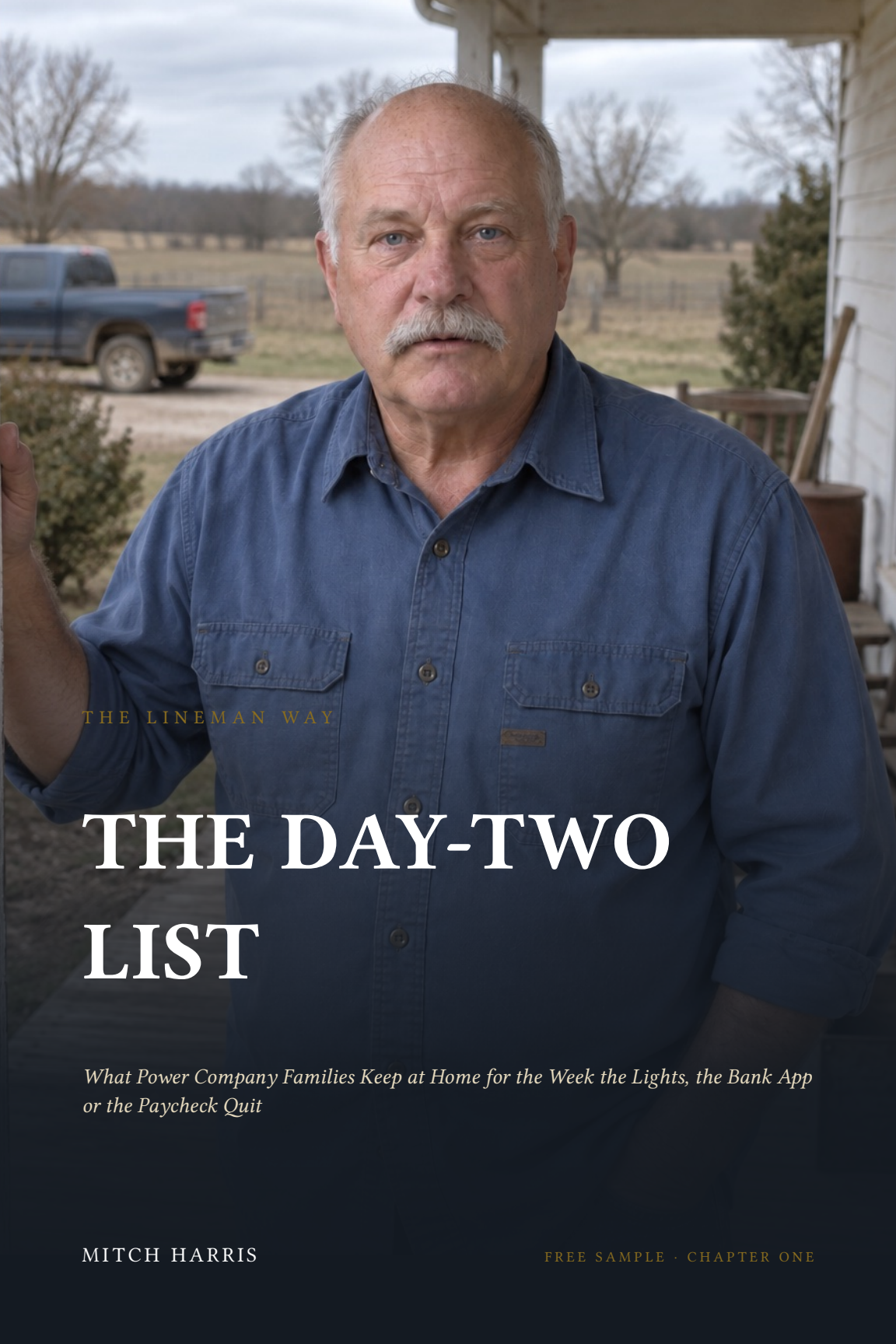


A full-page background image featuring a middle-aged man with a grey mustache and blue eyes, wearing a blue button-down work shirt. He is standing on a porch or driveway in front of a white house. In the background, a blue pickup truck is parked on a dirt road, and there are bare trees and a cloudy sky, suggesting a rural setting in late autumn or winter.

THE LINEMAN WAY

THE DAY-TWO LIST

*What Power Company Families Keep at Home for the Week the Lights, the Bank App
or the Paycheck Quit*

MITCH HARRIS

FREE SAMPLE · CHAPTER ONE

The Day-Two List

*What Power Company Families Keep at Home for the Week the
Lights, the Bank App or the Paycheck Quit*

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Questions, a correction, or a story from your own bad week: reply to the email that delivered this book.

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Read This First

It is the second morning. A summer storm took the power at supper last night and you handled it fine. Candles, a card game, the kids thought it was camping. Now it is 6:40 a.m., the house is already 84 degrees, the freezer has stopped humming, and the nearest open store is fourteen miles off. You reach for your phone to check whether the road is clear and it is at nine percent. Nothing bad has actually happened yet. That is the point.

I am not going to tell you the world is ending. I spent thirty-one years putting the lights back on after it didn't. The world was still there every time. What was gone, for a week or so, was one system a house leaned on, and the house had not noticed it was leaning until the system quit.



Figure 1: The shelf my dad kept. A flashlight, a radio, and food you'd eat anyway. Nothing on it cost more than a tank of gas.

Name's Mitch Harris. Thirty-one years on a line crew for a rural electric co-op in Missouri, the last twelve running the crew. I am not an expert on AI, or on money, or on anything you'd need a license for. I'm the man who put your lights back on, and I know exactly what a house looks like on day two when a system behind it quits.

What day two is

Day one is fine. Everybody's day one is fine. There's adrenaline, a neighbor with a chainsaw, a pot of chili on the grill. Day two is when the freezer is thawing, the phone is dead, the cash in the house is eleven dollars, and the one store that's open takes cash. Day two is when people cry in the driveway. I've stood in a lot of driveways, and not once was it over the thing they'd been afraid of. It was always a small thing nobody had checked.

Here is what I learned pulling up to those houses. The house that was fine and the house that wasn't looked the same from the road. The difference was never money and it was never gear. It was whether somebody in that house had thought about day two before day two, and had written it down.

FROM THE TRUCK

July 2006, Texas County, Missouri, straight-line winds. We reached a widow's place on the second afternoon. She was eighty-one and living alone, and she met us at the door with iced tea from a cooler. On her fridge was a note in her late husband's hand, ten years old: where the flashlights were, which neighbor to call, how long the freezer would hold. She'd followed it line by line. Her neighbor with the brand-new generator had spent the morning looking for a gas can.

What this book promises

One sheet of paper on your fridge, built a line at a time as you read, so that the week any system behind your house quits is a boring week. Boring is the goal. You'll still be warm and a little annoyed. You won't be in the driveway.

Systems behind the house is the phrase I'll use all the way through, so I'll say it plain once. The power is one. So is the water, since the pump and the treatment plant run on the power. So is the food, because the

store's shelves are a truck schedule and a computer. Cash. The bank app. The phone. The paycheck. The electric bill. The warning that tells you to leave. The two neighbors who would knock on your door. Every one of those is a system you don't run and don't see, and every one of them has a day two.

How the book is built

One system per chapter, thirteen chapters, in roughly the order a house fails. Inside every item is the honest catch, the trade-off, even if it costs me a sale. Every chapter ends with a few blanks to fill in, and the list on the fridge gets one line longer each time you do.

Not financial advice, not legal advice. Just what I'd tell my own kids. Where there's a real checklist from the people whose job it is, the fire folks, the weather service, the consumer agency, I'll point you to it instead of my own opinion, and the Sources at the back says where each one came from.

One more thing and then we start. About half of what's in here would have been in a book like this twenty years ago. The other half is here because these systems fail differently now, and the reason is AI. I'll name it once and then leave it alone. None of it is a prophecy. It is a set of things that have already happened to ordinary households, and each one has a cheap fix you can write on paper tonight. If you never think about AI again after this page, you still get the whole manual.

Now, the part I do in every video. I've held one item back. The cheapest thing in this book is the last thing in it, and you already own it. Chapter thirteen. It won't mean much until the rest is on the fridge.

Start with the rule that makes every other chapter work. Chapter 1, the Day-Two Rule.

CHAPTER 1

The Day-Two Rule

It is six in the morning and the kitchen is 51 degrees. You know that because the oven has a thermometer clock on it and the clock is the only thing in the house still telling you anything. Outside, every branch on the maple has a finger of ice on it, and every few minutes one lets go with a crack like a rifle. You open the fridge out of habit. The light doesn't come on, and the milk is the same temperature as the kitchen. It has been since about ten last night, though you didn't think about it then because last night was the fun part. Candles. The kids in one bed. Cards.

Your phone shows one bar and 22 percent. You put it face down on the counter so you'll stop looking at it. Through the window, across the road, you can hear the neighbor's generator running, a steady put-put-put under the sound of the ice. Yours is not running. You don't have one. You always figured you'd get one.

The coffee maker is a plastic brick. The well pump is on the power, so the tap gave you half a glass and a cough. Somebody upstairs is going to wake up in about ten minutes and ask for a hot breakfast and a shower, in that order.

That is day two. Nothing has actually broken in this house. The house is just finding out how many things it never did for itself.

This chapter has one job: to show you that every bad week has the same shape, and that a house that knows the shape stops being surprised by it. Same warning I give my own kids at the kitchen table: nothing here is financial advice or legal advice. It's what a lineman's family does, written down.

Why day one is fine and day two is not

I said this in the introduction and I'll say it properly here, because everything else in the book hangs off it.

Day one takes care of itself. There is adrenaline on day one. There is a story to tell, there is a plan being made out loud, there are neighbors in the road pointing at the same downed line. The fridge is still cold. The phone is still charged. The wallet has whatever it had. The kids think it's camping. On day one, your house is coasting on what it stored up while the systems were running, and it doesn't feel like coasting. It feels like being fine.

Day two is when the stored-up part runs out, and it runs out on a schedule you didn't set. A refrigerator with the door kept shut will hold food safe for about four hours after the power goes; a full freezer, about two days. A phone battery has a number on it and the number only goes one way. The cash in the house is whatever was in the house. The gas in the car is whatever was in the car. None of that surprises you on a page. It surprises you at six in the morning when it all comes due at once.

I watched this happen from the outside for thirty-one years. Crew pulls up on a road on day one and people wave. Same road on day two, and people are standing at the end of the driveway with their arms crossed, and some of them are crying, and it is not because they're weak. It is because nobody told them day two was a separate event with its own list. That is the whole rule. Plan for it separately and it turns back into an ordinary day with the lights off.

The systems behind the house

Here is a question I ask people who come to me for advice, and I'd ask you to actually answer it, not just read it: how many things did your house do for itself yesterday?

Most people say something like "the furnace" and then stop. The honest answer is closer to zero. The furnace was burning gas that came through a pipe somebody else pressurizes, lit by a control board that runs on a wire somebody else maintains. Your house is not a machine. It is the end of a long row of machines that belong to other people, and every one of them can quit without asking you.

WHAT A SYSTEM BEHIND THE HOUSE MEANS

A system behind the house is anything your household leans on every day that you did not build, do not run and cannot fix from the driveway. The power line. The water main or the well pump on it. The truck schedule that fills the grocery shelves. The card reader at the pump. The bank's app. The cell tower. The payroll software at your employer. The two houses either side of you, because a neighbor is a system too.

I sorted them out for you in the introduction, and I'm not going to run the list again. What I want to do here is show you the three shapes they come in, because the shape tells you what day two looks like.

Some of them come in through a wire or a pipe. Power, water, heat, the pump at the gas station. When these quit, you know it in one second, the whole road knows it with you, and there's a crew somewhere on it. The fix is physical, and it takes days.

Some of them come in through a screen. The bank app, the card reader, the payroll deposit, the phone that carries the warning and the voice of the person calling you. When these quit, you often don't know it, and you may be the only house on the road it happened to. The fix is somebody else's software, and nobody sends a truck.

And one of them comes in through the door. The neighbors. That one doesn't quit; it just goes unused until you need it, and by then it's awkward to start.

Three shapes. Wire, screen, door. Chapters 2 through 5 are the wire. Chapters 6 through 10 are the screen. Chapter 11 is the door, and it's the one everybody skips. Don't.

The root-cellar rule

My dad ran a farm the co-op didn't reach until 1971, and he had a root cellar, a generator and one rule I heard more than any other growing up: fix it before it's broke.

He didn't mean it as a saying. He meant it as a schedule. The generator got run on the first of every month whether anybody needed it or not. The cellar got restacked in the fall, oldest to the front. The chain on the pump got greased on a day when the pump was working fine, because the day it seized was not a day you wanted to be greasing anything. He

was not a worrier. He just didn't like being surprised by things he could have looked at last Tuesday.

That's the root-cellar rule, and it is the second half of the day-two rule. The first half says day two is a separate event. The second half says you handle it on a quiet Tuesday, not at six in the morning in a 51-degree kitchen. Every item in this book is a Tuesday job. Not one of them can be done on day two. That's the point.

The honest catch is that Tuesday jobs are boring, and there is no way to make them not boring. Nobody films themselves labeling a water shutoff. The people selling you gear understand this, which is why the gear is exciting and the labeling isn't. My opinion, flagged as opinion: most of the exciting gear is a hobby. A full pantry and a labeled panel beat a bug-out bag every week of the year.

FROM THE TRUCK: THE ROAD IN JANUARY 2009

The last week of January 2009, an ice storm laid down across southern Missouri, and we didn't reach one county road until the third day. Twenty-some houses, dark since the first night. Most were in bad shape. Four or five were fine, and I mean actually fine: a camp stove, homework by a lantern, coffee for the crew. I expected the difference to be a generator. Two of them didn't own one. What they had was a list on the fridge and a routine they'd run once before.

Paper doesn't get hacked

Twenty-two percent. Go back to the kitchen scene and think about where the information you'd need that morning actually lives. Some of it is in the phone. Some is in an email that's in the phone. Some is on a bill in a drawer, in a spouse's head, or on a website behind a password that's also in the phone. On day two the phone is at 22 percent, the website is down, and your wife is at her sister's.

So here is the rule for where the list lives, and I'm not going to soften it: it lives on paper, on the fridge, and it's the only copy that counts.

I know how that sounds in 2026. My grandkids think I'm being cute. I'm not. Paper doesn't need a charge, a tower, a password or the bank's servers. Paper doesn't get hacked. When the phone's a brick, the fridge

is still standing in the kitchen, and every person in the house walks past it twenty times a day. It's the only filing cabinet that works on day two. The list on the fridge is the whole product of this book. Every chapter adds a few lines to it. By chapter 13 it should be a single sheet, maybe two, that a stranger could pick up and use to run your house for a week. Where the panel is. Where the shutoff is. Who to call and in what order. Which neighbor has the chainsaw. It's better than a plan. A plan is in your head, and on day two your head is busy.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Tape a blank sheet of paper to the fridge. Write DAY TWO across the top in marker. Tie a pen to it with a piece of string so the pen can't walk off. Then write one line under the heading, any line: your power company's outage number, the name of the neighbor you'd check on, anything. It takes four minutes and it costs nothing, and from tonight the list exists. Everything else in this book is just filling it in.

How to read this book and build your list as you go

Read it in order the first time. The chapters are stacked in about the order a house fails, wire first, then screen, then door, and the later chapters assume the earlier lines are already on the fridge.

Inside every chapter you'll find the same pieces. The items, with what it is, why it matters on day two, what exactly to buy or do, and the honest catch. A checklist you can tick. A worksheet with a few blanks. And a close with one thing to do tonight and one this weekend, with the dollars and the minutes attached, so you never finish a chapter without knowing what it just cost you.

Do the worksheet. Write in the book, or copy the lines onto the fridge sheet. A blank left blank is a line missing on day two. If you don't know the answer, write "don't know" and it becomes a Tuesday job.

Take the dollar figures as examples. Prices move. Where I give a number it's one I've seen, and the Sources say where it came from. Where I don't, the thing is cheap, and I said cheap on purpose.

Chapter 1: the list exists

- ☐ A blank sheet on the fridge titled DAY TWO, in marker
- ☐ A pen tied to it with string
- ☐ One flashlight where you can put your hand on it in the dark, tonight
- ☐ Know where the breaker panel is and what's on it
- ☐ Know where the water shutoff is and which way it turns
- ☐ Your power company's outage number written on the sheet
- ☐ The names of the two neighbors you would check on
- ☐ An honest guess at how many days your place is fine right now

Worksheet: my place, honestly

My place is fine for ____ days without power
right now (honest guess, not the number I'd like):

The last time the power was out here it lasted:

The system behind my house I worry about most, and why:

The two people I would check on, and
how I'd reach them with the phone dead:

The breaker panel is at:

The water shutoff is at:

What this book will not do

No dates. I don't know when your bad week is coming, and neither does anybody selling you a countdown. The something they're selling is usually fear with a shipping charge.

No bunkers. This is a book about the house you live in, with the family you've got. Land and a steel door is a hobby, and a fine one, but it's not this.

No gadgets you don't own. Almost everything in here is already in your house, or under twenty dollars at the hardware store. Where I do tell you

to buy something bigger, a generator, a water filter, a radio, I'll give you the cheap version first and the catch on the expensive one.

And no villain. The systems behind your house are run by people doing their best on a Tuesday, same as you, and sometimes they quit anyway. My wife says I've been prepping since before it had a name. The name doesn't matter. What matters is a 51-degree kitchen where nobody is crying, because the sheet on the fridge says what to do next.

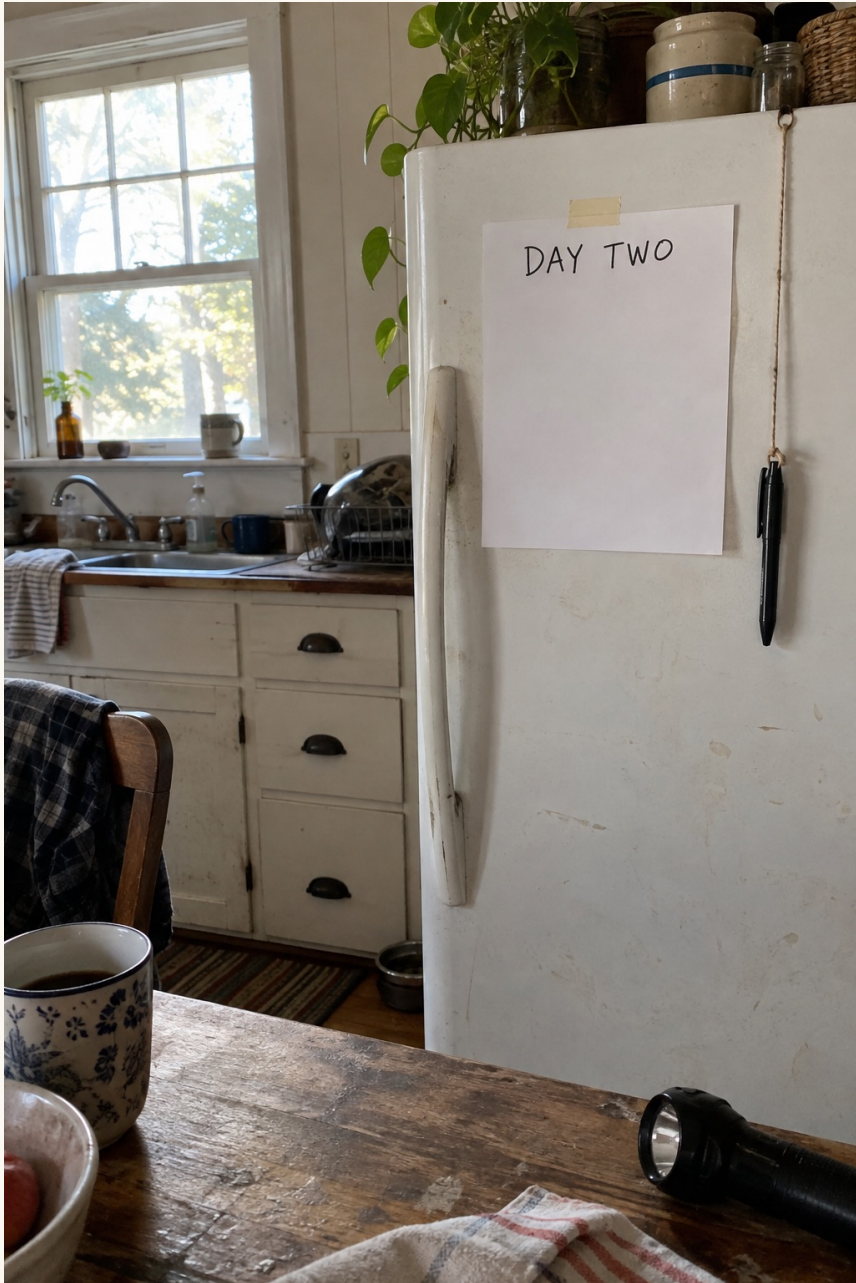


Figure 2: The list starts as a blank sheet and a pen on a string. That's the whole first chapter.

Tonight: the fridge sheet, the heading, the pen, and the outage number. Zero dollars, four minutes. This weekend: walk the house with a flashlight and a roll of tape, find the breaker panel and the water shutoff, put a strip of tape on each with a marker arrow, and write both locations on the sheet. If you don't own a flashlight that works, add one; ten dollars, thirty minutes including the drive.

That's the rule. Next is the first system that quits, and the one I spent my working life on. Chapter 2, The Week the Power Quits.

THAT WAS CHAPTER ONE

Twelve more systems, one list

The full book covers every system behind the house: power, water, food, cash, the bank app, the phone, the slow scams, the paycheck, the electric bill, storm warnings, the neighbors, and the list itself. Thirteen tear-out checklists. Free updates for life.