

Amateur Radio Club

As members of the Four Seasons at Beaumont Amateur Radio Club, many of the things we do to advance our hobby have potentially wider application for our friends and neighbors in the community. For instance, Amateur Radio operators (Hams) are always interested in figuring out new ways to run our radios without using the A/C wall sockets in our houses—a concept that could be useful to *anyone* in an emergency situation who needs to be able to turn on a light, or a fan, or charge a cell phone when the power goes off.

Power supplies, like the one about to be described, are commercially available (see last paragraph). But Hams generally like to build their own equipment, so one our members has been working on putting one together that uses a 12 volt marine battery (Wal-Mart \$75) contained in a black battery box (Wal-Mart, \$8). Two “accessory sockets” (used to be called “cigarette lighter” sockets) are then installed in the box top along with some switches and connectors (auto parts store, \$40) and wired to the battery. The sockets allow you to use mobile charging devices to charge your smart phone or power other low current devices like LED lamps. The power supply sits in the garage with a “float charger” attached (Wal-Mart, \$20) to keep the battery at full power when “Edison goes down.”



This project is not yet completed. The design calls for later replacement of the float charger with a solar cell panel and a controller so there would be no dependency on household A/C to keep it going. We’ll give you updates on it over the next couple of months as it “matures.”

During an emergency power outage, a set up like this will not come to close to meeting your regular energy needs but it does have its advantages. First, it’s

relatively inexpensive (way cheaper than a generator) and second, when household power is out, being able to charge your cell phone 15 to 20 times, or light a small lamp in your house in the evening for 3 hours over 10 to 15 days could be very advantageous to your comfort and peace of mind. Finally, its usage as a source of power for emergency communications is invaluable.

If the idea of having a portable power source available for emergencies appeals to you, check out units by Duracell and others on Amazon.com , Walmart.com and HomeDepot.com. These units are priced around a \$140 to \$180 and might just be what you need to “get by” during an emergency. (*Thanks to Colin Taylor for the inspiration for this project.*)

Our website is W6FSB, Club meetings are on the Last Friday of the Month in the Lodge Card Room @ 10AM

Jim Peterson, K6JWP, Vice President