

Things Aren't Working As They Should



by Lee Duigon

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Just before bed-time the other night, around 11 p.m., all our lights went out—zap, just like that. Power outage. If it hadn't been snowing, it would've been too dark to find my flashlight.

“Beep! Beep! Carbon monoxide alert! Beep!” That was the alarm in our foyer. I didn't know how to make it stop. Eventually it stopped of its own accord.

By and by I called the police, hoping for some information. The dispatcher didn't want to hear it. “That's Public Service Electric & Gas, their problem—nothing to do with us.” So much for the police knowing what's going on within a few blocks of their station.

Midnight. Call PSE&G. I'm holding the flashlight in one hand, a note with the telephone number on it in the other, and trying to dial the number: a juggling act, very difficult. I dialed, and got this:

“Hello! Welcome to The Hot Line, where hot and sexy women are waiting to talk to you!” I cried out: “What???” My wife thought it quite funny. Ha, ha. I dialed again and this time I got the PSE&G robot. They're working on it. Do I want a something-or-other ticket? “No, no! I don't know what that is. I just want the flamin' lights back on!” They're working on it.

At 1 a.m. I put on my coat and went outside to see if any progress was being made, anywhere. Toward the south, two blocks from where I stood, downtown Metuchen was lit up like the Fourth of July. You could read legal notices by it. Who the devil was shopping at one in the morning?

So I went north, into the darkness, homing in on some distant lights flashing on and off. A few blocks down, through the slush, I found four or five PSE&G trucks parked along the street, including two with cherry-pickers. But! No one was in the trucks. Where were the repair crew? I finally found a van with a driver in it, napping. He told me they're working on it. That was all he knew.

I hiked back home. We lit candles. My wife has an oxygen generator; it doesn't work without electricity: something to worry about. She fell asleep on the couch. I thought I'd better stay up, but by 3 a.m. I was nodding over the candles and it struck me as a dangerous position. I had to go to bed. I blew out the candles, left the flashlight for my wife in case she woke up, and plodded up to bed, assisted only by a very small penlight. Couldn't stay awake, had to go to bed. By and by I could hear men and machines working in the street.

Our power came back on around five in the morning. By then the bedroom was uncomfortably cold, but I got out of bed to make sure my wife had her oxygen. Once that was taken care of, I went back to bed and somehow wangled a few hours' sleep.

The point of all this is, things don't seem to be working as they should. It doesn't take much to screw up modern life.

We need to do better than this.

I have discussed these and other topics throughout the week on my blog, <http://www.leeduigon.com/> . Click the link and visit... if your computer is working. My articles can also be found at www.chalcedon.edu/ .

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