

## When The Power Goes Out

By Karen Kaplan

**When storms** hit your neighborhood, different grids feel the outages at different times and in different ways. Homes and businesses can be affected in different ways. Perhaps there is no hot water. Perhaps the refrigerator is affected, the oven and the hot water supply. Stores, restaurants, or favorite visiting sites are unable to open due to lack of power.

When storms hit, lightning can occur. The winds can knock down trees, send branches flying and disengage power lines. The sounds of the storm can cause anxiety. Outside lights can flicker on and off and cause fears to rise. Phones and computers and TVs can no longer keep minds busy and engaged. The darkness can reduce the ability to read, write and engage in activities that require brightness.

So, how can parents of individuals with autism and other learning differences build supports around these changes and get through them? First and foremost, offer provide them with feelings of safety.

- 1) When you know a storm is coming, it is time to create a social story with visuals to read to your individual [Home - Carol Gray - Social Stories \(carolgraysocialstories.com\)](http://carolgraysocialstories.com). This approach helps prepare the individual. It helps them see what might happen and provides some simple copying strategies with some help suggestions for what they can do to **resolve concerns**.
- 2) Make sure your home has flashlights and book reading lights that can be used to help your individual get around your home. Reading lights give up close brightness to enhance reading. Turning on and off a flashlight and making sure batteries are working in them, is building motor skills and **skills of daily living**.
- 3) Make sure you have a good supply of candles that can be safely put in places around the home to show the way in those places. Show them how **to light** and then put out a candle. Fine motor and problem-solving skill development, here.
- 4) Have some backup electrical devices to plug the phone or computer into that can prolong usage.
- 5) Some families may have a backup **generator** to use for the refrigerator and other electrical appliances and light.
- 6) This may be a good time to locate a shopping mall with power. A walk around a large mall could be helpful. Some shopping could be done as well.
- 7) This may be the time, especially if there is not way to cook food, to expose your individual to a restaurant. **Ordering food**, eating appropriately and trying something new, now, has a reasons to motivate your individual.
- 8) If the storm is over and the weather supports, this is a great time to ask your individual to help in the cleanup. Getting out the green cans and showing them how to break up fallen branches, sweep up and then dump all debris into the can works on motor planning and builds independence.
- 9) Learning that they cannot just open the refrigerator a million times, as coldness will escape, builds **comprehension** and a daily living skill.
- 10) If the rain is not heavy, pull ot the **umbrella** and teach your individual to open and close and of course take a walk in the rain. This gets them out of the house, but also shows them how to manipulate the umbrella works on fine motor and motor planning.

- 11) Perhaps check in with other friends and family to see if they are also okay. This is a **great social** skill to teach your individual. “ Let’s check on grandma and grandpa and your brother and sister to see how they are getting along in this situation.”
- 12) Maybe this is an opportunity to connect with a **friend**. Perhaps the friend has power and a play date of some kind arranged.
- 13) If other family members have power, perhaps a **visit** is now a great idea. This again supports socialization and can increase conversation skills and also resolve some of the no light or no power issues facing your individual. If there is no hot water at your home, perhaps grandma can share some. Perhaps grandma can do some special cooking, because her oven is working.
- 14) This can be a good time to teach your individual about **weather**. If you do have backup energy, then they could check weather on their phones or computers and see where the storm is coming from, where it is going and when weather will be clear. They can learn about wind speed. They can learn about the temperature for the day. They can learn about sunrise and sunset that day. Great opportunity to expand vocabulary and build comprehension.
- 15) Since the washer and dryer may not be working, perhaps a **laundry mat** is open in another part of town. This could be a great opportunity to show your individual how to access a laundry mat and use machines. Great independent living skill.
- 16) If the storm occurs on a week day, you will need to help them find out if school is open or if their volunteer place is open or their work place expects them to come in. Teaching them to make **those calls** and ask those questions is a great opportunity to help them learn to problem solve. If they are non-verbal but can write then sending a text or email to inquire could work. If communication skills are very limited, then have them watch you do the checking in. At least they learn that communication is needed to solve the questions.





### Your power's out. Now what?

Stay calm and call 1-888-DIAL-DWP to make an official report.

Use a flashlight for light. NEVER use candles during an outage.

Keep refrigerator closed to keep food cold.

Check [www.ladwp.com](http://www.ladwp.com) or Twitter (@SCLADWP) for outage updates.






