**Experts Warn The Internet Will Go Down In A Big Way — And You'd Better Be Ready**

Story by Geoff Williams

It’s bad enough when the internet goes down for a few hours because your power went out after a storm, but what if the internet went down indefinitely, sort of everywhere? What if your state or an entire region of the country lacked the internet or electricity because of a cyberattack or something innocuous, like problems with an aging grid or the federal government forgot to pay a bill?

Do you have a plan for that?

Most people don’t. In fact, the Federal Emergency Management Agency surveyed 7,525 Americans for their [2024 report on disaster preparedness](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_icpd_2024-national-household-survey-on-disaster-preparedness-findings_05072025.pdf) and found that 57% of the country isn’t prepared for, and isn’t planning to prepare for, a disaster.

That’s a shame because an internet or electric type of emergency is likely to occur one of these days, said [Robert Siciliano](https://safr.me/), a security analyst and author of ”Identity Theft Privacy: Security Protection and Fraud Prevention.” “I don’t think it is a matter of ‘if,’ it is simply a matter of ‘when.’ The electrical grid, as we know it, is only about 120 years old. And it is scattered in such a way that local or regional brownouts or total failures are happening too often.”

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Siciliano added, “Having backup food, water, batteries and power should be a consideration for everyone. The term ‘prepper’ has gotten a bad rap.” He said that if you want to function in the event of a regional or nationwide electric or internet outage, “I think at this point everybody should be prepping.”

So if you want to keep your tech during a period of digital upheaval, feel free to borrow these strategies.

**Try and create a backup internet plan.**

“Preparing for individual internet disruptions and power outages is straightforward – you need backup internet access methods and/or the ability to generate energy on your own,” said [Sean Gold](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sean-gold/), who should probably hang out with Siciliano. Gold is a prepper and the owner of the website [TruePrepper](https://trueprepper.com/" \t "_blank). Gold also has a degree in emergency management and was an emergency manager in the Air Force.

I don’t think it is a matter of ‘if,’ it is simply a matter of ‘when.’Robert Siciliano, security analyst

Gold said that the best way to not lose your digital life during an internet or electrical grid crisis is to assume it’s going to happen sooner or later and plan for it.

“A cellular hotspot is an easy way to get through a day or two of internet outages, but if the outage is widespread, then that plan is much less effective with the overloaded cell towers. Many preppers are starting to embrace Starlink and satellite ISPs even if they are in less rural areas,” he said.

Of course, if you’re not a tech person, Gold might as well be talking in Sanskrit. So let’s do a quick translation:

* **Hotspot:** This allows you to hook up your smartphone to a laptop, tablet, smart TV or any device that has the internet. This is helpful if your phone can’t access Wi-Fi but other devices you own can. If the internet is out everywhere, however, as Gold said, you’re not going to get very far with a personal hotspot (your phone’s settings will have instructions as to how to set up a hotspot).
* **Starlink.** You’ve probably heard of [Starlink](https://www.starlink.com/); Elon Musk owns it. It’s a satellite internet provider, so if cell phone towers are down, well, no problem – you’re accessing the internet through satellite technology. Starlink can be pricey: [$80 to $120](https://www.starlink.com/us/residential?srsltid=AfmBOoqWgwJK4Zo2E70O33BA9F3DvVll8aznsWYpr93kqDNJE2Pi4Jvb) is what it charges residential households that want to use it, and you’ll have to buy the [$349 equipment](https://www.cnet.com/home/internet/starlink-internet-review/) to set it up.
* **Satellite ISPs.** It’s an abbreviated term for satellite internet service provider. The aforementioned Starlink is one. Don’t feel like making Musk richer than he already is? You may want to check out [Hughesnet](https://internet.hughesnet.com/?medium=tsa&utm_medium=CPC&utm_source=google&utm_mcid=3577907&utm_term=hughesnet&utm_dvc=c&utm_ntwk=g&utm_locphysid=9015669&campaignID=71700000065067465&tfn=8334531793&utm_ltpcid=Cj0KCQjwjdTCBhCLARIsAEu8bpJPpSmy6W1MYDabMct1RnWorRgV38T8RIAqOrsmSd5ZizWioAPj5CcaAiXlEALw_wcB&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=9653941585&gbraid=0AAAAAClRQ9cR9tk6cuzM_zj8Ycl8ZHTdT&gclid=Cj0KCQjwjdTCBhCLARIsAEu8bpJPpSmy6W1MYDabMct1RnWorRgV38T8RIAqOrsmSd5ZizWioAPj5CcaAiXlEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds" \t "_blank) (plans start at $49.99 a month for a full year, but you need to set up a two-year contract). [Viasat](https://www.viasat.com/satellite-internet/plans/" \t "_blank) is another prominent satellite internet provider ([plans start at $69.99 a month](https://www.viasatprovider.com/satellite-internet/plans-pricing/)).



Once the internet goes down, you won't be able to find helpful advice like this if you don't have a backup plan.

Satellite ISPs are not perfect. [Extreme weather can disrupt the internet](https://www.starlink.com/support/article/529bf751-3cad-f460-d653-4af162f195da?srsltid=AfmBOorP5Agkph3klClegdDcdxspoQv4jJ8TJpjZCS_gOXM9DkXI3LZ9). But at least when the skies clear up, you should be able to access the internet, and not being able to is what often wrecks people’s sanity. The storm blows through and destroys cell towers or takes out your electricity, and once the disaster is over, you can’t watch your shows, check email, text and make calls.

If you’re not crazy about spending around $100 a month on Starlink, Gold says you may want to try [Starlink’s Roam plan](https://www.starlink.com/us/roam?srsltid=AfmBOoohrDzDm9FFksqjbvdV7uDbt8lKldhLOlhxmVLwYKAQ3h73ae8Y). You’ll spend about $500 on the hardware to set it up, and then there’s a $50 a month service plan.

“And then pause it, if you plan to only use it as a backup internet service,” Gold said. “There is no limit to how long you can keep the service paused, so there is no monthly fee at that point. You’ll still need to be able to access the service site to unpause it, but if you see an emergency or disaster coming, you can make that a part of your emergency plan.”

**Go shopping.**

That is, do it now, before something bad happens to the internet. If you have extra cash lying around, you can create an “I am not losing my tech” shopping list and put at least some of the following on it:

* **Power bank.**Power banks are portable chargers that recharge your electronic devices. “To power your hotspot for short interruptions, power banks can work for a few days, depending on how much you get online,” Gold said.
* **Portable power station.**These are similar to generators but don’t use fuel. They store electricity in batteries, and like a generator, they keep essential household appliances running. They tend to be cheaper than generators (you can find them in the low hundreds and into the low thousands). Gold said that most preppers are opting for power stations over fuel-powered generators.
* **Generator.** We sort of just covered what these are. But be sure to be careful when setting up a generator. Using them improperly can lead to an early demise (i.e., carbon monoxide poisoning).
* **Flashlight.** Just a good idea to have, if your power inconveniently goes out after sundown.
* **Battery-operated radio.** This can be really handy, especially if you’re in that 57% who isn’t going to work to preserve your digital life in the event of an emergency and will just hope for the best. It might make you feel less cut off from the world to hear some news if you’re unable to access any information on your phone.

## **Have a tech money plan.**

Now that you’re broke, shopping for a non-tech apocalypse and are thinking how stupid you’ll feel in a few years if there’s never even a simple outage on your block, consider what your money situation could be like if the internet goes down for a long time.

“Nearly everyone across the nation accesses their bank accounts via the internet to pay bills, make deposits, and withdraw funds,” said [Chris Reynolds](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drchrisreynolds/), dean of academic outreach and program development at [American Public University System](https://www.apus.edu/). Reynolds is also an emergency management expert with over 35 years of experience.

He pointed out that not only are we used to buying gasoline, groceries and other necessities digitally, many of us don’t have cash in our wallets or locked in a safe.

“During emergencies, internet and power outages can make banks and ATMs inaccessible, cutting off access to digital funds,” Reynolds said.

So what to do? Reynolds suggested keeping a small amount of emergency cash in small bills “in a secure, waterproof place.”

If you really feel ambitious, he recommended that people consider buying a prepaid debit card to be used for emergencies, like buying groceries or gas.

“Keep this card separate from your daily use accounts,” he said. “These cards can be used if you lose access to your main bank but can still find working terminals.”

And if you’re super-duper ambitious? Reynolds said, “Another option is to form an informal cooperative with your neighbors to help with short-term funds, grocery items, or other small items.”

Whatever you do, he added, “The time to discover that you no longer have access to your bank account or ATM isn’t during an emergency. Plan in advance.”

**Create a family emergency plan.**

What’s the first thing you’ll do after a disaster, once you realize that, phew, you’re connected to the internet, and you still have your digital life? You will want to check in with your loved ones, who may not have been thinking ahead like you and who you may not be able to reach. So if you have aging parents that you’re worried about, or adult kids who you’re going to agonize over if you can’t reach them, you could discuss getting a backup internet plan for them ― or if that’s too costly, at least talk about what you’ll do in the event of an emergency in which you can’t reach each other.

Jeremy Gocke, CEO of [Entropy Survival](https://entropysurvival.com/), an online retailer specializing in disaster and survival kits, recommended setting up what he calls a “pre-internet failure family plan.” He suggests the plan cover:

* A place to meet, if you live fairly close to each other.
* A plan on when and how often to try to check in, if you don’t live near each other.
* A list of who you can relay messages to, such as a designated family member or friend who lives near anyone you’d want to check on.

Whatever you put on the plan, Grocke suggested laminating it and giving it to your family members. “Don’t assume they’ll remember,” he said.

Or put it somewhere on the internet, and … oh, never mind.But if relying solely on a laminated plan to stay in touch seems a little risky, Gocke suggested that you consider adding a satellite messenger to your shopping list.

You could buy one for your household, but also for family members. What are satellite messengers? These are devices that, like a satellite ISP, use satellite technology to stay connected ― and can keep you able to communicate with loved ones when your cell phone can’t. [Garmin inReach Messenger](https://www.garmin.com/en-US/p/793265/) is probably the most popular satellite messenger out there and retails for $299.99. That said, many [cell phone carriers have been adding](https://www.verizon.com/about/news/verizon-customers-satellite-texting-select-android-smartphones), or are planning to add, satellite technology to their phones, allowing people to text even when cell towers are down.

But we also interviewed a time traveler from the 1990s who explained that if cell phone towers go down everywhere, landline telephones can be an effective way for families to communicate with each other. So that may be an option, unless telephone poles in your area have also been decimated. You could also invest in a CB radio for you and your family or walkie-talkies (as long as you’re in range with family members); [Midland](https://midlandusa.com/pages/about?srsltid=AfmBOooX9q9BRL0CGwq4cchy62wbIzoaFfHx3cVnouzRyqpHoIMDqFnz) is a popular brand.

The main thing, Grocke said, is that you plan for a tech outage and don’t assume that just because your tech works beautifully that it always will.

“Start by accepting that if it can go down, it might,” Grocke said. Once you accept that, he said, “your brain and your preparedness become your most valuable tech.”