

Nothing announces the coming of winter quite like the end of Daylight Saving Time. It confirms that the sunny days are shorter and the warm days are over; it's time to prepare for the new season. What sort of preparation? I put it into two categories, the first of which is basic household prep.

As there will be no more early rising to sun-dappled walls, and the risk of stepping on late night cat toys is greater in the dark, the first part of my household prep is to make sure I have an appropriate supply of replacement light bulbs. At this time of year many of us leave home in darkness and return in the same. Best to insure that outside stairs and other places normally navigated in summer sun are well lit, as the ambient light changes but our schedules might not.

My next concern is staying warm without overtaxing the heating system. Small drafts that may go unnoticed in warm weather become prominent as it cools. Therefore I remove a window air conditioner and use rope caulking and/or foam tape to seal a couple of leaky windows. An exterior door gets a fabric covered "draft stop" at its foot that keeps out the cold air while allowing normal operation.

There's no sense in making the heating system work harder, so it's a good time to have the furnace and water heater serviced. (Beleaguered heating pros may prefer earlier!) New filters, etc., will make systems more efficient.

With more heat sources in use, it will be essential that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors be up to date, with fresh batteries where needed.

My second area of preparation is for incidents brought on by winter weather, such as brown-outs or total power outages. These are much less likely than in the days when Nantucket generated its own power, but they do happen now and then. I make sure that, at minimum, I have cordless lights and the means to keep my phone charged. To that end I have several rechargeable flashlights and area lights, and battery power sources for the mobile devices. I even have a battery power source strong enough to run the microwave and coffee maker. It's not a bad idea to have some of these things in the car as well.

If a power outage lasts long enough, batteries will be depleted, so a small portable generator could keep the chargers going.

Most everything I use for winter prep I got from Marine Home Center. As I recently discovered, The Electrical Department is a trove of corded and cordless lighting solutions good at any time of year. Between The Electrical and Hardware Departments, Marine has you covered!

If you could mandate just one year round clock setting, would you choose Standard time or Daylight Saving Time? DST was last applied all year in 1974, ostensibly to save energy, but it was very unpopular even among those who thought they wanted it!

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