



Michael Keyser
CEO/General Manager

Keyser's Corner

Report Power Outages with BARC's Mobile App or Online Portal

These are the easiest and most effective ways for you to report a power outage with the added benefit of receiving a restoration notice when power is restored.

Nobody likes power outages. But like death and taxes, they are a certainty of life. While we know they are inevitable, at BARC we are constantly striving to improve our outage reporting and response.

Last month I announced the launch of BARC Mobile, our new mobile app for Apple and Android that allows customers to quickly report power outages. It's tremendously easy to do, and an added benefit to outage reporting through the app is the ability to receive a restoration notice when power is restored.

For Rockbridge customers, earlier this year we opened a field office that has already begun paying dividends. Outages that previously required a trip to our Millboro headquarters are now handled out of our field office, drastically decreasing our outage-response time for Rockbridge customers.

These recent efforts build upon earlier triumphs by BARC staff. In late 2014, we launched a robust outage-management system, or OMS. A link to the OMS map is available through our website, or at this address: outages.barcelectric.com:83/.

When you report an outage over the phone, the OMS attempts to locate your service based on the data you provide. If the data you provide does not match your account information, the OMS can't find a match and the outage report "fails." Thus, it is essential that you keep your account information up to date.

Reporting via BARC Mobile fixes that problem. You are already logged into your account when you use the app to report your outage. Instant reporting and zero failure rate! And you'll never wait in a phone queue or get a busy signal either.

For those without a smartphone but access to a computer during outages, just like BARC Mobile you can report your outage via the Customer Portal (accessible through our website).

Some members have used Facebook and social media to report their outages. We ask that you do not report your outage this way. We are not staffed to monitor social media 24/7, so posting an outage after hours can go unnoticed for some time. We primarily use social media to provide progress updates in major outages.

For reporting an outage, please use one of the other electronic methods.

So why not use the telephone? You can still use the telephone, but it takes longer for you to report your outage, it takes longer for the information to reach us, and you do not get the benefit of notifications when the power is back on. It might even require more key punches to dial our number than report via the app.

While on the topic of telephone calls, effective June 1, 2016, we are

moving our after-hours call service to a different

company. The number won't change but we feel the service will improve. A major improvement is no more automated answering systems.

With our new provider, you will get a live person every time. So

if you do need to reach us via the telephone after hours, that

part of our service is also being improved.

For members who enrolled in the outage text-messaging service, that is going to end with the transition to BARC Mobile. We apologize for any convenience this causes but highly recommend the new BARC Mobile app as an excellent replacement.

To wrap things up, reporting outages via the app and online portal are going to be the easiest and most effective ways for you to tell us your power is out. Not only is it easier for you, it helps us give you better service.



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Summer Storm Season

by Tom Tate

As we shake off the mantle of winter and get ready to enjoy some well-earned warmer weather, it is time to make plans for what to do in preparation for summer storms. It is always good to have a basic storm kit on hand and fully stocked. The kit will function in any kind of bad weather with certain tweaks for different times of year. Let me go through the basic items and preparations first.

- Charge up your cellphone. If the power lines go down, telephone lines will go too.
- Have a list of important numbers written down or in your cellphone.
- Have a list of all prescription numbers for and medicine you and your family need.
- Have a flashlight and battery-powered radio handy plus extra batteries.
- If you like, have a battery-powered lantern as well for evening use. LED versions are the best.
- Have a couple of gallons of drinking water set aside at all times. Rotate them so they don't get that plastic taste.
- Have a day's worth of non-perishable food on hand, three if practical. Rotate these too to keep them within their expiration dates.
- Don't forget your pets or livestock when it comes to food and water.
- Have a small first-aid kit for cuts, scrapes, headaches and such.
- Have a sturdy knife, some cord and some duct tape.
- Locate and mark water and electric shut-off valves and switches.

Summer storms are somewhat different in that they pop up with little warning and leave nearly as fast. The damage they cause is also localized in most cases. The basic kit described above will see you through an outage of a day or so. When it comes to hurricanes, you need to take additional steps noted below.

- Fill your vehicles with gasoline as gas stations may not have power to pump gas.
- Get gas for your emergency generator if you have one.

- Test your generator at least monthly. Make sure everyone knows how to use it safely.
- Get money from the ATM because they may be without power too.
- Your non-perishable food supply should be at least three days' worth.
- Fill bathtubs with water for sanitation purposes. Increase your drinking water to at least five gallons.
- If you have a medical need that requires uninterrupted power and you do not have a generator, consider finding a location that can offer uninterrupted power or that is out of the storm zone.

And of course, if you see power lines, or any wires for that matter, on the ground after a storm, stay well away from them as electricity flows quite readily through wet soil. Also, never drive over them.

The final topic for summer storm prep deals with what to do in a lightning storm. I was asked to prepare a presentation on this topic for a homeowner's association a few years back and was quite surprised to find out some critical advice had changed.

In days gone by, we were advised to find a low point away from tall buildings, structures and trees and lay as flat as possible if caught outside. Today that advice has been modified. If you lay flat and lightning strikes nearby, the electricity will flow through the ground and your

Outage Reporting

Be sure to read Keyser's Corner this month on the various ways BARC has for reporting outages. We have greatly enhanced your options.

Not to be a spoiler, but you can:

- Use our mobile app;
- Online portal; or
- Phone.

body. It has to do with a differential in resistance. At any rate, it exposes your body to potentially dangerous electric levels. The new advice recommends assuming the baseball-catcher position. Crouch as low as you can in the same type of area you'd formerly lay flat in, keep your feet as close together as possible, and wait for the storm to pass. Remember that lightning has a striking distance of up to 10 miles so when you hear thunder it is time to seek shelter.

If you are inside during a storm, the safety tips have not changed. See them below.

- Stay away from windows.
- If there is a potential for damaging winds, go to a central part of your home and seek the sturdiest space like an interior closet or under stairs.
- Do not take a shower, bath or come in contact with any plumbing fixtures.
- Do not use a corded telephone.
- Turn off sensitive electronics. Unplug the most valuable if they are not protected by a surge protector. What, you don't have a surge protector? Look for an article on that topic elsewhere in this issue.

That is all for summer storm preparation and safety practices. All of us here at BARC wish you and your families a happy, healthy and safe summer.



Stake Energy Vampires with Smart Strips

In an average home, 5 percent to 8 percent of electric use stems from “energy vampires”— devices that use power even when turned off. Smart power strips help you unplug energy-draining devices when not in use easily.

There are typically three different types of outlets on a smart strip:



The blue outlet serves as a control plug (ideal for a TV or computer).



Devices plugged into red outlets stay on—electricity to these receptacles never cuts off, making them perfect for satellite boxes and other items that need constant power.



Remaining outlets, often green or neutral in color, are sensitive to current flowing through the blue outlet. Turning off a device plugged into the blue outlet cuts power to items connected to these outlets.

Smart strips are available online or at specialty electronic retailers and generally cost \$20 or more depending on their size.

Source: Cooperative Research Network, Bits Ltd.

Surge Protection Primer

by Tom Tate

Everything seems to have an electronic component these days. And electronics are very susceptible to high voltages, exactly like those from a nearby lightning strike. So, some tips:

Unplugging valuable items is the surest way to protect against surge damage but also the most inconvenient. Two other techniques in combination provide the best protection without unplugging.

To start, be sure your household grounds are solid and still working properly. The ground should cover everything conductive coming into the house; electric, water, telephone, cable. Good grounds all bonded together can divert most surges right into the earth where they do less harm. A qualified electrician should do this for you.

Point-of-use devices are next. Get a good one. They cost more but are worth it. A cheapo protector actually increases the



Invest in a good-quality surge protector so your electronics won't be damaged by high voltage.

risk because of how these devices work. Expect to pay \$40 and up. I like Panamax, TrippLite, and Monster. There are other good ones but these are my personal favorites. When getting a good device, get the model that protects all the connections to your equipment like cable, internet, satellite dish, etc. Go for a joule rating of 1,600 or more and a connected-equipment warranty. Caveat emptor on the warranties, they may require your homeowner's insurance to pay first. Read the fine print if a warranty is important to you.

Got a well? Put a surge protector at the well itself. A metal casing full of water is an enticing target for lightning.

That's it for this little primer. Let us know if we can help with questions on surge protection.



Tina Glenn

TINA's Tastings

OATMEAL BREAD

1 cup quick oats	2½ cups water, divided
½ cup whole wheat flour	2 pkg. dry yeast
1 cup brown sugar	6 cups white flour, divided
1 Tbsp. salt	
2 Tbsp. butter or margarine	

Combine ingredients in first column in a large bowl. Pour 2 cups boiling water over mixture, stirring to combine. Separately dissolve: 2 packages dry yeast in ½ cup warm water. When batter is cooled to lukewarm, add the yeast mixture. Stir in 5½ cups white flour (you'll probably add another ½ cup in kneading). When dough is stiff, turn onto a floured board and knead 5-10 minutes. Place in greased bowl, cover and let rise until doubled. Punch down and let rise again. Shape into 2 loaves and place into 2 loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Cool on rack. Brush loaves with additional butter or margarine for a soft crust.



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