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Ask the Electrician: How to prepare a commercial building for power outages

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In New England, there is no shortage of extreme weather, especially during the winter months. High winds, strong rains, and intense snow can wreak havoc on our infrastructure and lead to unexpected power outages. While it is nearly impossible to know when a power outage will happen, it is possible to be prepared for it. It's important to note that it is not always a downed power line or extreme weather that can cause an outage. Construction issues and unforeseen accidents can damage power lines and equipment, causing outages.

As a part of the largest merit shop electrical contractor in New England, I'd like to offer some tips that can help you be prepared in the event of a power outage.

Know the Power Consumption of the Building

Many people don't know that they need to think about power consumption, but this is a simple piece to keep track of. You will need to know approximately how much power the building draws to ensure you are using the correct size generator in the event of an outage. Keeping your power utility bills easily accessible is a great way to learn about your usage.

Plan Ahead for a Generator

Generators are a hot commodity when a widespread power outage strikes. Many corporations and businesses with multiple locations, like grocery stores or restaurants, will put down a deposit at the beginning of the winter season or before a large storm to reserve their generators. This guarantees they will have backup power when needed. For everyone else, it tends to be "first come, first serve" when renting a generator. Do your best to plan ahead and reserve the proper size generator for the building.

Identify the Priority Systems in the Building

What functions of the building's electricity are absolutely necessary? Determine the more pressing power needs, such as refrigeration or lab equipment. Knowing the most important components in

the building will help you determine where to direct the backup power first in the event of an outage.

Have Equipment Tested and Inspected Regularly

It's important to have the building's electrical equipment tested and inspected regularly by certified professionals. While most vital electrical components have a long life, it is important to keep them maintained. This ensures your electrical contractor will have up-to-date records of the entire electrical system and will have an easier time restoring backup power to the building when needed. At Interstate, we keep extensive records of each jobsite and serviced building, ensuring we are prepared to revisit in the future.

In following these tips, you will be prepared to handle a power outage and restore power quickly to your commercial building. In our next installment of "Ask the Electrician," we will cover how to be properly prepared in the event of a disaster. Contact us if you have questions about how to prepare yourself for an unexpected disaster.

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