

- 1 Kelly Kettle, from £49.50
- 2 Duronic Apex wind-up radio, £17.99
- 3 Water-to-Go bottle, from £19.99
- 4 Nebo Big Larry 2 torch, £14.99



How to cope if the power goes out this winter

Three leading disaster experts give tips on how to be prepared when the lights go out. By Martina Lees

Professor Lucy Easthope, Britain's leading disaster expert, is "terribly embarrassed" to say that her family does generator drills. She lives with her husband, two children and three labradors in Shrewsbury. Once a month they test their petrol and diesel back-up generator to make sure it will work if the lights go out.

In the UK "prepping has a bad rep, hooked to Armageddon religions. But I'd be doing my profession a disservice if I didn't put this level of work in," Easthope says.

She is no nutter bracing for a SHTF (shit hits the fan) event, as preppers call it. Easthope advised the prime minister's office on the pandemic, and worked on disasters including 9/11 and the Grenfell fire — recounted in her bestselling memoir, *When the Dust Settles*.

Last week Oliver Dowden, the deputy prime minister, urged people to buy battery-powered radios and torches to boost their "personal resilience" in the event of power supplies collapsing.

"Britain can be quite complacent in terms of how much help is coming over the hill," Easthope says. The idea of preparedness went "more mainstream" in the pandemic, but the UK is still "really far behind" the precautions that America and Australia encourage citizens to take, she adds. "This kind of preparedness will genuinely save lives."

What should you stock up on? We asked three British disaster professors, including Easthope, how they have prepared at home.

Dr Sarita Robinson, alias "Dr Survival", lectures on the psychology of survival at the



- 5 The Biolite CampStove 2 converts heat into electricity to charge your phone, £160.95

University of Central Lancashire. She became fascinated with why some people cope in disasters and others don't after hearing her mother's stories of surviving hurricanes as a child in Mauritius. Her rule is that your preparation should "fit your life — it shouldn't take over". Robinson does what she calls "micro preps". Not many people have the space or money to stockpile, she says. "I wouldn't build a nuclear bunker in the backyard. But would I have a go bag and some first-aid training? Absolutely."

Ilan Kelman, professor of disasters and health at University College London and co-founder of disastersavoided.com, keeps enough supplies to survive two weeks at home. "It is not about instilling fear ... It's simply about saying, 'Let's do what we can to help each other and support each other,' recognising that governments cannot and should not do everything."

It is harder to ask people to prepare amid the cost of living crisis, Easthope says. As Kelman puts it: "The real disaster is that so few people can afford to be prepared."

The disaster experts' essentials

Go bag Easthope, who tweets as @LucyGoBag, says your go bag should contain what you would take "if somebody said to you, 'You've got 15 minutes to pack.'" Her bag has a phone charger, a battery pack, underwear, a washbag, headache pills and a bottle of water.

Kelman's advice is to keep at hand a money belt with cash and a passport, as bank cards may not work in a crisis.

Robinson's bag is in her car, with an extra set of clothes, a foil survival blanket, a small torch and food for 24 hours.

Power Because Kelman lives in a flat without a garden, he decided not to have a generator, which comes with a risk of fire or carbon monoxide poisoning. Nor does he have a power bank, which will eventually run out.

Robinson has a "tiny generator, the sort of thing you take camping". Which? suggests the battery-powered Anker Portable Power Station, which costs £149 and can be charged with a solar charger.

Communication The mobile phone network may fail in a blackout; so will landlines, if they have been switched to phone calls over broadband, as has happened in much of the UK. A wind-up radio, ideally with solar power as well, such as the Duronic Apex (£17.99, Amazon), is your best friend for emergency updates, Easthope says.

Water Robinson has several bottles that can purify any water (from £19.99, watertogo.eu). Kelman and Easthope both keep large bottles of water at home.

Food Experts recommend having food for at least 72 hours. Include cereals, nuts and dried fruit, meals that do not need cooking — and treats to lift spirits.

Heat A small gas camping stove with spare canisters and matches is a useful back-up cooker, Robinson says. Which? likes the Coleman FyreStorm PCS (£55.93, Amazon). A Kelly Kettle can boil water in three minutes using only twigs and pine cones as fuel (from £49.50, kellykettle.com).

Light "The world feels more terrifying when it's dark," says Easthope, who has solar lamps, rechargeable lamps and hurricane lanterns. Disaster experts "are not thrilled with candles" because of the fire risk, she says.

According to Which?, the Nebo Big Larry 2 torch (£14.99) and the Black Diamond Astro 300 head torch (£32) both last over eight hours. Remember spare batteries or buy a wind-up torch.

Medicine Prepare a month's extra supply of prescription medication and a first-aid kit. Do a first-aid course. "More and more we're seeing a longer delay with help coming. That's a worthwhile investment," says Easthope, who has put both her children through first-aid courses.



For more power cut tips go to thetimes.co.uk