28-Day Grid Outage Survival Guide

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Bear Grylls-inspired priorities adapted for a household electricity outage

BOTTOM LINE | Prioritise protection, safe water, food, essential medicines, communication and sanitation. Staying safely at home is generally preferable to wilderness survival tactics when the home remains habitable.

1. Survival priorities

- Protection and shelter: remain home if safe; manage temperature and security.
- Rescue and communication: know how to receive official alerts and request help.
- Water: store safe drinking water and have a treatment backup.
- Food: use perishable food safely, then shelf-stable supplies.
- Medical needs and sanitation: preserve medication access, hygiene and safe toilet arrangements.
- Routine and morale: set daily schedules and check on neighbours.

Grylls' wilderness mnemonic is commonly expressed as "Please Remember What's First": Protection, Rescue, Water, Food. This household plan adapts those principles; it is not a verbatim Bear Grylls checklist.

2. Water: calculate your household requirement

Planning formula: people × litres per person per day × 28 days. For three people: 3 L/day = 252 L; 4 L/day = 336 L; 5 L/day = 420 L. This covers drinking and basic food preparation only, not most cleaning, bathing or toilet use. Water needs increase with heat, illness and activity.

3. Four-week supply checklist

Category	Prepare
Water	252–420 L for three people (planning range), plus safe treatment method and clean containers
Food	84 person-days of shelf-stable meals for three people; include ready-to-eat food
Lighting	LED lanterns, torches, batteries
Power	Charged power banks; optional power station for priority devices
Cooking	Outdoor-rated stove and fuel; food that needs no cooking
Information	Battery/hand-crank radio, written contacts, printed local emergency instructions
Medical	Essential medication supply where feasible; first-aid kit; backup for refrigerated medicine or powered devices

Sanitation	Soap, sanitiser, toilet contingency supplies, heavy-duty bags
Finance and records	Cash in small notes; printed prescriptions and critical documents

4. First 24 hours

1. Confirm whether the outage is local or widespread; monitor official emergency information.
2. Fill clean containers while the tap-water supply is confirmed safe; do not assume it will remain potable.
3. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Refrigerated perishables generally become unsafe after about four hours without power unless verified cold; a full closed freezer can hold temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half-full).
4. Reserve battery power for essential communications, lighting and medical equipment.
5. Set water and food-use rules, meal times, daily check-ins and household responsibilities.
6. Relocate if the home becomes unsafe, sanitation or water fails, or essential medical needs cannot be met.

5. Non-negotiable safety rules

- Never use a generator, charcoal barbecue or outdoor camping stove inside a house, garage or enclosed space: carbon monoxide can kill.
- Do not eat perishable food simply because it smells or looks normal; use time/temperature guidance.
- Do not assume boiling removes chemical contamination; follow local water advisories.
- Keep fuel, flames and battery equipment away from children and combustible materials.

6. Practical sequence

Today: confirm water storage, torches, radio and critical medication plans. This week: assemble seven days of no-refrigeration food and test a safe cooking method. Next: extend supplies to 28 days, including sanitation and communications. Practise one evening without mains electricity to identify gaps.

Sources and scope

Bear Grylls: survival-priority mnemonic (protection, rescue, water, food). Food safety: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, “Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency” (refrigerator ~4 hours; full freezer ~48 hours, half-full ~24 hours). Australian emergency planning: Australian Red Cross, RediPlan; Australian Government emergency preparedness guidance. This is a household preparedness guide, not a prediction of a grid failure.