposes, one can fill a household bathtub, but there are a number of reports of leaking plugs etc. that keep this from being as useful a step. A better option is a bathtub bladder that can be filled just before a hurricane strikes. This is called a WaterBOB, and comes with a vacuum pump to dispense water stored in the bladder. An internet search will give you several outlets for purchasing a WaterBOB. KH]

“I am going to talk about 2 types of communications here, incoming and outgoing. Each is pretty much self-explanatory.

Incoming I’m talking about radios to keep up on local news and the weather. I have 3 types of radios I am using. One is just an old “boom box” style of radio that can be powered from either AC power or batteries. The other is an “emergency” type that can be powered by several sources such as AC power, disposable batteries, rechargeable batteries that are charged from solar power or from a hand cranked dynamo.

The third type is an AC powered police scanner. As long as there is AC power you can monitor your local, state and federal law enforcement, fire departments and first aid squads as long as you have the proper frequencies. They can be found on-line.

Outgoing I am talking about cell phones. I had read that cell phone communication during emergencies it is best to use text messaging instead of talking on the phones. In emergencies “voice” communications get all backed up.

I came up with a system to stay in contact with family and friends to see how they are faring during the storm several days prior to Hurricane Irene hitting our area.

Our plan was to power down our cell phones to conserve battery power and only power up every 4 hours starting on the even hours and staying powered up for 15 minutes, exchanging text messages and then powering back down. This system worked like a

charm for us. Using the same system for using your radios to listen to the news and weather is very easy to do also.

Recharging the cell phones was easy with the use of a car charger.”

[SMS, or Text messaging, does take minimal cell system resources and should be the preferred means of communicating in an emergency. There is tremendous benefit to having a family communications plan prior to any disaster, and the poster’s plan is reminiscent of the Wilderness Protocol for monitoring published simplex frequencies at certain hour intervals. By having a predetermined understanding as to what time frames communication would be undertaken, it is possible to conserve resources (in this case battery power) yet maintain connections with loved ones. KH]