

A letter to our family: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

It is Monday and our power is still off. It has been off since Thursday in a Millennial storm with 70 mph winds that took down trees everywhere. Because we have had record rainfall the past month, the roots are really soggy, so lots more trees came down than normally would have. There were over 300 trees down over roads so you can imagine what that did to power lines. Three of our neighbors had trees fall on their houses. The neighbor 2 doors down from us had a huge tree come down on top of their house. The only reason they were not killed was a smaller tree deflected it and it hit further over and just knocked the corner of the house off. It would have come right down on their bedroom if it had not been deflected. The radio news people warned everyone not to sleep in the South side bedrooms of their house but some did not hear the warning. My neighbor almost lost his life because of that.

I am sitting here hurrying to do the funnies on my laptop while the generator is running for an hour to keep our freezer cold enough to be safe. I don't need the power for my laptop but the modem to the Internet needs power so we are basically cut off from the internet. It sort of gave us a sense of what it would be like to not have a phone either. None of the portable phones worked because they need electricity so lots of people don't have phone service because they don't have a normal land line phone. Cell phones are no good once the charge runs out. They say some in our area won't get power until after Christmas, AND IT IS 32 degrees outside here so lots of people are in shelters.

LESSON LEARNED: Have emergency supplies even if you live in an apartment. Store up plenty of blankets. At least 3 days water. As a learning experience, I slept in our bedroom last night with no heat, in the 32 degree weather, just to see if I could keep warm. With 3 blankets I was warm as toast. We have a little camp stove with 6 20 gallon cylinders of propane to cook with. We have a generator and enough gas to run it 2 hours a day for about 3 weeks. We store the gas way out back away from the house. We have a fireplace with enough wood for a month. To conserve heat, we barricaded off the front room with sheets and that helped us stay warm as bed bugs. It was kind of fun. It was almost like camping out in our front room. We had lots of candles and several oil lamps. We had plenty of batteries for our radio (we could have sold them on eBay for a lot of money yesterday) We have 15 - 50 gallon barrels of water (we have that many so we can share with the neighbors). We have enough food to live for several months (and water to cook it in). We have a portable waterless toilet in case the sewer is not usable. We have a hanging shower bag you can put warm water in. We have a 72 hour kit in each car and a warm coat, hat and gloves in each car. We have 3 large plastic bins full of medical supplies that slide under our bed. But even with all that, I still feel so unprepared.

What would we have done if lots of people were hurt. It has been gratifying to see how many people have gone around checking on other people and offering to share what they have. If something bad happens, the government agencies are not going to take care of us (as we saw in Katrina). We need to be prepared ourselves to be self reliant as much as possible.

This emergency has been such a little thing. This has been a really good exercise in preparedness to help us see what we need to do if there was a bad earthquake that took out everything including gas and water for 2 or 3 weeks. May this little exercise be a warning for us ! We know more of this kind of thing will happen in the future. Why wait to get prepared until it happens?