



## **What to do when the lights go out!**

By Rick Bunzel

Mountain View Property Inspections

What would you do if the power went out? Here in Boulder County, we frequently get winds that can gust up to 70 mph. These winds wreak havoc on trees, which in turn fall and break our power lines. Blackouts can happen at any time, for any reason. A little planning can make these events a little less stressful. Perform a pre-blackout survey of your home and look at all the essential items that operate on electricity. For example, that hi-tech cordless phone may be fully charge but unlike your cell phone it needs power to the base unit to operate, rendering it useless when the power goes out. Do you carry keys to your home? Many people use their garage door as the main entrance to their home. In a blackout that garage door opener won't work. How about your stove? Even if it's gas, it may not work without power.

- It's a good idea to keep flashlights in several handy locations: in your car, near your home's front door, by your bed and in the kitchen. This way you don't have to fumble around too much looking for one when you need it.
- If you use candles during a blackout, it a good idea to set the candle in a bowl that has water in the bottom. This way if the candle falls or is knock over the water will extinguish the candle.
- If you have computer equipment you will want to have a surge suppressor power strip. However, a better solution is to have an "uninterruptible power supply" (UPS). These can be purchased for under \$100 and can give you several minutes of standby power to save files and shut down the machine. It is also a good idea to have surge suppressors on all expensive electronics as one bolt of lightning to a local transformer can send thousands of volts of electricity through the power lines potentially ruining any sensitive electronics plugged in to an outlet.
- Turn off or disconnect any appliances or electronic devices you were using when the power went out. Leave one light turned on so you'll know when your power is restored.
- Never use your oven as a source of heat, and never burn charcoal indoors for heating or cooking. Limit indoor fires to an approved fireplace.
- Avoid opening your refrigerator and freezer as much as possible. Food inside should stay cold for hours if the door is left closed.

**Here's a basic list of what Mountain View Property Inspections recommends to be kept on hand in the event of an outage:**

- Candles and flashlights with fresh batteries
- Matches or a lighter for the candles and to light the stove
- A portable radio, also with fresh batteries
- A regular cord style phone (cordless phones don't work without power)
- Stored water and food (dry or canned)
- A BBQ grill or camping stove for cooking

If you have to drive be careful. Remember that traffic signals may be out in a blackout. Consider each intersection to be a four-way stop, and drive defensively. If you are a pedestrian, be extra alert, since normal traffic patterns are disrupted.

A little preparation can turn a potentially scary time into a nice break from your normal daily routine.

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Mountain View Property Inspections. If you would like to know more about safety in your home go to **[WWW.MVPinspection.com](http://WWW.MVPinspection.com)** If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or [MVPinspection@attbi.com](mailto:MVPinspection@attbi.com)