

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

In honor of disaster preparedness week, the *Beacon* would like to share with you a couple of tips to increase your resiliency during an emergency.

A solar and battery hybrid system can now provide significant backup power for your home. Whether or not emergency back-up power is important to you, the most sensible electrical step you can take is to put solar on your roof and make clean power to reduce your bill and reduce your carbon footprint. The addition of batteries is something that you can easily do initially or at any point in the future for security and energy resilience during an outage.

Prior to installing solar, it is important to use your electricity as efficiently as possible. With our reliable and relatively inexpensive grid electricity, energy efficiency sometimes becomes a lower priority. However, during an outage, you will need to be self-reliant, and the efficiency of your home will quickly come into sharp focus. The installation of proper insulation and air sealing around doors and windows is crucially important for keeping your home comfortable with as little energy input as possible. Replacing an old furnace with a heat pump can save you a lot of money and make your home more comfortable, and you should also consider a non-electric heat source for an option for the depths of winter.

For the solar part of the installation, you will want to share your power bill with the solar designer so they can target the right amount of energy production over the year and also consider the potential production during an outage.

In regard to battery storage that can carry you through a power outage, you will want to analyze the loads that you need to back up in your house. If you keep safe and comfortable with a few smaller circuits, then your battery system will be much less expensive. A whole-home backup is possible, but remember that project budgets increase along with the amount of energy storage. The home ESS (Energy Storage System) will use an automatic transfer switch to provide power from the batteries when the grid goes down, will be able to utilize all of the solar you can produce, and will often have a generator backup in addition to solar.

There is an art and a science to designing such a system that incorporates the solar and batteries, along with many considerations of your individual home. It is a good idea to work with a dependable local company that will take the time to put together the best that the current state of the industry has to offer for your project.

Special report by Andy Cochrane

Food is an important part of our emergency supplies. Being prepared for a natural disaster can also support you during other times of uncertainty like a personal injury or losing a job. Here are some basics for starting and maintaining your emergency food supply. For our area, the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) recommends a tiered approach to gathering food and other emergency supplies. Three days is good, two weeks is better, and 30 days is best! If you feel daunted about where to start, consider creating your own meal plan. A general outline is a plan for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and ensure at least one well-balanced meal per day for good nutrition and energy. Including one to two snacks can support your energy throughout the day.

Food insecurity impacts many in our area. Lack of resources also affects our ability to plan for the future. Start where you can and build from there. Adding a meal at a time increases your preparedness bit by bit. Consider storing a variety of food types in your emergency supply. Things like dry beans and rice will keep indefinitely. Canned goods, shelf-stable snacks, and instant prepackaged meals can be rotated more often. Every six months, check the expiration dates on your emergency food. Freeze-dried meals and MREs (meals ready to eat) are popular to add to your emergency food supply. They can help you save space and have a long shelf life. Consider the ingredients and sodium levels in these and other prepared foods. As always, think about your personal dietary needs and what will work for you.

Plan for how you are going to cook in a power outage. If your stove uses electricity, you'll need a back-up option. If you cook with propane, consider having some extra on hand for emergencies. Propane camping stoves and charcoal BBQs are some alternative options.

Safety note! Remember to only use these things outside and in a well-ventilated area. Plan and practice for how you will set them up. During a power outage, eat strategically and use perishable and refrigerated foods first. After that, move on to items in your freezer. If you keep your freezer closed, food will stay frozen for up to 48 hours. Do this before eating shelf-stable foods.

Opinion by Elena Bary, Department of Emergency Management Program Coordinator

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the Jefferson County *Beacon*. This is Nigel O'Shea. Thank you for listening.