

Preparing for climate change, part two: resilient citizens

By Carl Duivenvoorden

Be prepared: it's an important lesson New Brunswickers learned when a massive ice storm struck us last winter, and one that was hammered home again when Post-tropical Storm Arthur struck us in July.

With the onset of climate change, we can expect more such extreme weather events in the future. Here are some strategies we can all use to ensure we're ready the next time disaster strikes.

The basics

Our federal government recommends that Canadians have enough supplies on hand to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. A basic emergency kit should include:

1. **Water:** a minimum of two litres of drinking-quality water per person per day. Filling containers before a weather event is one option; another is using bottled water. I'm no fan of the stuff, but this may be the one instance where it is justified. Rain barrels and bathtubs filled in advance can provide extra water for washing and toilet flushing.
2. **Food:** set aside a stock of non-perishables such as dried foods or canned goods. Rotate them annually. Be sure to have a manual can opener on hand.
3. **A flashlight:** battery powered flashlights are fine but wind-up models are even better because they'll never leave you in the dark. Candles and oil lamps are useful, but they come with fire risk.
4. **Matches:** to light stoves, candles or lamps
5. **A radio:** as with flashlights, wind up models are the best option.
6. **Special needs items:** for infants, seniors or disabled members of the household.
7. **A first aid kit**

8. A bit of cash: both coins and low-denomination bills

Ideally, a basic emergency kit should be portable so it can easily be transported if necessary. And, if an evacuation is needed, don't forget prescriptions and eyeglasses.

Options for the longer term

Beyond these bare necessities, here are a few more items to make your household more resilient:

- A source of heat: wood stoves are the ultimate defence against winter cold because, unlike pellet stoves, they work whether there's power or not.
- A means of cooking: most canned goods can be eaten cold, but they're much more enjoyable when heated. Wood stoves can do the job. Camp stoves and barbecues are good options too, provided you have enough propane on hand – but don't operate them inside!
- A solar cell phone charger
- At least one corded phone, because cordless phones don't work without power.
- A basic tool set: a hammer, an adjustable wrench, pliers, screwdrivers, duct tape and a pocket knife

One more critical thing

Perhaps the most important element of household resilience is this: get to know your neighbours, and discuss ways you can help each other in emergencies. Who has what tools and equipment? Who has particular skills that could suddenly become important? If you don't have means for heat, water or cooking in emergencies, who could help? No person is an island, and the very best of resilience strategies always involve neighbours helping neighbours.

Finally, what about generators? There's no doubt they're very handy; they saved the food in many freezers and fridges in the wake of Arthur. But by temporarily facilitating normalcy, they may lull us into complacency, and into putting off more enduring elements of resilience. You could say a generator is to resilience what

an air conditioner is to global warming. If our emergency planning consists of nothing more than having a generator, we're still stuck if it fails or if we run out of fuel.

Be prepared the next time disaster strikes. For more information and a planning guide, visit www.getprepared.gc.ca.

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