



## **MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 21, 2014

### **POWER OUTAGES – WHAT TO DO**

**[GRAVENHURST, ON]** It seems to be a common occurrence in Muskoka that at some point we will lose our electrical power for a period of time. So Town of Gravenhurst officials are advising the public to be prepared to deal with the likelihood of future power outages.

“While losing power for a couple of hours isn’t so bad, we should all have a plan in place to deal with extended power outages that may exceed 24 hours,” states Candace Thwaites, Community Emergency Management Co-ordinator.

If your house was constructed after 1990 you should have electrically powered smoke alarms on every level and outside of every sleeping area. If you haven’t replaced your smoke alarms that are greater than ten years with smoke alarms having a battery backup in case of power failures, you won’t have that protection of early detection and warning of a fire emergency.

“You should have flashlights and battery operated lanterns, avoid using candles unless absolutely necessary, but if you do use candles, keep them away from children and pets in a secure holder and NEVER leave a candle unattended,” advises Fire Chief Larry Brassard.

Power Outages – Do’s and Don’ts:

Recognizing that we still need to eat, do not use a propane, natural gas or charcoal barbecue indoors. Not only is that a fire hazard, but a potential source of carbon monoxide as well and if your carbon monoxide alarm is electrically powered it won’t work in a power failure either!

If you have, or are going to purchase a generator, make sure it is approved for use in Canada and has the proper connections and receptacles. If you are buying a whole house backup generator, ensure that a master electrician performs all work to avoid any potential back flow of electricity into the grid which could electrocute hydro workers trying to restore your power. Purchase a generator that is ‘big’ enough to power the appliances you want to operate.

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Do not run a generator inside the house or attached garage because it too will produce carbon monoxide. Be careful when placing a generator outside that you don't have it near door or window openings to prevent dangerous fumes from entering into your home. When you have to use extension cords, ensure that they are rated for the intended use, and do not run them across floors or under carpets.

Make sure your stove elements are off BEFORE the power is restored. Turn off all tools, appliances and electronic equipment to minimize damage by a power surge when power is restored. Also, power can be restored with less difficulty if there is less of a load demand on the grid when it is re-energized.

Turn off all lights, except for one inside and one outside. This will notify you and the power authority when power has been successfully restored to your home.

If you do not have a generator, avoid opening fridges or freezers as much as possible. A full freezer will keep food frozen for 24 to 36 hours if the door remains closed.

If the power outage occurs in the cold months and you must use a space heater, make sure it is designed for indoor use and follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions.

The Government of Canada provides these tips if you have to evacuate your home in winter weather because of a power outage:

- Turn off the main electrical breaker
- Turn off the water main where it enters the house, protect the valve, inlet pipe and meter or pump with blankets or insulation material
- Drain water from your plumbing system. Start at the top of your house, open all taps and flush toilets several times. Go to the basement and open the drain valve. Drain your hot water tank by attaching a hose to the drain valve and running it to the basement floor drain
- If you have a fuel fired hot water tank, make sure the pilot light is turned off and have a licensed gas technician relight it
- Disconnect washing machine hoses and drain
- Add a small amount of antifreeze to water traps and toilets
- If you have a sump pump to prevent water from entering your basement, clear valuables from the basement floor in case of flooding

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Last, but not least, in today's world of cell phones and portable phones you should always have one of those old fashioned phones that plugs into the wall outlet and does not require electricity to operate, just in case you need to call for help in an emergency.

For more information about becoming better prepared in the case of power outages visit:  
<http://www.gravenhurst.ca/en/ourcommunity/personalpreparedness.asp>.

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*For additional information please contact:*

*Candace Thwaites, Community Emergency Management Co-ordinator  
Town of Gravenhurst  
705-687-2230 Ext. 234, or [cthwaites@gravenhurst.ca](mailto:cthwaites@gravenhurst.ca)*

*Chief Larry Brassard  
Town of Gravenhurst Fire Department  
705-687-3414, ext. 238, or [lbrassard@gravenhurst.ca](mailto:lbrassard@gravenhurst.ca)*

*Geoff Carleton, Director of Infrastructure and Community Services  
Town of Gravenhurst  
705-687-2230 Ext. 243, or [gcarleton@gravenhurst.ca](mailto:gcarleton@gravenhurst.ca)*