DARK DISPATCH NEWS

Five-Minute Blackout Rehearsal

A drill, not a prediction. It tests whether your home is ready for a dark evening.

Before you start

Don't flip the main breaker, run a generator, or use a gas stove or oven for heat. Keep the path clear and walk slowly. If someone in your home has trouble moving in the dark, have a helper with them.

Set up

You'll need paper and a pen and a timer. Pick one room. Tell everyone it's a drill.

The clock (5:00, no pausing)

0:00–0:30 Put phones in airplane mode. Turn off that room's light.

0:30–1:30 From where you'd sit or lie, find a working light by feel.

1:30–2:30 Turn it on. Check the battery type and whether spares are nearby.

2:30–3:30 On paper, read back your out-of-area contact and two meeting places. Mark any you can't fill in. Don't stop to fix them.

3:30–4:30 With Wi-Fi off, try to open your offline copy of the 72-Hour Blackout & Comms Checklist (darkdispatchnews.com/guides/72-hour-blackout/). Our advice: If it won't open, put a paper copy in your kit.

4:30–5:00 Write down what was hard to find.

After the timer

Fill in the blanks you marked. Move one item tonight, such as a flashlight to your bedside.

How you did

Pass: You found a working light in under a minute, read back your out-of-area contact and two meeting places, and opened or printed the guide.

Try again next week: Any of those didn't happen. Repeat the drill after you've fixed one thing.

Make it work for your household

Kids: Let them hold the light and name the meeting place.

Pets: Know where they'd be and where the carrier is.

Medical needs: Note which devices need power and what your backup is.

Sources: Ready.gov emergency kit · Ready.gov family emergency plan · Ready.gov (FEMA) power outage guidance

We are not an official alert service. In an emergency, follow the National Weather Service and your local officials.