

EMERGENCY PLAN: 2 WEEKS WITHOUT ESKOM

Two weeks without Eskom. This is what the Cabinet, the Cape Town City Council and various other provincial and metropolitan authorities are preparing for. This emergency plan compiled by Solidarity and KragDag helps people to be prepared so that there need not be reason for panic in the unlikely event that Eskom fails to supply power for a week or two.

Beforehand		
Priority	Background	Be prepared
Electricity	Modern households depend on electricity. Ask yourself: how would you – without Eskom – get energy for lighting, preparing food, heating water, heating your home, household hygiene, security, entertainment and communication?	Consider alternatives, including a generator, gas stove, solar panels, wood, etc. Get a supply of fuel, such as wood, petrol and gas – and store it safely. Use fuel from your old supply while you replenish it continuously.
Family logistics	A grid collapse is likely to occur unexpectedly, while family members may not be at home. Parents at work and children at school may be unaware that the power failure is bigger than the normal load shedding.	Discuss the situation with your family. Decide on every member's first action and logistics. Consider the role of your family and friends, to offer temporary accommodation to one another. Periodically remind your family of the plan.
Water	Municipalities often rely on electric pumps to pump water to reservoirs from where it is distributed to households. Without replenishment of reservoirs, taps can run dry in a day or two.	Keep 5 litres of water per person per day available. E.g.: 5 litres * 4 persons * 14 days = 280 litres Store water in a dark, cool place. Replace it regularly. Old water can get spoiled. Consider a water tank. Keep a reasonable supply of water purification tablets, regardless of the water supply.
Food	Shops possibly will have only a few days' supply and might be unable to order new stock or to have it delivered. In particular, fresh and perishable food that cannot be refrigerated could be a problem.	Keep two weeks' non-perishable food (canned food, oranges, biltong, rusks, etc.) Put bottles of water in empty spaces in your fridge. This way, your fridge will stay cool for longer. Make sure that your food supply can stay fresh and can be prepared without Eskom.
Work	Most places of work use electronic systems for bookkeeping, orders, stock, etc. Many normal work activities can grind to a halt because of a lack of stock or logistics.	Confirm your employer's plan: during a power failure, do you have to go to work or not? Consider how you can work even without Eskom, such as working from home. Make sure how your income and accounts will be affected if you cannot work.
Transport	Fuel companies typically keep a reasonable supply, but distribution will be difficult. Without banks or computer networks, buying fuel could be a problem. In addition, there may be unusual traffic jams during a failure.	Apart from fuel for power generation, keep sufficient fuel for urgent use of your vehicle. Use fuel from your own supply, and replenish regularly. Try a couple of alternative routes between work, school and home.
Medical	Some medical facilities may have generators, but many will be able to run for only a couple of days or even hours. Medical aid transactions could be a problem if computer systems are down.	Keep a good supply of your chronic medication, as well as a first-aid kit. Find out where your nearest hospital and pharmacy with emergency power and a good Plan B are. Ask your medical aid how they can support you in an emergency without power.
Safety and security	Home alarm batteries usually last for between one and three days. Electric fences will be off most of the time and the nights will be very dark. Communication with the police will be very difficult; they themselves may experience fuel shortages and may have exceptional workloads.	If you want to keep your alarm, consider a spare battery and a charging source. Join your local neighbourhood watch and find out about plans regarding a power failure. Get a weapon. This could vary from a firearm to pepper spray.
		Are you prepared?
Additional	Background	Be prepared
Hygiene	See above under "Water". Getting water for bathing and washing dishes and clothes will be a challenge during water shortages. The water calculation above makes only that limited provision for hygiene. If you want to store extra water, remember that a litre of water weighs about a kilogram.	Consider shower options that use little water, such as a bag shower, available at camping stores. Keep a good supply of toilet paper, plastic bags and other hygiene products. Get your family members into the habit of using water for cleaning sparingly.
Sewerage	Municipalities use electric pumps in sewerage management, as for water. Without these pumps your sewerage system could become clogged and in low-lying areas it could even run back into your home.	Consider a camp toilet with chemical sewage processing or a temporary pit toilet in the garden, etc. Plan how to block toilets and drains temporarily if necessary. Consider gypsum, etc. Get a big bucket or basin for keeping and re-using dish-washing water.
Refuse	Refuse removal could continue if the municipality has fuel, and missing one week's refuse removal would not be too bad. However, non-removal for more than a week will cause stench and even health hazards.	Find out where to take refuse and whether these sites will be open during a power crisis. Start a routine of separating refuse; keep perishable leftovers apart from glass, plastic, etc. Keep an extra supply of refuse bags.
Communication	Your phone's battery may be charged, but networks (internet as well as telephone) could be down within days because of limited ability to function without external power sources for long periods. Without these networks, internet and cellphone signals will not be available.	Get a battery-powered FM radio (and a spare set of batteries) to receive radio broadcasts. Find out if there are any amateur radio operators in your area. Consider a two-way radio to engage with your local neighbourhood watch.
Community	Be prepared for neighbours who may be less well prepared and may approach you for assistance after a few days. And even in spite of your own preparation you may also need help later. Together we are stronger.	Get acquainted with your neighbours and other people in your street. Give a copy of this Emergency Plan to your neighbours and compare your state of preparedness. Get involved with a local community structure, e.g. an AfriForum branch, neighbourhood watch or church.
Money	Banks are likely to operate on back-up power for some time, but in the event of internet, telephone and security problems, transaction facilities and access to hard cash will be limited. With a lack of cash it becomes more difficult than usual to make and receive payments.	Gather a supply of cash (small notes), even gradually. Store in a safe place. Find out how your service providers are going to react to late payment of accounts. Avoid the use of cash by exchanging items of which you have a lot for what you are looking for.
Entertainment	Two weeks without TV, video games, Facebook, etc. could become boring. It is important to keep the family occupied with work as well as entertainment.	Get a number of board games for the whole family to take part in. Tackle general domestic repairs. Do some research on what people in your family did in the evenings in years gone by.
		Are you prepared?



Apparently, Eskom expects a grid collapse to last for up to two weeks. This emergency plan is aimed at such a period. An actual power cut could be shorter or longer, for example if there is an increase in cable theft.

During the interruption

	Hints	Make a plan
Priority	Electricity	Regularly monitor your power consumption against your supply of fuel, gas, coal and wood. It will help to prioritise and to decide what to limit first if necessary.
	Family logistics	Computer and telephone networks may still be working for a couple of hours or longer. Cellphone networks in particular can get overloaded quickly, possibly blocking communication.
	Water	Water for drinking purposes always gets first priority, before bathing, washing and preparing food. First use the water most likely to become contaminated, e.g. tap water or open bottles of water.
	Food	Discard rather than get sick; don't take chances with thawed food that could be contaminated. Regularly monitor consumption against supplies.
	Work	Family comes first, but both work and family are important. You will have to draw up the balance sheet yourself during a crisis.
	Transport	Especially in the cities, traffic flow will be different – possibly very slow initially as everybody tries to get home and traffic lights are not working. Detours through residential areas can get busy when highways are clogged. Familiar routes could now be unsafe or inaccessible.
	Medical	Medical service providers will experience many challenges. Do not trouble them unnecessarily. And remember: doctors and nurses also have homes – there is likely to be one in your area who will be able to help in an emergency.
	Security	Employees of security companies may not be able to get to work. Traffic and other problems can quickly result in an interruption in normal guarding, patrolling and armed response. Alarms, gates, etc. may not be working.
		Are you doing what is necessary?

Additional	Hygiene	With good, basic hygiene, many diseases can be avoided, which is important especially when medical help is difficult to access. Not only personal hygiene is important, but also hygiene where food is stored or handled, in washing areas and around toilets.
	Sewerage	It takes about 7 litres of water to flush a toilet. Less water could mean that one has to flush again or that pipes get clogged. Use enough water for the first flush – it will save water. Remember, however: 5 litres is one person's entire ration for a day.
	Refuse	Huge volumes of refuse are non-perishable, such as plastic, cardboard, etc. By separating your perishable refuse, you can reduce your "problem refuse" to a very small volume. Remember that your neighbours' refuse can become your problem as well, so help where you can.
	Communication	Communication by telephone and email could be limited. If available, it should nevertheless be used sparingly to limit network overloading. Communication remains important, especially for safety and logistics, but also for socialising.
	Community	In everyday life, a community relies on the cooperation of its members for its progress. During an emergency this is even more important. Also remember that every crisis will come to an end eventually, and that you will be remembered for your actions.
	Money	Bear in mind that money is not the only way to trade. One can also borrow, pledge, exchange, give and use alternative mediums of exchange to trade.
	Entertainment	Variation is the name of the game. Do not try to force everybody into singing, acting or playing games, etc. if they don't want to do it – the aim of entertainment is enjoyment by all, not merely reducing boredom.
		Ensure that cutlery, kitchen equipment and food areas are cleaned regularly. Do not spoil water reserves (e.g. swimming pools) by using it for washing, bathing or shaving. Ensure all family members stay clean and brush their teeth, etc. Put used water (e.g. washing water) in a container (e.g. 5 litre bucket) to flush the toilet. Block drainage holes and toilets as necessary, according to your situation. If the ordinary toilet does not work, do bury all faeces, etc., e.g. in a pit toilet in the garden. Separate "clean" refuse from left-overs to limit the space taken up by stinking refuse. Offer to help your neighbours with their refuse if your capacity allows this. Your fruit and meat refuse in particular should be well managed, e.g. seal or bury deep. Make contact with neighbours and socialise, but take care not to be a nuisance. Join physical social networks in your area for news and support. Listen to the radio to keep abreast of what is happening. Be prepared for neighbours looking for help. See how and how much you can help. To resolve conflict, go together to a respected third party and ask for a decision. After a few days, organise a street market – someone is bound to have a surplus of something useful. Use your cash sparingly and withdraw extra cash if you still can. Keep a record of everything you borrow, pledge or promise, and keep to agreements. Be prepared to trade with other persons – both parties will be better off. Develop a routine of work and play, especially if there are children at home. Make sure the family do things they enjoy, not necessarily always together. Page through your old picture albums or repack boxes of old things.
		Are you doing what is necessary?

Please note: This emergency plan was compiled by the Solidarity Research Institute and is not a comprehensive emergency plan. Domestic conditions differ and this emergency plan is intended only as an incentive to be used for doing one's own thorough planning eventually. Practically speaking, an Eskom grid collapse could last shorter or longer than two weeks.