

Hotline Case Study: Managing a Prolonged Power Outage at Camp

Following a severe thunderstorm, a camp experienced a total power outage. Power restoration was not anticipated for at least a week. The camp, which hosts 150 campers and 40 staff members, had policies in place for short-term outages, but no detailed protocols for managing an extended loss of power. The camp director immediately convened her leadership team to assess the situation and determine the best course of action to ensure camper safety and continuity of operations.

This case study provides an opportunity to assess the resilience of your camp's emergency plans and to prepare for unexpected crises beyond short-term disruptions.

What Can We Learn From This Case?

- Understand the critical components of a response plan for a prolonged power outage at camp.
- Identify the key operational challenges posed by extended outages, including:
 - Feeding campers and staff
 - Food safety
 - Medical needs
 - Heat and health
 - Water/sewage
 - Sanitation
 - Parent/Guardian communication
 - Activities and morale
- Evaluate options for communication, relocation, or cancellation in the event of a prolonged outage.
- Locate local communication, emergency instructions/mandates, news, and updates.
- Explore risk management and liability considerations, including the role of insurance and legal counsel.
- Develop strategies for staff training and preparation in the event of a similar emergency.

Policies and Risk Management — Questions to Consider

- Does your camp have a comprehensive emergency preparedness policy that includes prolonged power outages?
- Does the camp have access to generators (either owned, rented, or procured through insurance or the local power company)?
- Are there existing protocols for voluntary evacuation, and under what conditions should this be implemented?
- What is your current policy for parent communication during emergencies? Does it need adjustments for long-term power issues?
- How will you ensure food safety, including the safe storage of perishable items and the ability to cook meals without power?

- What alternative measures can be implemented for critical medical needs, including the refrigeration of medications and the treatment of heat-related illnesses?
- Have you consulted with your insurance provider and legal counsel on potential relocation options, liability, or financial assistance during a crisis?

Staff Training — Questions to Consider

- How can staff be trained to handle the various challenges of operating a camp without power for extended periods?
- What additional skills or resources do your staff need to manage health risks, such as heat exhaustion, without typical amenities like air conditioning or running water?
- What training will staff need to manage crisis communication with parents and campers, particularly in the event of a potential evacuation or relocation?

Key Takeaways

- A comprehensive, adaptable emergency plan is essential for handling prolonged power outages, including protocols for voluntary evacuation, communication, continued operations, and/or cancellation.
- Legal counsel and insurance providers should be consulted for advice on relocation/cancellation, funding, and liability.
- The safety of food, water, and medications is critical in these scenarios, requiring contingency plans for refrigeration, water quality, and meal preparation.
- Ensuring clear, calm, and transparent communication with parents is crucial, especially when evacuation or relocation might be necessary.
- Staff training should cover not only basic emergency response but also specific skills needed to manage health, safety, and emotional well-being during a prolonged outage.

Resources

- [American Red Cross — Power Outage Checklist](#)
- [Ready.gov — Power Outages](#)
- [ACA — Severe Weather Season Is Year-Round: Preparing Your Camp](#)

Articles

- [Camping Magazine — Generating Your Backup Plan](#)
- [The CampLine — Are You Ready? Severe Weather](#)