



Survivalist mentality

While stopping short of wearing [tin hats](#) we've been asking survivalist questions. It's not a comfortable mentality but we're trying to be reasonable and prudent.

Where we live we generally lose power half a dozen times a year due to lightning and winter storms. Usually the power comes back within a few hours, but with the last hurricane we lost power for a few days. I was glad to have had a backup generator. During a trip to Ohio last month a brief afternoon "inland hurricane" stripped power from most of the state and several of its neighbors. Many places were warned they'd be without power for over a week. Waiting a half hour in line at the gas station was frightening, and there are much larger kinds of natural and unnatural disasters.

I don't know just how vulnerable your power grid and food supply networks are, but given how dependent we are on them it's worth asking how we might live without them. Here's a keypoint: in a disaster the **MOST IMPORTANT THING** is your **health**. After you get past the discomfort of asking these questions here are some simple solutions.



Food:

A key nonperishable food item is [protein powder](#). It's made from milk whey and comes in flavors and containers of various sizes. They'll last a few years unopened and they taste good enough to eat as part of your regular diet so that you need not leave it to perish.



Water:

Don't take it for granted, and don't drink runoff. There are various gravity fed, ceramic filter contraptions that are the size and shape of small water coolers. They require no power and filter out pathogens so that you can drink local lake and river water. Once I had to drink swamp water, but that's another story.

The secret is that you can get [filter/spigot kits](#) at 1/2 of the price. A \$100 2-filter kit plus your own two \$5 plastic buckets and you'll have 3 qt/hour of potable water. Go [here](#) for the better kit, or Google "drip water filters" for the already-built items. The one shown on the left is from [Katadyn](#) and costs just under \$300.



Cooking:

Without a doubt the answer is [Kerosene stoves](#) and there are two kinds: ones that are pressurized and ones that aren't. The non-pressurized ones burn with multiple wicks and only cost around \$65. For another \$65 you can get an [oven that sits on top](#). They are portable but they're not camping stoves. They're also quite powerful so that with two burners you can have a decent kitchen.



The pressurized variety range from the multi-burner units on legs, to small camping stoves. Often they're multi-fuel, which means they'll burn kerosene, white gas, or even unleaded auto fuel (which is dangerous but possible). These range in price from a [\\$50 million-sized Korean stove](#), a copy of the \$100 Coleman camping stove, to \$120 Coleman double-burner units, as well as higher priced models.

Burning kerosene produces carbon monoxide and depletes oxygen. Beware of burning fuels indoors.



Light:

Candles suck, so use [kerosene lanterns](#) instead. These are the old "storm lanterns" and they're as safe and reliable as they always



were. They come in two sizes with the larger better for reading. No moving parts, nothing to maintain, won't blow out, won't fall over: safe.



LED flashlights are great, but even greater are [hand crank flashlights](#). The old incandescent bulb crank flashlights only lasted 10 minutes for a minute of cranking, but with LED bulbs a minute of cranking gets you 90 minutes of light. That makes them a better back-up than even the battery powered ones. The one at the left costs \$12, and [here's one](#) for \$21 that says it will also charge your cell phone.



Communications:

When the power goes out so does your cable, internet, wireless, cell phone charger, and cordless phone. A hand crank-powered radio is a good idea. They've got them with LED lights attached, and some are the size and shape of flashlights. This one costs \$20 on ebay.com



Solar battery chargers are still pricy but having one for your cell phone is a good idea. They cost between \$50 and \$100, but think of what it could be worth!

The upshot is that for a few hundred dollars you can have a working off-the-grid kitchen that will keep you going for many weeks. [St. Paul Merchantile](#) sells a [basic package](#) with stove, oven, lanterns, radio, flashlights, and water filter kit for \$260.

I was surprised it was so cheap and easy so we're plan to outfit ourselves. Maybe you want to do the same.



Note the flip-flops.

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