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Ask the Electrician: How to recover from an unforeseen power outage - by John Sloane

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John Sloane

Interstate Electrical Services Corp.

Winter may be behind us, but power outages can happen at any time of year. In last month's Ask the Electrician column, we covered best practices for preparing for various disasters that have the potential to cause power outages. However, no amount of planning can prevent the occasional power outage to your commercial building – be it from weather, construction, accidents, or something else. In the event of an unforeseen power outage, here are steps you can take to get your building up and running again as quickly as possible.

Contact Your Electrical Contractor

Whether you are working with a large regional electrical contractor, like Interstate, or with a small team, your contractor should be available to help you navigate through the power restoration process. Depending on your preferred level of involvement, your electrical contractor can help you with generator rental and coordination, collaborate with other key contracting teams, and create and execute an action plan, among other important tasks. If you've worked with your contractor previously, they will have a helpful record of work in your building and will likely know the voltage, phase rotation, ampacity, and other details that are key for power restoration.

Secure A Generator

If you are experiencing a power outage as part of a weather-related incident or some other event that is causing widespread loss of power, you may have a more difficult time securing a generator if you have not already reserved one. Keep in mind that you will need to request the generator size that is right for your building based on your usual consumption. If you do not have easy access to your power utility bills, your electrical contractor should be able to help you out with determining the correct size generator as well as securing one.

Designate Your Point Person

If possible, designate a point person on-site who knows the building well – this could be you, one of your employees, or even one of your clients in the building. They don't necessarily need to know the

technical workings of the building, but, they should know how to access the basement or where the electrical room is located, for example. If you can't find someone who can be on-site, make sure you have an expert ready via phone for any questions that may arise.

Create An Action Plan

Once you have a generator secured, have been in touch with your electrical contractor, and designated your on-site point person, it's time to create an action plan. Consider what systems are most important to bring back online, and which floors should take priority for power restoration. For example, a grocery store should prioritize the refrigeration units, while a computer security company should ensure mission-critical servers and systems are back online first. Your electrical contractor will work with other trade contractors, such as mechanical or HVAC, to ensure systems are coming back online in the correct order.

Power outages are never a welcome occurrence. However, by contacting your electrical contractor and following these simple steps, you won't be left in the dark for long the next time an outage happens.

Contact us if you have questions about how to be prepared for an unexpected disaster or power outage.

John Sloane is regional vice president, Central and Southern New England Service Divisions at Interstate Electrical Services Corp., North Billerica, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540