Joe the Prepper Newsletter
November 2026 · Issue 1

A strong El Niño winter, a quiet hurricane season, and getting your house ready for the cold

by Joe Miller · joetheprepper.com · for members

1. From Joe

Welcome to the first Joe the Prepper newsletter. Each month I'll bring you the news that affects your preps, a checklist for the season, one skill, one piece of gear, a pantry recipe, a homestead tip and one small, cheap prep. November is the month to get ready for winter: storms, ice and power outages are the most likely emergency most of us will face this year. Pick two or three things from the checklist below and get them done this weekend.

2. Prepper news roundup

As of November 11, 2026.

- **NOAA's winter outlook: a very strong El Niño.** NOAA released its official outlook for December through February on October 16. With a very strong El Niño pushing the jet stream south, it favors a **warmer than normal** winter across much of the northern U.S., the Midwest and the East, and a **wetter** winter across the Southwest, the South and the East Coast. Extra rain could ease drought, but NOAA warns of flash floods and mudslides on dry ground. A warmer outlook doesn't rule out ice storms or a hard cold snap, so prep anyway.
- **One of the quietest hurricane seasons on record.** The Atlantic season had 10 named storms through early November, and its total storm energy was about 83% below average, one of the lowest in the satellite era. The strong El Niño, with its high wind shear, was a big reason. The season officially ends November 30. Don't let one quiet year make you skip next year's hurricane kit.
- **Flu season started early.** The CDC reports flu activity rising earlier than usual in many states this fall. Stock fever reducers, electrolyte drinks and tissues now, and see our sister site doctorcritical.com for flu care and when to see a doctor.

3. Seasonal prep checklist

Winterize the house

- **CO alarms:** one on every level and near bedrooms. Test them and put in fresh batteries.

- **Pipes:** insulate pipes in crawl spaces and outside walls; know how to drip faucets in a hard freeze; disconnect garden hoses.
- **Heat backup:** have the chimney inspected; store dry wood or extra propane; check your indoor-rated heater.
- **Generator:** run it under load for 20 minutes, change the oil, add fresh stabilized fuel.
- **Warm room:** pick the room you'd heat in an outage and stage blankets, sleeping bags and a tent there.

Winterize the vehicles

- Swap in the winter kit: blankets, shovel, cat litter, scraper, hand warmers, snacks and water.
- Check tires, wipers, antifreeze and battery; keep the tank at least half full.

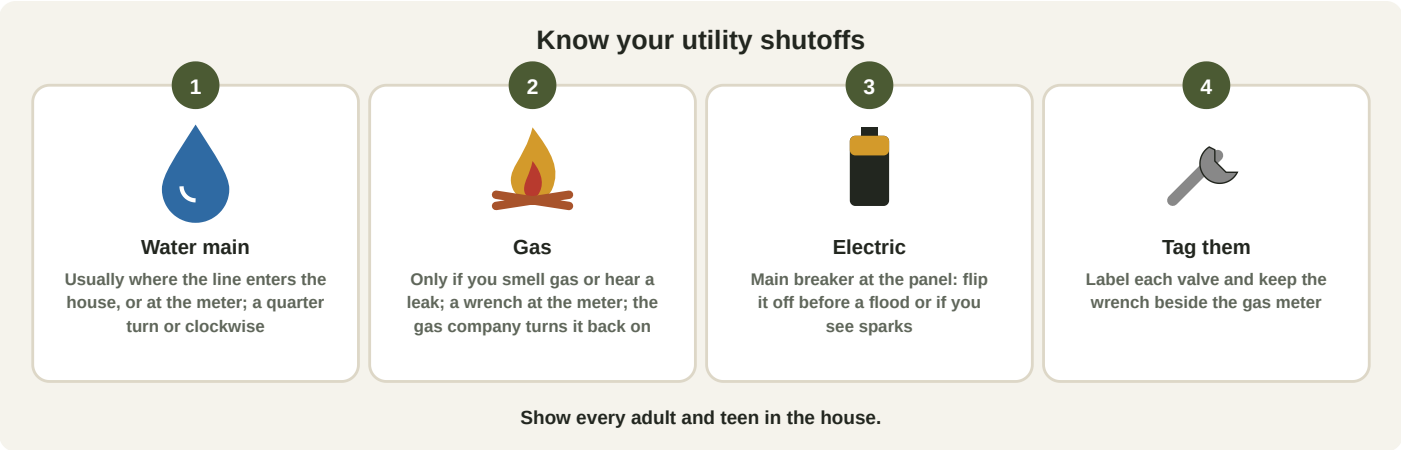
Check your kits

Daylight saving time ended November 1, the twice-a-year reminder: rotate the water and food in your bug-out bags, swap in winter clothes, and check medicines and batteries.

4. Skill of the month

Shutting off your utilities

After an earthquake, flood, or a gas leak, being able to shut off the water, gas and power quickly can save your house, or your life.



- **Water:** a burst pipe can pour out hundreds of gallons. Find the main valve now and make sure it turns.
- **Gas: only** shut it off if you smell gas, hear hissing, or are told to. Then get everyone out and call the gas company from outside. Never turn the gas back on yourself.
- **Electric:** never stand in water to reach the panel. If the panel is wet or flooded, stay away and call the utility.

5. Gear spotlight

A hand-crank NOAA weather radio

When the power and the internet are out, a weather radio is how you hear warnings and official instructions. Look for:

- **NOAA Weather Radio** with all 7 weather channels and AM/FM.
- **Several ways to power it:** AA batteries, a built-in rechargeable battery, a hand crank and a small solar panel.
- **Alert mode** (sometimes called SAME), which stays quiet until your county gets a warning.
- A **USB port** to top up a phone, and a flashlight.

Cost: about $25 to $80. Keep one in the house and one in the car or bug-out bag. More on radios at talkcritical.com.

6. From the pantry

Pantry chili (serves 6, all from storage)

- 2 cans of beans (or 3 cups of cooked dry beans), drained
- 1 can of meat (chicken, beef or 2 cans of tuna in a pinch)
- 2 cans of diced tomatoes, 1 can of corn
- 2 tablespoons of chili powder, 1 teaspoon each of cumin and salt, a dried onion if you have it

Dump everything in a pot, simmer 20 minutes on a camp stove or wood stove, and serve over rice. Cooking dry beans takes a lot of fuel, so cook a big batch at once, or use canned beans when fuel is short. Make this once this month so you know you have everything.

7. Garden and homestead

- **Plant garlic** now, a few weeks before the ground freezes: plant cloves pointy side up, 2 inches deep and 6 inches apart, and mulch them with straw. You'll harvest next summer.
- **Mulch** beds with leaves or straw to protect the soil over winter.
- **Save and store seeds** from this year's heirloom beans and tomatoes: dry, labeled, in a cool, dark place.
- **Chickens:** hens lay less as the days get short. Keep water from freezing (a heated base), and close up the coop at night against predators.

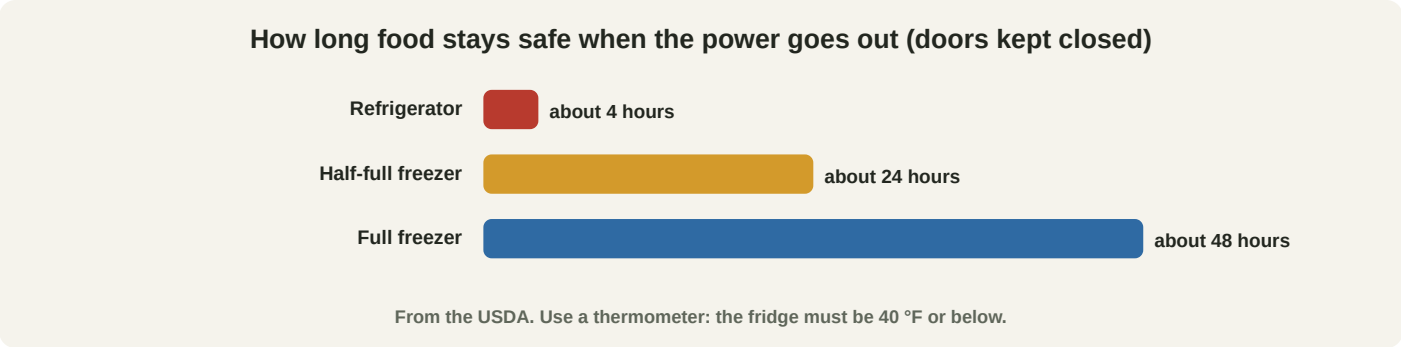
8. The $10 prep

A battery-powered carbon monoxide alarm (or batteries for the ones you have). Winter is when generators, heaters and camp stoves come out, and carbon monoxide kills hundreds of Americans a year. Most CO alarms cost $15 to $30; if you already have them, spend the $10 on fresh batteries and test every one.

9. Myth vs. fact

Myth: "When the power goes out, the food in the fridge is fine for a day or two."

Fact: The USDA says a refrigerator keeps food safe for only **about 4 hours** if you keep the door closed. A full freezer holds about 48 hours, and a half-full one about 24. Keep a thermometer in the fridge: throw out meat, milk, eggs and leftovers that sat above 40 °F for more than 2 hours.



10. Three-question quiz

1. How long does a refrigerator keep food safe in an outage if the door stays closed?
2. When should you shut off your gas?
3. Who should turn the gas back on?

11. Coming next month

December: a winter storm survival plan for home and car, prepper gift ideas for every budget, cooking with a Dutch oven, keeping water from freezing for animals, and a look back at the year in preparedness.

Quiz answers

1. About 4 hours.
2. Only if you smell gas, hear a leak, or officials tell you to.
3. The gas company, never you.

Prepare, don't panic. General education only. Follow local laws and official emergency instructions, and call 911 in an emergency.

Sources

Checked November 11, 2026.

- NOAA: 2026-27 U.S. Winter Outlook (as reported by FOX 2 Detroit)

- NOAA Climate Prediction Center: Seasonal outlooks
- FOX 10: 2026 Atlantic hurricane season among least active by ACE
- National Hurricane Center
- CDC FluView
- USDA FSIS: Food safety in a power outage
- Ready.gov: Winter weather
- Ready.gov: Utility shutoff and safety
- CDC: Carbon monoxide poisoning prevention
- NOAA Weather Radio