



Thursday, August 14, 2014

Where Were You During Blackout 2003?



By Agatha Kereere

Anita Salzberg, American Red Cross Greater NY editorial manager, was home with her husband in their Queens, N.Y., apartment on Thursday, August 14, 2003, when a major outage knocked out power to millions in the northeast U.S. and Canada.

"It was late-afternoon and sunny," Salzberg

said. "The air conditioner abruptly cut off and our clocks stopped working. This was about two years after 9/11 so my first thought was—"Terrorism?" I got one of our small transistor radios out of a cabinet, and, within a minute, I knew this was 'just' a blackout."

Salzberg proceeded to collect all the batteries and flashlights in the apartment and dumped them onto the couple's dining room table. She said her husband looked at her with a combination of surprise and amusement. "He didn't know we had these supplies or how I'd thought of them," she said. "And I didn't think it was funny."

Though Salzberg and others felt a sense of relief when the source of the blackout was revealed to have no links to terrorism, that didn't make the situation any less serious. According to news reports, roughly 50 million people were affected by the loss of power.

Technology and social media had yet to make the strides of today; there was no Facebook status to assure loved ones of a person's wellbeing or tweets to provide updates on the situation. Many people weren't sure how to respond to the outage, but perhaps some, like Salzberg, were able to rely on past experiences to dictate how to proceed.

"I remembered the blackout back in 1977 and used that to help me in this situation," Salzberg said. "Having the supplies on hand was instinctive; I just knew what we'd need if the power went down."

Blackout 2003 was 11 years ago today. However, more than a decade later, many New Yorkers still aren't prepared for this kind of emergency. Are you?

Learn [Red Cross tips](#) for successfully coping with a power outage.

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Volunteer @katielovett11 takes you on a ride-along to see what its like to respond to everyday disasters in NYC. youtu.be/qjxFJsw2_4I
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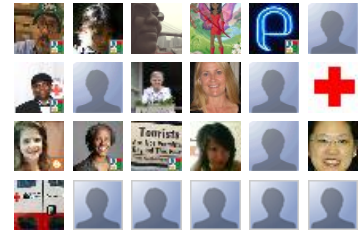
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