



## What happens to all that technology when the lights go out?

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I have a superintendent in an upper eastside cooperative apartment house that spent six months last year going to school to learn about a new computerized central heating and cooling HVAC system that was installed in his building. He was an ace with the old one. And, like all love hate relationships was sorry to see it go. It was inefficient and expensive, a temperamental instrument that needed a lot of enabling. But, the super understood its errant idiosyncratic ways and kept it alive season after season very long past its life expectancy. Banaiding be gone, concerned that another fierce winter lay ahead, the board felt it was imperative to have a modern system put in place. Now our super is facing a mechanical wonder that is new to him. This courtship period comes with a manual.

Stories like this are being told throughout the city. This is an aging town with geriatric buildings ready to be upgraded. Ripe to go modern. Change is not only inevitable, it's a must.

At Lawrence Properties we are constantly researching better, more efficient ways to run the buildings we manage. It is part of our job to keep our boards and owners informed and be able to recommend the latest technological advances when change is mandatory.

Today, there are many technological advances affecting residences. Here's just a very short list of examples. Elevators have evolved to operating with microprocessor control chips. Telephone, intercom, cable and computer access lines have become part of a single integrated whole. Security devices have become so state-of-the-art and effective, seminars must be held on-site to train both staff and residents. The development of computer driven programs for financial schedules and spreadsheets that can let us understand, review and make decisions about the property down to the smallest detail. From budget and spending insights to tracking operations and capital improvements every step of the way.

All this technological progress is exciting. Keeping abreast of it is one more responsibility and commitment each residential manager makes. We at Lawrence Properties see it as an opportunity to do our jobs more efficiently. We both welcome it and educate ourselves to work with it. We also realize that while we will come to know it, it's risky to rely only on it. What happens when the lights go out? When the systems fail and everything stops? Technology is kaput.

This is when a managing agent steps up to the plate. When the years of experience kick in and this expertise takes charge. Traditional management training teaches us how to seize the leadership role in this kind of emergency. He or she must now retrieve the skills that makes him or her such an important mechanism in the functioning of their charge. At Lawrence Properties we all know how to go back to basics. This was never more evident than in our take-control, effective responses to Hurricane Sandy.

We went into action mode days before. Putting out warnings. Preparing shareholders and staff and ourselves. Gearing up for the worst. Staying close so that we would be ready when the storm hit.

And when it did, we knew how every one of our buildings and every single resident were being affected. We knew who needed water, who needed flashlights, who needed food and help. We knew who needed to be evacuated and we helped find safe places for them to live. As a company, we were all involved. We were in constant touch with each other. We heard stories about how other managers went missing, ours showed up. Leaving their own homes to do service to others in the face of this disaster.

We must be there. Be present. Take charge. Help organize and comfort. No one knows our buildings better than we do. Although high technology will always be a goal for the future, it is wise and prudent to have a steadfast and unfailing manual can opener.

Andrew Hirsch is director of operations and general counsel for Lawrence Properties, New York, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540