



What to do when the power goes out....

Dealing with blackouts, whether isolated to certain buildings, communities or on a national level, is an important part of contingency planning. We're all familiar with the occasional "This is a test of the Emergency Broadcast System", especially in relation to natural disasters like hurricanes or tornados.

But in a terrorist attack, widespread loss of power, affecting computer networks, regional or national power grids and satellite systems, is a real possibility. You need to know beforehand how your particular agency, community, county or state is planning to communicate with your stakeholders during a widespread and possibly long-term blackout.

For example, you have a wealth of vital information up and running on your website, but what if no one can access it? Do you have the essential facts and messages your audience must know in hard-copy form? Do all the members of your emergency planning team know where they will be stored?

In the event you lose the capability to email or FAX updated and cleared fact sheets to partners, how will they receive that vital information? If you are a local health department, do you have access to the [Health Alert Network](http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/han/) (<http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/han/>) ?

Can you have pre-written and pre-cleared material on a variety of potential bioterrorist agents printed and stored carefully in a location or locations around your community where local officials can access it and disseminate it quickly?

Do your local radio and television stations have access to your pre-approved information on hand, making responsible broadcasting easier during a crisis?

Since churches, schools and hospitals could be gathering places during an event, have you identified respected, credible community leaders - ministers, teachers, doctors - who also could spread your message to their particular audiences? These people could also benefit from having a set of the documents you have cleared.

You will want to:

- Make sure you have access to several corded phones...cordless phones depend on AC current.
- Make sure you have extra batteries for your cell phones.
- Are your generators in good working order? Have they been serviced and tested recently? Is everyone familiar with power loss plans?
- Identify what courier services are available in your community. Bike couriers could be essential, especially in areas blocked by inactive traffic lights and snarled traffic.