

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Where would Sun Citians go during power outage?

By CHRIS RASMUSSEN
and MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

You are sitting at home watching television, the air conditioner contentedly humming and keeping you insulated from the searing heat. Suddenly you are plunged into darkness and silence by a power failure.

Would you know where to go to seek sanctuary from the heat?

As the nation blisters in one of the most severe heatwaves in recent memory, heat-related deaths have mounted, and placed greater emphasis on keeping cool, especially for senior citizens, who are more susceptible to the ravages of high temperatures.

The heat also has caused electric consumption to skyrocket as people try to stay cool. The excessive demand has led some power companies to ask their customers to keep thermostats set at 80 degrees, or to ration power to stave off possible brownouts or blackouts.

Although APS has made provisions to ensure a constant flow of electricity, that does not preclude Mother Nature from disrupting electric service as the result of a monsoon storm. Determining where people in the Sun Cities would turn for shelter cannot be easily answered.

"There is no formal heat-related plan," said Harry Coyle, local Red Cross director. "When there is a power outage, and we are requested, we respond.

"It would depend on the range of the power outage as to what site would be used for shelter," he continued. "We would also consider which facilities still have power and which facilities have ability to be hooked into a power source."

Planning for emergencies

Options are limited in Sun City.

Recreation centers would seem a likely place, however, they do not have the capability to generate power.

"We have designated Sundial and Bell (rec centers) as emergency shelters," said Ed McCrea, Recreation Centers of Sun City director. "However, the rec centers do not have generators. There are some emergency lighting systems."

If electricity was not a priority, the centers temporarily could house resi-

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dents in need of shelter.

"There is a plan primarily handled by the fire department," Mr. McCrea said. "When we find there is an emergency, the fire department notifies the county, and the county notifies the Red Cross, and at that point the Red Cross takes over. We have a contract with Red Cross to make our facilities available.

"They will bring in the cots. They will bring in the food," Mr. McCrea explained. "We do have a plan and hopefully we will never have to use it."

Bob Spencer, Maricopa County Emergency Management Department director, noted a group of Sun City residents discussed raising money last year to wire one of the rec centers to use a portable generator.

"It is smarter to get the buildings wired and then have a portable generator able to go to the site," Mr. Spencer explained.

Mr. McCrea confirmed discussions were held regarding possibly rewiring Sundial Recreation Center to so a generator could be used, but nothing came of it.

"Luke (Air Force Base) has portable generators, and we thought we might be able to get one from them," Mr. McCrea said.

Hospitals' capabilities

Boswell Memorial Hospital in Sun City would not provide a cool respite from the heat even though it has limited emergency generating capability.

Boswell and Del Webb Memorial Hospital, both of which are operated by Sun Health, have emergency generators, according to Tom Dixon, executive vice president and chief financial

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officer for Sun Health's Del Webb Memorial Hospital. However, Boswell has only enough generating capacity to operate life support systems and operating room equipment, and not the cooling system.

"At Boswell, we have emergency generator capability and we have plans to add generating capacity next year to allow us to run our chillers," Mr. Dixon said. "Last year, we lost power at Boswell for a couple of hours but it proved to be no problem.

"Also at Boswell, we have two separate power feeds," he continued. "If one power feed were to go out we could switch to another and would not have to be on emergency backup. To be safe, we plan on bringing in another emergency generator at Boswell.

"We have never had a situation where power has gone out for a long enough period of time for us to have a problem," Mr. Dixon added.

"We had a major power problem in the community two years ago (following a monsoon storm)," Mr. Dixon said. "We accommodated many local residents. We invited them into our cafeteria, and provided food and beverages."

The situation is different in Sun City West where the newer Del Webb Hospital has greater emergency generation capabilities. "At Del Webb Hospital, we have enough emergency capacity to operate our chillers, which produces our air conditioning," Mr. Dixon said.

Either hospital is able to accommodate people in time of need, according to Mr. Dixon.

"Both hospitals have huge cafeterias and there are other rooms we could use to accommodate people and get them out of the heat," he added.

Sun City West facilities

In addition to the hospital, Sun City West residents have another shelter alternative.

The Community Services Building on R.H. Johnson Boulevard, with its own emergency power generator, has been deemed Sun City West's main evacuation center.

The building could hold up to 800 people.

In addition, the R.H. Johnson and Palm Ridge rec centers, although they have no backup power, could also be used in emergency power outage situations.

Directing to safety

If a power outage occurred in the Sun Cities, the fire departments would play an integral role in notifying people of shelter availability and helping residents evacuate their homes.

"There have been a couple of instances in the 25 years I have been here, where power has been out for more than a couple of hours," said James Sebert, Sun City fire chief.

The chief said there are designated evacuation sites in Sun City. However, the fire department does not advertise them in advance because the building might be located in the area affected by the power outage.

"We would evaluate on a case-by-case basis," the chief said. "We would go door-to-door in the neighborhood to notify the residents."

In Sun City West, Fire Marshal Jim Heger said announcement would be made via the radio telling residents where to go. Of course, residents would have to have battery-operated radios to receive the message.

Getting word to residents about shelters would prove a monumental task for the fire departments, but that would not take precedent.

"The biggest concern we would have would be people on life support, etc.," Chief Sebert said. "They should register with APS and in event of power outage they will notify us, so we can evacuate them. We will give priority to reaching people who are dependent on electricity to live."

"If they depend on life support, they can register with us and we tag them," said Ms. Arrellano of APS.

"We have a person whose job it is to stay in touch with customers with special needs. She even visits them to check up on them," offered Ms. Holmes.

Despite all the preparations that have been made to deal with a power outage, Chief Sebert concedes, "If the power should go out in Sun City, we might have a situation worse than we have faced before.

"Two years ago, we were able to manage the situation," he added. "We worked closely with APS, and, fortunately, there were no heat related deaths."

The lengthiest power outage in Sun City was 24 to 36 hours, according to Chief Sebert.

"No shelters were opened, people were not interested in moving. They seemed comfortable remaining at home," he said.

In the event of a power outage, Sun City's Fire Department has a contingency plan to secure ice and

dry ice.

"We have a contract with ice companies and dry ice companies," to try and keep people cool, the chief said. He further suggested, "If there is a power outage, if the house remains closed up the residual air conditioning will last for a few hours, but eventually you must open the windows, even if it is 110 degrees outside, and let fresh air flow through."

APS preparations

The recent heatwave placed great demands on Arizona Public Service, which established new records for power demand on four occasions in a recent two-week period. However, APS officials are confident they can avoid any power disruptions resulting from high demand.

"On Thursday, July 16, we set a new, all-time record for megawatts demand — 5,062," said Maria Arrellano, APS public information officer. "The high temperature that day was 116 degrees, and the humidity was 18 percent.

"The day before it was warmer, 117 degrees, and we reached the 5,000-megawatt plateau for first time, but the demand was not as great as the following day because the humidity was lower," she said.

Even with soaring electricity demands, APS officials believe they can avoid power shortages.

"APS has made plans to ensure a constant supply of electricity to service its customers," said Janie Holmes, northwest Valley community relations officer. "If we are unable to generate enough electricity to meet our forecasted needs, we will buy power from another generator on the western grid."

"We buy and sell power all the time," Ms. Arrellano noted. "Buying is not a problem. You buy and sell power according to need and price, etc."

Daily News-Sun

Friday, Sept. 26, 1997

SC rec board approves disaster plan

2 rec centers are designated as shelters

By DAVID MILLER
Staff writer

About a year ago, hurricane-force winds blew into the Northwest Valley, leveling trees and dumping a deluge onto local streets.

This week brought another hurricane-style storm. While the effects of Nora were not as serious as they could have been, local officials didn't want to take chances on a potential disaster.

Red Cross and Sun City recreation officials met this week to hammer out a disaster plan, and determined that two local centers will double as emergency evacuation points.

'We have a plan for Nora, and for the future.'

**Ed McCrea
Recreation Centers Director**

Sundial and Mountain View recreation centers will be the places to meet should the torrents come, as happened in last year's melee.

"We have a plan for Nora, and for the future," said Recreation Centers Director Ed McCrea at the board's monthly meeting Thursday.

McCrea has been working with local fire officials and the Red Cross in developing the disaster plan. He was also instrumental in the recreation centers' adoption of insurance covering golf course trees and foliage.

Some 300 trees went down in the storm of a year ago, McCrea told the audience. Power also went out across the Valley.

Sundial center, at 14801 N. 103rd Ave., has space for 300 people. Mountain View, at 9749 N. 107th Ave., can accommodate about 175.

For locals wishing to help the Red Cross in future emergency situations, training sessions will be offered Oct. 23 and 24 at the Sun City West Community Services Center.

Classes slated from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day will cover shelter operations, disaster services and the care of large groups of people. To register, call 336-6476.

Officials also approved motions allocating \$7,000 for the purchase of two treadmills, and decided to raise the annual contribution given to the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City, from \$500 to \$750.

"The posse has been very good about helping us," said Board President Don Pritchett.

Other motions covered amendments to club articles and bylaws, and a group name change, creating the "Sun City Outdoor Shuffleboard Club."

One article revision, however, drew the ire of some residents. The move will garner 10 percent of fees paid to club instructors, to be turned in to the recreation centers each quarter.

Some audience members said club teachers only make a pittance, and shouldn't have to give more to the recreation centers.

Board Vice President Bud Moriarty also announced healthy figures for local fitness centers, with attendance up 7.6 percent for the year.

Plans are in the works to revamp the Lakeview center fitness room in November. Slated for refurbishing next year is the Bell center fitness room.

• AUGUST 13-19, 1997

Lessons can be learned from 1996 storm



Photo by BRET MCKEAND/Independent Newspapers

Glancing back at the storm of '96

During last August's storm, a decades-old pine tree crashed through a block wall and landed on 99th Avenue near Burns Drive.

By **JULIA DE SIMONE**
Independent Newspapers

There's a storm of information available for residents who fear the onslaught of lightening and thunder.

Residents can take precautions in preparing for storms, according to Kimball Hansen, Arizona Public Service spokesperson.

This year marks the first anniversary of the August 1996 storm — one of the worst as far as damage to electrical systems goes.

Mr. Kimball said 98 percent of APS customers were without electricity for about one day while the

remaining customers, residing in remote areas, had no electricity for about three and a half days.

"It was the worst ever in APS's 110-year history," Mr. Hansen said.

He said once power is gone, residents should immediately unplug major appliances such as stoves, dishwashers, televisions, pool pumps, water heaters and especially air conditioning systems — a major user of electricity.

He added that residents should also keep a corded phone available because cordless phones can't be operated during a storm. They should also refrain from opening

their refrigerator doors as much as possible and keep their freezer doors closed.

According to APS literature, every time the freezer door is opened, warm air speeds the thawing of food.

Food can remain frozen about two days in a full freezer and one day in a half-full freezer.

Mr. Hansen said APS also offers customers in dire straits a supply of dry ice for their refrigerators and freezers. He said five pounds of dry ice can cool both systems for about

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12 hours.

Residents should maintain a dependable supply of non-perishable foods that don't have to be refrigerated and keep a manual can opener on hand. A thermos can be used to keep liquids hot for an extended period of time.

Mr. Hansen said customers under medical care that could be interrupted by an electrical outage have access to a special program.

He said APS's Medical Care program makes special provisions for such customers by identifying them on maps and immediately informing them when there is an outage.

"We encourage customers on such equipment (as life-support systems) to call us so we know where they are," he said.

"We need to know where they are and who they are. We can't do everything for them, but we need to be prepared."

He suggested those residents on life-support equipment seek temporary shelter during an outage to assure their medical needs are met until power is restored. Residents can call 371-6884 or 1-800-253-9405 for more information on the Medical Care program.

Mr. Hansen warned residents driving during a storm to stay at least 100 feet from a downed power line. The line could be energized and affect the surrounding ground.

A resident whose car is hit by a power line during a storm should stay in the vehicle. The rubber tires will insulate the car and protect the person. Those with access to a cellular phone should immediately call 911.

"We work closely with the police and fire department so we can deal with the situation," he said.

Mr. Hansen said APS regularly inspects its poles.

In addition, the company has installed steel poles in certain areas. He said although they are more expensive, the steel poles can sustain wind and rain better than the wooden poles.

Almost all of APS's distribution lines are being put underground in the newer housing developments, Mr. Hansen said, because burying the lines makes them less susceptible to damage.

"If everything was overhead and something like last August occurred, it would have been weeks — literally weeks — until everyone would have their power lines restored," Mr. Hansen said.

But residents aren't the only ones forced to deal with Mother Nature's temperament.

According to Kim Hicks, Arizona Humane Society media specialist, dogs should always be kept indoors during a storm.

"We (already) advocate that your cats be indoors at all times," she said.

Ms. Hicks said if residents witness a storm brewing or anticipate a holiday packed with fireworks such

Preparing for an electrical outage

1. Have several flashlights in familiar places throughout your home.

Make sure all family members know where the flashlights are located. Stock up on extra batteries.

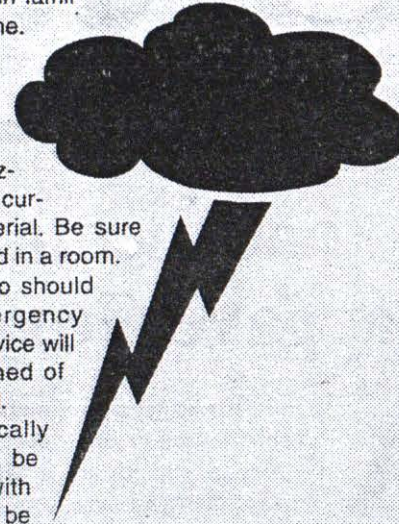
2. Candles can be fire hazards. Never place them near curtains or other flammable material. Be sure not to leave candles unattended in a room.

3. A battery-operated radio should also be a part of your emergency equipment. Arizona Public Service will keep the news media informed of when electricity will be restored.

4. If you have an electrically operated garage door opener, be sure to familiarize yourself with the owner's manual so you will be

able to release the door when the power is off. If you don't have a manual, you can obtain information by calling a contractor who installs your brand of door opener.

Information provided by Arizona Public Service.



as the Fourth of July, they should immediately bring their animals inside.

"If you see a storm, bring dogs inside because it's very terrifying to them," she said.

In the beginning stages of a storm, she said, residents should distract their pets by playing with them or brushing their fur.

Ms. Hicks said it is also important residents create a safe haven for their pets or allow them to create their own. She said animals will

usually retreat to a spot under a bed, in a closet or in a bathroom. They must be able to come and go from this area freely, even if it is an area where pet owners don't want their animals to be.

Ms. Hicks said the biggest mistake pet owners make during a storm or active event is trying to console their animals.

"It's just reinforcing their behavior. ... Dogs really react if we're making a big deal out of a storm," she said.

Instead, pet owners should use counter-conditioning and desensitization techniques to reduce their animals' fears and phobias.

"This means that the dog is conditioned to respond in non-fearful ways to sounds and other stimuli, which previously frightened her," she said. "This must be done extremely gradually ..."

Ms. Hicks said if animals react strongly to the noise — such as a recent situation where a dog jumped through a window — their local veterinarian should be consulted.

"In very, very serious cases, you might have to medicate them," she said, "(but) never medicate them without the supervision of a veterinarian."

Ms. Hicks said a behaviorist also might be needed to better desensitize an animal.

Pet owners also should not punish their pets for being afraid of the noises produced from the storm or holidays. Humane Society officials said this approach is "almost guaranteed to make the problem worse."

Customers interested in receiving APS's booklet packed with tips about storms should call 250-2251.

To receive a brochure on tips to handle pets, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Arizona Humane Society, Public Information Department, 9226 N. 13th Ave., Phoenix 85021. (Specify on the envelope: Thunder/lightning safety information.)

Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz. Wednesday, July 30, 1997

Sun City ill-prepared for disaster

Sun City West groups unite to draw up emergency plan

By BRUCE ELLISON
Staff writer

The monsoon storm that ripped rooftops across the Northwest Valley last Aug. 14 also opened Pandora's box when residents didn't know where to turn for disaster relief.

Would we know where to turn now, a year later?

Maybe.

Professionals in the disaster business — firefighters, sheriff's deputies, area police officials, emergency medical technicians — are prepared and practice regularly. They have written plans they can pull out and follow. Their efforts would be coordinated by the county.

It's the same at area hospitals, which also have formal disaster plans. So do most nursing homes.

And state law requires all incorporated communities to have a disaster plan, which must be updated regularly. So Youngtown, Surprise and Peoria, for instance, all have such plans. Each city's top official, mayor or manager, is in charge of them.

But for unincorporated areas such as the Sun Cities, the plan is prepared by Maricopa County — without a local administrative head in charge.

Volunteer efforts in coping with an emergency are another story, and one where there's a big difference be-

tween Sun City and Sun City West. Sun City West is far ahead in coordinating its volunteer efforts.

Maricopa County's Emergency Management coordinator, Bob Spencer, puts it diplomatically: "Sun City West is definitely ahead of any other unincorporated area," he said.

"Sun City right now is somewhat behind."

Sun City comes up short

One of the biggest problems in the Sun Cities is a lack of shelter space with back-up power, something the brief but vicious and widespread storm demonstrated last year.

Large areas of the Sun Cities and nearby Youngtown, Surprise and El Mirage lost electricity for extended periods. With the temperature nearing 100 degrees and a high humidity, many people were extremely uncomfortable — but physically not in harm's way.

Some found shelter in the hospital lobbies which had air conditioning, but there was no organized way of helping them.

But others, who wanted to get to shelters in Peoria or Surprise, or to El Mirage to pick up free dry ice from Arizona Public Service Co., may have had no way to get there.

Things are different now in Sun City West, where the Recreation Centers are buying a large portable generator.

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Prodded by Robert Fernhoff, a Sun City West resident and former civil emergency preparedness official in Westchester County, N.Y., representatives of about 20 volunteer organizations met several times to hash out who would do what, and how those efforts could be coordinated.

The end result: the Sun City West Community Foundation's community services building will become a disaster headquarters.

Pacts have been signed making the building and its tenant spaces available; the wiring is being reconfigured so the generator can power the structure.

Arrangements have been made with Lending Hands, across R. H. Johnson Boulevard, to borrow its folding cots if necessary, Fernhoff said. Those arrangements include knowing who has keys to the building and how to get them, he said.

"This is an ideal shelter and command center," he said of the community services building.

"It has a large meeting room and three kitchens. It has tables and chairs. The Interfaith Service adult day center area can accommodate wheelchair clients. The posse, and its radios and cars, is just adjacent. The PRIDES have an area with golf cars, and we can use clothing and bedding from the thrift shop if we have people who left home with nothing to wear."

Sun City West fire officials are checking two other sites — the R.H. Johnson and Palm Ridge recreation centers — as alternate shelters, and making sure the generator the Recreation Centers is buying and which is portable, could be hooked up at them.

Grants help pay for wiring

Grants from county, state or the federal government will help pay for the wiring needed, Fernhoff said.

The Sun City West group also is preparing a mailing to make residents aware of what they should do in an emergency. The Community Foundation is advancing the funds.

Arrangements also are being discussed so that a new Sun City West fire station, soon to be constructed, will have an extra radio room that could accommodate Sheriff's Posse operations on the fire department's emergency power if the need arose.

Fernhoff said in some of the discussions that led to the

plan, there was a lot of negativity that needed to be addressed.

"People were protecting their turf," he said. "We had to address the organizational needs of both well-meaning volunteers and 24-hour professionals."

"Once we broke down those barriers, things got easier, the arrangements were made, and I'm mostly out of the picture."

Enter Red Cross

Red Cross officials now will take over much of the planning. That agency has disaster vans and shelter supplies which can be moved in quickly to meet needs — and Fernhoff's group is arranging for volunteer shelter operators and personnel to be trained and available.

"Should something untoward occur," Fernhoff said, "the Red Cross can bring in its shelter supplies to a known area to which we have access, and we'd have our volunteer staff ready to go."

Fernhoff said the plan "is functioning now, but will get better as we go along."

It is just that kind of coordination that is much less apparent in Sun City.

The Recreation Centers have been offered as shelter sites, said Jim Warfield, general manager, but which centers would be used isn't known yet. That would depend in part on what the power situation was, he said.

But there is no large generator in Sun City. Some buildings do have their own power supply — the hospital and the three fire stations, for instance — but no heavy-duty portable power source is here.

One could be borrowed from the county, or from Luke Air Force Base in an emergency, but it would need to connect to buildings with special wiring to be most effective.

Demand exceeds supply

And in a widespread emergency such as that last year, there would be more demand for portable generators than there are generators.

Those with medical needs would be cared for first; those simply uncomfortable would have to wait.

Arrangements have not been made to get into other buildings, such as Sunshine Service, which has cots and other medical supplies.

Gina Griesman, vice president of community relations at Interfaith Services, said the use of Sun City churches as shelters "has not been

discussed at the ministerial association," of which she is a member.

While the churches may be willing to accommodate storm or disaster refugees, she said, there now is no organized way of dealing with that offer.

The Sun City Home Owners Association sponsored what it called a public forum on May 29 on disaster planning, but it was sparsely attended, said HOA's executive director, Ione Boynton.

Boynton added that "I don't think it's up to us as an organization to do that planning."

"We need a joint effort from the Sheriff's Office, the Recreation Centers, ourselves and others."

Leadership needed

The problem in Sun City, many experts said, is that so far there is no real leader waiting to tackle this problem as there was in Sun City West.

"You need someone like Fernhoff to take the bull by the horns and get everybody working together," Spencer of the county's emergency management agency, said.

"I know there are a lot of people in Sun City, retirees with the experience in this sort of planning, if we can just get them to work on it."

His words are echoed by Jim Sebert, Sun City fire chief, whose firefighters are part of the formal county disaster plan, but who depend on others to handle the people the department may have to evacuate.

"Maybe we should be looking to set up a group like that in Sun City," Sebert said.

Chris Woods, a disaster relief coordinator at the Red Cross in Phoenix, has been at preparedness meetings in both Sun City and Sun City West.

Information vital

She said residents in the area need more information about what to do in the event of a disaster — what radio station to listen to, who to call, where to go for emergency shelter.

And, she said, residents need more knowledge of how to help themselves if need be.

A widespread disaster like last year's storm, especially one that cuts off power, would leave many residents feeling forgotten and helpless and certainly uncomfortable, she said.

They would be stressed and distressed even if not medically affected.

Daily News-Sun July 30, 1997

Neighboring communities ready

By BRUCE ELLISON
Staff Writer

Officials in Youngtown and Surprise say they're ready to handle an emergency should one come along.

Both communities have updated their emergency preparedness plans after last summer's severe weather in August turned off electric power twice for extended periods within a week or so.

Surprise has acquired an emergency generator to power its police station and dispatching office; Youngtown already had one.

Youngtown Police Chief Art Baker said that after the Aug. 14 storm last year, in which winds of up to 115 mph downed trees and tore out power lines, police officers brought some residents to the police station where they could temporarily stay in air-conditioned comfort.

"But we want to get a 25-kilowatt generator so we can power up The Clubhouse and provide space for more people if necessary," Baker said.

After the first hour or two of last August's storm, "most of our calls and problems were climate-related," the chief said.

As for other emergency services, Youngtown has its plans ready and updated.

The community can call on other nearby service providers under mutual aid pacts, Baker said, something officials did when the Youngtown Plaza

caught fire three months ago.

"The only worry is if there's a major disaster elsewhere," Baker said. "We might not be able to call on that help if there were a major shopping center fire at 35th and Bell and some other problem, at, say Loop 101 and Thunderbird in Peoria. Other cities' units might be tied up."

Last fall, Baker said, "we did a tabletop exercise of just what we would do in a major disaster, and I'm very confident we can do it if such a problem occurs."

Surprise, too, has updated its disaster planning, especially since that city now operates its own police and fire dispatch service, something it previously had bought from Youngtown.

"We reviewed our plan at the end of April," said assistant city manager Mike Branham, who heads the city's emergency planning operations.

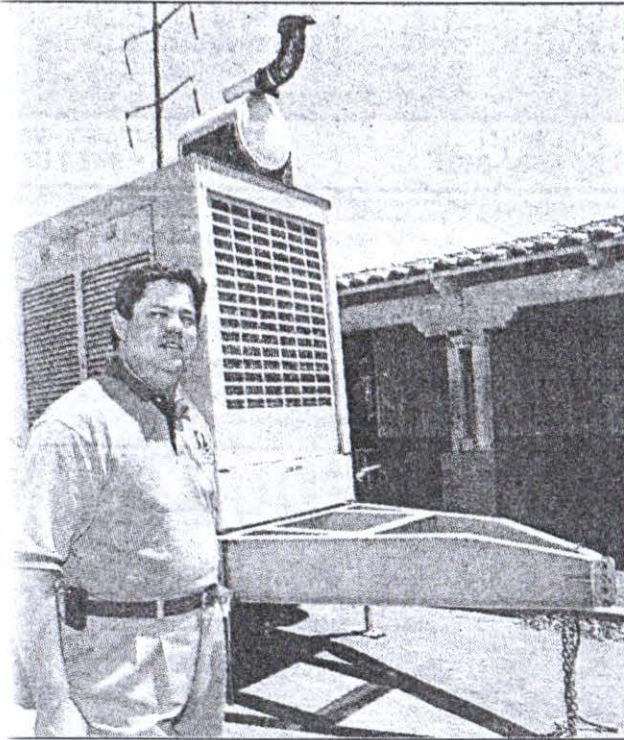
That plan ties into state and county disaster plans, which provide for mutual aid, he said.

"We did look at August 1996 and learn from it, but there was very little that had to be changed," Branham said.

With the city growing apace and new developments sprouting like weeds, the city did need to update maps, locate fire hydrants and plan out how to evacuate residents from new housing, if need be.

"We've had our act together for many years,"

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Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Surprise Assistant City Manager Mike Branham stands next to a portable diesel generator, which can run the police station and communications system if there is a power failure.

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Branham said.

With the city growing apace and new developments sprouting like weeds, the city did need to update maps, locate fire hydrants and plan out how to evacuate residents from new housing, if need be.

"We've had our act together for many years," Branham said. "We work together regularly (with nearby municipalities) on many emergency issues."

Arizona disaster relief agencies generally "are set up for short-term disasters," Branham said.

After all, there are no earthquakes, no snowstorms that close roads for days, no hurricanes, and almost no tornadoes.

"So when something like a power outage comes along and hits us for three days, we aren't as ready for it," he said.

Neither are most residents, he said — who then turn to the city for aid when they should make some preparations on their own.

Branham said that last year, "Arizona Public Service Co. was proactive, and has been working on ways to quickly restore service." It, too, called on mutual aid from the Salt River Project and even California utilities.

With power out for days, APS brought dry ice to its service office on Grand Avenue for people to pick up.

Its preparations also include a knowledge of which residents might have electrically operated lifesaving medical equipment, such as dialysis machines or oxygen bubblers. Those devices can be battery-operated for a few hours, but then must be reconnected, and APS tries to restore power to such customers or get them other help.

But electric power must be restored in a certain way, with major transmission lines repaired first, then feeder lines, and finally, those neighborhood wires.

There's not much point to fixing one residential line if

there's no juice coming after it's been reconnected.

Restoring a major line helps customers by the hundreds.

Both Surprise and Youngtown have the ability to declare emergencies, which gives their administrators additional powers, and lets them call for backup help,

and cash, from county, state or federal governments.

In both, procedures are in place to get that help, and aid from Luke Air Force Base if need be, if the situation escalates to more than local authorities can handle.

In the Sun Cities, without a local government, county officials take that role.