

What would you do if there was a national electrical power systems failure ?

The most likely scenario for all the electrical power to go down in the UK is a systems failure due to extreme weather, and, as we all are starting to experience, extreme weather due to climate change is already upon us.

This was the situation put to those of us who attended an on-line seminar on Community Resilience organised by Wiltshire Council. Our grid is said to be extremely resilient, but it could happen. So what would you do without electricity for, up to 2 weeks?

Could you continue to work from home when your computer and mobile phone wouldn't work? Your landline would only last a few hours as the batteries in the telephone exchange ran down, and in the future all land line phone calls will be transmitted by the internet. Could you travel to work and to get shopping when you needed fuel and the fuel pumps would not work? Could you pay with plastic in the shops when the system used electricity and the internet? Could you withdraw cash from the cash point when it requires an electrical supply?

Would your central heating continue to run? Could you cook on your electric cooker? No TV, no radio, no social media. Nothing working that needs electricity in your home, and society as a whole.

The Machine Stops.

So what would you do? There are a number of vulnerable people in our parish who would need help. Do we know who they are? How can we help them?

To a certain extent residents in Coombe Bissett and Homington already keep an eye out for each other in such circumstances, and generally know who the vulnerable people are in their area.

Who are the vulnerable people?

- the aged.
- those who need to be visited by carers.
- those who normally receive meals on wheels.
- those who are pregnant and about to have their baby in the next two weeks.

Who can help?

- All able bodied villagers who can check on their vulnerable neighbours.
- Local doctors, nurses and midwives who might help if emergency services cannot get through.
- People who could offer to loan mains generators.

Being prepared is thought to be essential.

How can I be prepared?

- Have a stock of warm clothes to wear indoors, base layers, quilted garments, outdoor coats, blankets, duvets.
- Make sure that you have enough basic dried and tinned foods in the house to last for at least 2 weeks.
- Purchase a small gas camping stove to heat up food and drinks.
- Ensure that you have a stock of candles, torch batteries, and batteries for radios. It is possible that local radio might broadcast on FM or AM using generators, and national radio on 1500m long wave as these transmitters cover the whole country. Your car radio might be useful in these circumstances.
- If you rely on regular drugs, make sure that you always have enough to last for 2 weeks or more.
- Keep your freezer closed.
- Get a lead to charge your mobile phone from your car battery, just in case mobile phone masts are operational.
- Get on the SSE vulnerable list. E-mail: customerservices@sse.com
- Keep a reasonable amount of cash in the house. Plastic won't work.

What else can I do?

If you know someone vulnerable who lives in an isolated area of the parish take a walk, cycle or drive out to see how they are.

Will you be available to help if needed?

If there was a national power outage, and it is unlikely, it would take time to get the whole system running again. You can't just turn on all the power stations at once with a big switch. They have to be run up to speed and then gradually more areas would have their electricity reinstated, but it would take time. Be prepared.

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