

# EMERGENCY INFORMATION FOR YOU AND YOUR PARROTS

This has been a tough year for everyone, between Hurricane Irene and the big snowstorm in October causing massive power outages, so I thought I would compile some thoughts here for reference. This is not meant to be a comprehensive emergency guide, but just some tips for everyone, especially for power outages.



First of all, please keep a list of CAFA Board Member phone numbers and emails printed out. If you have questions about bird safety during an emergency or need advice, please call. We're here to help! We're scattered around the state, so even if some members don't have power or phones, other may, so call around until you get the help you need. We want to make sure our members and their birds are all safe during disasters. Keep all avian veterinarian phone numbers handy, even the ones you don't normally use. You might want to call for advice and possible boarding.

Also please think to check in on friends and fellow CAFA members with pets to make sure they're ok and to see if they need anything, especially if you're one of the lucky ones who still has power. Everyone appreciates a call checking on their welfare. We don't have a formal buddy system, but it would be nice if everyone could pick a few people to check on during an emergency.

## General Information:

Most people in CT get their electricity from CL&P or UI. Here are their emergency numbers:

**CL&P: 800-286-2000** (report and check on outages)

You can also text them at 24612 with "outage (your zip code)" and you will get a text message back with information about your town.

[www.cl-p.com](http://www.cl-p.com)

**UI: 800-722-5584**

[www.uinet.com](http://www.uinet.com)

Call **2-1-1** for CT emergency information, including the location of shelters and emergency services. Remember that towns are now required to have shelters which accept pets, though conditions may not be ideal. [www.211ct.org](http://www.211ct.org)

**Phones:** If you have Internet phone (usually total packages from cable or DSL companies), it will not work if the power is out. Keep that in mind when you sign up for these services! If you have a landline, make sure you have an old-fashioned corded phone handy (inexpensive) to plug in if the



power goes out. Cordless phones will not work. We rarely lose phone service, so this is important for staying in touch. Make sure you keep your cell phone charged at all times, and make sure you have a car charger. Emergency shelters often let you charge phones, and there are usually places in your town that have charging stations, even with widespread outages.

**Garage:** If you keep your car inside a garage with an automatic opener, make sure you know where the emergency release is ahead of time and test it out to make sure you know how to disengage and reengage the motor. You don't want to get stuck at your house!

**Generators:** Many people used portable generators during the last storm. There were some deaths and serious illness from carbon monoxide, so remember that the generator must be outdoors and away from the house. Also remember that your birds are more sensitive than you are to fumes.

**Gas:** Fill your tank up before a predicted storm. Always keep the tank at least half full in winter. If you do need gas for the car or generator, try to find out which towns have power. Sometimes driving an extra 10 or 15 minutes will get you somewhere where there are no lines at gas stations rather than waiting in line for an hour!

**Other tips:** Stock up on flashlights, batteries, and battery-operated lights. Having a crank flashlight or lantern is helpful. A headlamp is really useful to keep the hands free and for reading. Keep a



radio with weather bands available. The best is one that runs on batteries and has a hand crank. Some of these also have cell phone ports to charge your cell. If



you have well water, fill up your bathtub and water buckets before a storm. Keep bottled water on hand for you and your animals. Make as much ice as possible before a storm so you can use it to keep perishables fresh longer. Turn the heat up in the house before a predicted bad storm so it will take longer for your house to cool down if the power goes out.

## Bird specific information:

While they may not be overly comfortable, birds can survive down into at least the low 40's as long as they have time to acclimate. Larger, fluffier birds, like the cockatoos, will do better with the cold. They are wearing down coats, after all! Very young birds and unhealthy birds,



however, should not be exposed to such cold temperatures, so they should be your priority for moving if you are without power long enough for your house to get cold.

Move your birds into the warmest room in the house, probably the room that gets the most sun during the day. The inside of the house might get colder than outdoors, so you might open doors and windows during the day to let in the warmer air.

Covering cages, at least partially, can help keep warmth in because the birds' warmed exhaled air will stay close. Try breathing under the covers and you'll see how it warms up! During a storm, keep birds in the interior of the house and away from windows where breaking glass and flying debris could harm them.

Member Denise Coughlan had a useful tip. Put your birds in carriers filled with shredded newspaper to trap air - the insides of the carriers will be warmer than the surroundings.

Wood stoves and fireplaces are ok to use for heat when the power is out, but birds should be kept out of those rooms because of carbon monoxide and particles in the air. Never burn treated wood. Never use kerosene heaters, propane heaters, or gas



heaters in homes with birds. Only use bird-safe candles, such as beeswax. Remember that candles get knocked over easily, especially in the dark! Keep fire extinguishers on every floor and check them periodically to make sure they are still charged.



Have carriers and/or portable cages available for every single bird. You don't want to have to choose who to leave behind! Make sure your name and contact information are on every carrier, along with bird name and species, and perhaps a photo. If you will be moving out of your home with your birds for several days, bring along playstands or portable cages so they're not stuck in carriers. You'll need to weigh the pros and cons of moving your birds out if there is no power. You don't want your birds to freeze, but birds unaccustomed to traveling may be stressed. If in doubt, call someone for advice!



Hotels that don't normally allow animals may allow them during emergencies. A hotel with a kitchenette or suite is great for birds since the kitchens are usually not carpeted, so there's less chance of making a mess. Just make sure you hang the "Do Not Disturb" sign when you're not there so no one comes in who might steal your birds. Also try to get a room on the end and away from other people, if possible, so your birds' screaming doesn't disturb other people and get you kicked out.



Take special care to make sure your birds don't get loose if traveling with them. Microchip every bird that is large enough. Write down band numbers. Photograph every bird from multiple angles for identification. Write down any identifying marks ahead of time (you may not remember which toe is deformed after the fact). Record your bird singing both for identification and for help in retrieval, if the bird gets loose. Birds often respond to their own voices.

Remember that loss of power is stressful to birds because their routines change and flashlights can be scary, so they'll need extra TLC. Life is stressful, though, and in the wild birds have much more variation in their lives than they generally have with us, and they do just fine. It's ok

if they don't have their hand-made warmed up bean mash at 7:15 a.m., as usual. They'll live. If you're upset, your birds will be upset, so the first thing to do is to try to stay calm yourself! Once darkness falls, it's safest to keep the birds inside their cages so no one gets injured.



If your house is cold and dark, your birds will not be moving around much. They'll be perched trying to stay warm with feathers fluffed and trying to conserve energy. They lose heat through their feet, so expect to see feathers fluffed out over the feet. E.B. Cravens recommends that outdoor aviary birds have wider perches so that the feet are easier to cover up with feathers. You could try changing out the perches for wider perches if your house gets cold. You may not see your birds eating much, but that's ok since they won't be expending much energy. If the house is cold, supplement feeds with high fat foods like millet and black oil sunflower seed. Fat has the highest calorie count of all foods and will help your birds stay warm. Fat has 9 kcal per gram, while protein and carbohydrate only have 4 kcal per gram, so you'll get the most bang for your



buck out of healthy fats. Your birds will probably be getting more sleep than usual if the power is out, so they will also need less food than usual. Your birds will not allow themselves to starve to death, so don't be too concerned about how much they are eating unless they look ill. Remember that stress can unmask illness, so a bird that previously seemed healthy could become sick under such circumstances. Observe your birds closely and call your vet if you are unsure about anything.

Make an avian emergency kit ahead of time for your birds. Here's a good list:

<http://www.aviannetwork.com/articles/emergprep.htm>

Make sure your avian first aid kit includes wing and nail trimming supplies, something to stop bleeding, and bandaging material. You may not be able to get to a vet right away in an emergency.

For more information about disaster preparedness with birds, check out BirdChannel.com's Bird Disaster Series:

[http://www.birdchannel.com/bird-housing/bird-safety-tips/bird-disasters.aspx?cm\\_mmc=Vanity--birddisasters--na--van](http://www.birdchannel.com/bird-housing/bird-safety-tips/bird-disasters.aspx?cm_mmc=Vanity--birddisasters--na--van)



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