



LIFE WITHOUT POWER

From Sean Wall, Senior Regional Safety Coordinator/North—Region 5

On Monday, June 19th the night started like any other night. Got home from work, got the kids, waited for my wife to get home, and then started dinner. That's when I looked out the window and thought, "Hmm...sky looks pretty dark. Guess the storms are here." If I only knew what that really meant. The rain didn't start slow at all. Within minutes the windows were getting pounded with high winds and rain. So...much...rain! After a few flickers, the power was out and we were sitting in the dark realizing we should have started dinner a LOT earlier.

Being the safety guy that I am, I went into complete panic mode, screaming like a little kid and scaring everybody in the house. I'm of course just kidding. I went to the closet and got the flashlights all ready to go, and then began to light some candles. The kids were taken care of, so I then went into damage control. The windows on the lower part of the house were getting hammered with the high winds and rain, so much so that the storm windows were getting pushed in and water was coming into the house. My wife and I began bailing water out of the window sills, trying our best to keep things dry.

After an hour of rain (4" total), the storms passed and we were able to get out and see the damage. Not only were there roughly 17,000 without power (Point has a population of roughly 26,000), but there were trees down everywhere and a LOT of flooding. After a quick walk around the block to see if anyone needed help, I was back home trying to figure out next steps. Little did I know our power would be out for more than 2 days, not coming back on until about 55 hours later.

In that time, there were a few things I learned:

- * Keeping a 14-year-old daughter and a 9-year-old son occupied with no power is about as futile as herding cats. Their worlds came crashing down when they realized their phone and tablet were soon going the way of the dodo. Side note: Seeing these two ration that power was absolutely hilarious.
- * The hostility between said 14-year-old and 9-year-old increases exponentially when you don't have power.
- * No matter how many times you tell your kids not to open the fridge...they still open the fridge.

On a serious note, there were some opportunities I found through this experience that I will for sure be addressing moving forward.

- * Flashlights. Everyone talks about having them, but how many do you actually have? We had enough for each person, but we didn't have enough...
- * Batteries. Flashlights are great...if you have the batteries to run them. One of our flashlights ran out of battery power in those 2 days. Didn't have batteries to replace them.
- * USB charging station. A friend of mine had a USB power bank / charging station. I used this to charge my phone for all 3 days, which was for sure a life saver, especially with needing my phone for work. This was not one of those free giveaway ones either. It was about \$35 total, but worth every penny. All you have to do these days is keep that phone charged and it should work.
- * Candles. No batteries needed! Besides making the house smell nice, they do provide more than enough light. Still need to be careful though (don't want to burn the house down)!
- * Water. We still had running water thankfully, but we also had a 24 pack of bottled water.
- * Back-up generator. We lost everything in our fridge/freezer. Yet, it can be replaced.

Being in the industry and having a good understanding of how things work, I (somewhat) know what those line crews were going through. I felt for them, working through the night and being away from their friends and family. It was a long few days for everybody, but they never stopped working to get everyone's power back as soon as they could. I tip my hat to all of the linemen out there. The jobs you're all doing are critical to SO many basic things in life that many of us take for granted. I would like to personally thank each and every one of you out there.

You all do great work!

Sean Wall

