Here are tips to cope with stormy weather

"Stormy Weather" may be the title of a classic love ballad, but this time of year in southeastern Michigan, the song takes on an entirely different meaning.

Stormy weather occurs frequently May through September, causing damage to electric utility lines, resulting in temporary power outages. Detroit Edison has several suggestions to assure your safety and to minimize property damage and inconvenience while it is restoring electrical service.

- First, always be prepared for an emergency. Keep handy a battery-operated radio, fresh replacement batteries, flashlight or candles and a first aid kit.
- If your electricity goes out, check circuit breakers and fuses to see if they need to be replaced or reset. Familiarize yourself with the procedures for replacing or resetting the devices. If there are no tripped circuits or blown fuses, see if your neighbors are without power and have reported the outage to Detroit Edison. If they haven't, call the number on your bill to report the problem. Be patient and try again if the lines are busy.
- Stay away from fallen poles and wires, hanging wires or anything the wires may be touching; report the problem to Detroit Edison.
- To avoid electrical overload when the power returns, disconnect appliances and turn off lights. Leave one light on so you will know when the power returns.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to avoid food spoilage. A well-filled freezer, if kept closed, will preserve food for two or three days.
- Dry ice will help keep food cold. Place the dry ice on cardboard on top of food packages in the freezer. Food also can be stored, with ice, in a bath tub, metal bushel basket, pail or insulated picnic hamper. Cover with newspapers, rugs or blankets. (Partially thawed food or food that still has ice crystals can usually be refrozen.)
- Stay out of flooded or damp basements. The water or moisture surrounding your furnace or electrical appliances may serve as a conductor of electricity.
- If you must leave home for an extended period of time during a power outage, empty the contents of the refrigerator and leave the doors open. Turn off the main electrical and gas supply valves on your meter.
- When the power returns, wait a few minutes before turning on the lights and appliances and then turn them on one at a time.
- There may be a low voltage condition, resulting in dim lights, a small television picture and appliances that operate slower than usual. Low voltage will not damage ordinary light bulbs, television sets or heating appliances. Motor-driven appliances may hum and click instead of starting, or once started, not operate normally. Shut them off to prevent overheating and possible burnout. As soon as repairs to Detroit Edison lines and equipment are completed, full voltage will be returned and appliances will operate normally.

Care can prevent pool accidents

Constant supervision is an effective safeguard against drownings in back yard pools, AAA Michigan said.

A total 13 Michigan residents, all children, died in private pools during 1987, the most recent statistics available. Lack of supervision was cited as a major factor in the deaths.

Nationally, between 300 and 325 people die each year in back yard pool accidents, with 40 percent of the victims younger than 11 years old.

Drowning is the third leading cause of accidental death among children younger than 5 years.

"Contrary to popular belief, drownings usually occur quickly, silently and without a struggle," said Robert V. Cullen, AAA Michigan safety manager.

"About 75 percent of the children who died had last been seen less than five minutes before they were discovered in the pool," Cullen said. "That's why constant supervision is so important and requires more than merely keeping an eye on children while you do yard work or other distracting chores."

TO MAKE backyard pools safer for everyone, AAA Michigan and the Aquatic Injury Safety Group recommend:

No diving in any above-ground pool or in less than five feet of water in an in-ground pool.

Never go down a pool slide head first.

Barriers and fencing should surround all sides of the entire pool and be at least five feet high.

Locks and latches on pool gates should be self-closing.

Always have Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices, a ring buoy with an attached line and/or a long handled hook available poolside.

All family members should be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and successfully complete swimming lessons.

Use the "buddy system" when swimming.

Don't mix swimming and alcohol.

Poolside phones eliminate the need to leave the pool area when taking or making calls and are immediately available in an emergency.

Pool safety covers can prevent drownings. Select one designed so water won't collect on the surface and that prevents children from crawling underneath.

Small portable wading pools should be emptied and stored immediately after each use.

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