

February 15, 2021 LeeCARES Net Training: Lessons Learned from the Polar Vortex of 2021

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This is KI5ABB. Tonight's training is on Lessons Learned from the Polar Vortex of 2021.

There is a lot to learn from the weather we are currently experiencing. Hopefully, we are not learning from our own experience but from watching what has happened to others and thought carefully about what we need to be able to do if we were have similar misfortunes.

We are also fortunate to be living in Central Texas where we know that this is a short-lived event, and we will be back to normal next week. We need to be sure that we are prepared and can still function and be comfortable during such events.

The cold presented numerous challenges that tested our infrastructure and our backups. Ice formed on power lines and trees broke under the weight of the ice causing outages. Solar panels failed to produce power when covered in snow or ice and several days of thick cloud cover future reduced their effectiveness.

Wind generators had to be shut down due to high winds, ice forming on the blades and the lubrication inside freezes as well. Batteries tend to fail during extreme cold as the lower temperatures cause them to discharge more quickly and electronics can fail in extreme temperatures as well.

Then we must face rolling black outs to help conserve energy and share it "equally" amongst us. These are the times when our backups are truly tested. How long will our batteries last? How long will we be without power? Will the generator even start in this weather? Today really is not the day to learning these lessons. My hope is that we are all taking notes and making plans so that we do not have an emergency of our own during the rest of this weather event or in the future.

During an extended power outage, some in the Austin area have been without power for many hours, how will you maintain your own safety? What do you have as a secondary method to heat your home safely or to at least stay warm? Do you have a way to prepare food or food that can be eaten without cooking? And most importantly, do you have a way to make coffee?

Obviously, we all will have different methods and budgets for handling these issues. We could spend hours talking about ways to handle just the battery question, but the most important thing is to be proactive and learn from the experience so that next time we are not scrambling to adjust or repair equipment. Listen carefully to others experience and find out what works and what does not. Try not to let your opinion of how it should be done cloud your opportunity to learn another way to get the job done. Having multiple sources of power and heat would not be a bad thing.

Since we are mostly staying in, this is a great time to reflect on these things, work on LeeCARES projects, study for license upgrades or try making new contracts on the radio. Just be sure you make time to go out and play in the snow. This does not happen very often in Texas so take the time to enjoy it.

This concludes tonight's training. This KI5ABB. Back to Net Control.