



**Ken
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Storm Safety

We have had some really crazy weather lately, especially the wind. Temperatures are normally unpredictable at this time of year and so is the precipitation. We have had much less snow and much more rain this winter and something that accompanies wind and rain is power outages. They are definitely an inconvenience but unless temperatures are below freezing the risk of damage to your home is minimal. Basements may flood without a sump pump and that can be serious but otherwise the concern is usually food spoilage in freezers and refrigerators. Some people have backup generators and if they are working most problems are averted. However, there are some problems that can occur that everyone should be aware of. When the lights go out they don't always just go out all at once. Sometimes there is a brownout before the complete outage and that can make things even worse. One thing that can be especially damaging is an 'open neutral'. That is when one of the wires coming into your home is broken and the others are not. This sets up a potential for damage to many things in your home.

The best advice I can give you is that when the power starts to flicker during a storm, it would be advisable to go to your main circuit panel and turn off the main circuit breaker for the duration of the event. Sure, that sounds like an unnecessary inconvenience but the damage we see from power surges and brownouts is substantial. Sometimes it depends on what appliances are operating at the time of the brownout but there are other problems that will damage all of the electronics in your home and even your heating or air conditioning system. There are whole house surge protectors that can be installed on the main panel but there are many more things than a surge that can damage your appliances.

I think that the increasing number of dead trees along the roads will contribute to more frequent outages and the more salt that gets used on the roads, the more dead trees we will see. The ash beetle has killed virtually every ash tree in our area and they are dropping faster all the time. The power companies can barely keep up with the removal of them before they fall. Because of how these trees break and fall, they are more dangerous to take down and are more unpredictable when and where they will fall.

Protect yourself and your home during a power outage and you will save money in the long run. When you see your neighborhood light up again for 15 minutes or so, turn your main circuit breaker back on. Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

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Pennsylvania Homeowner Assistance Fund Reopens

By Rep. Ann Flood

PEN ARGYL - The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) announced the Pennsylvania Homeowner Assistance Fund (PAHAF) has reopened to homeowners struggling as a result of pandemic-related financial hardships.

The program provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners for mortgage and housing-related expenses to address delinquency and avoid default, foreclosure or displacement from their homes. It was paused last year as the agency processed a backlog of applications. The agency is now accepting new applications until the remaining funds are exhausted. So far, more than 15,500 households have received more than \$205 million of the \$350 million awarded to the Commonwealth through the American Rescue Plan Act.

Funds will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible applicants with priority given to homeowners facing an imminent adverse action (IAA) such as a notice of foreclosure, sheriff sale or utility shut-off notice. Applicants should understand that submitting an application does not guarantee funding.

More information about the program, eligibility and how to apply is available at pahaf.org. If homeowners have questions, they can contact the dedicated PAHAF Call Center at 888-987-2423, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Artists Invited to Participate in Art of the State

By Rep. Ann Flood

PEN ARGYL - The State Museum of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Heritage Foundation are inviting artists and craftspeople to submit applications to exhibit their work in the annual Art of the State.

Art of the State is open to Pennsylvania residents who are at least 18 years of age. Artists will compete in five categories: painting, work on paper, sculpture, craft and photography/digital media.

More than \$5,000 in cash awards will be presented. The exhibit is scheduled to open to the public at The State Museum on Sunday, Sept. 8, 2024, and close on Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025.

Entries to Art of the State must be submitted online. Additional information and the link to enter are available here http://links.pahousenews.com/q/uRlaaxG6Wh0XnY5rx_zIN6SSfWPfhCrMREDZcOJYnZ0aW1lc0ByY24uY29tw4ghfyq4drTf7B3Lh6D-cXdohob4og. The deadline to enter is May 3.

