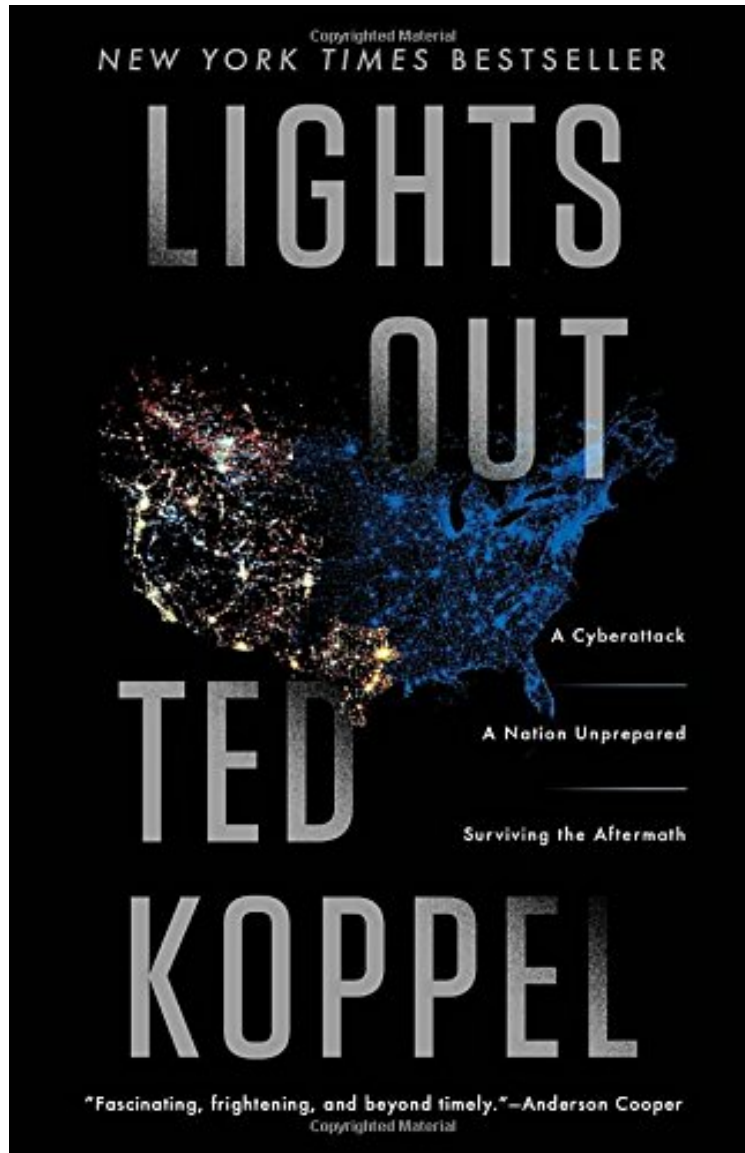


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Lights Out: A Cyberattack, A Nation Unprepared, Surviving the Aftermath

Ted Koppel

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Ted Koppel : Lights Out: A Cyberattack, A Nation Unprepared, Surviving the Aftermath before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lights Out: A Cyberattack, A Nation Unprepared, Surviving the Aftermath:

345 of 364 people found the following review helpful. Possibly the most important book of the decade

By Monica J. Kern
People have been warning of the potential catastrophe awaiting us if the electric grid should fail for a long time, but most of those warnings have fallen on deaf ears or considered the rantings of post-apocalyptic doomsayers. But when Ted Koppel--one of the nation's most trusted journalists--takes up the cause, each and every one of us needs to listen. In a relatively short and readable book, Koppel succinctly and unemotionally makes the case that (a) the electric grid of the U.S. is extremely vulnerable to collapse due to either cyberwarfare, EMP attack, or solar flare; (b) due to a variety of economic and political reasons, we have not implemented necessary steps to protect the grid; and (c) most frighteningly of all, we do not have emergency plans on either the state or federal level to deal with a widespread collapse of the grid. This is not a trivial threat. Imagine Katrina, only thousands-fold. Koppel notes that the report of the commission tasked with evaluating a potential EMP attack predicted that, in the case of such an attack that would destroy large parts of the grid, only 1 in 10 Americans would still be alive a year later. It is important to stress in light of the preceding sentence that Koppel's book is NOT a hysterical fear-mongering rant; instead, it is a careful analysis of the genuine risks and a convincing documentation of how completely unprepared we are, at all levels, to face this threat. As a chilling example, consider the quote Koppel provides by Jeh Johnson, secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, who when asked how the country would respond to a collapse of the grid, said "Oh, I'm sure FEMA has the capability to bring in backup transformers." As Koppel so compellingly describes, we not only don't have sufficient spare transformers lying around, we don't even have the infrastructure to deliver them in a timely manner. Koppel also offers a convincing argument that this threat is different from other seemingly similar threats, such as nuclear war. Simply put, with conventional or nuclear war, we know who is attacking or might attack us, and our ability to quickly administer an equal or greater response serves as a deterrent to any even slightly sane enemy. It is also the case that relatively few nations exist with the capability to mount a conventional or nuclear offense against us. But as Koppel notes, this is the first time in the history of warfare where "small groups, even individuals, can undermine the critical infrastructure of a state." The book is divided into three major sections: The first, "A Cyberattack" is a careful if sometimes dry and technical argument demonstrating the vulnerability of the grid. My impression is that Koppel started the book this way to show that he isn't merely fear-mongering, but if you find your eyes glazing over the minutiae of the SCADA computer software used by electric companies, don't give up on the book entirely; skip to the second section, "A Nation Unprepared," which documents chillingly the lack of planning for a collapse of the grid by the very federal agencies that OUGHT to be planning for such an event, and the third section, "Surviving the Aftermath," where Koppel describes the mind-set and actions taken by the groups most likely to survive a grid collapse, such as preppers and the Mormons. While that section is perhaps the most "optimistic" part of the book, the optimism dims more than a bit when Koppel repeatedly raises but never satisfactorily answers the question of how these prepared individuals or communities will react when throngs of panicked citizens who HAVEN'T prepared come knocking on their doors and asking for help. I don't often encounter a book that I think literally everybody in the country should read, including and especially our nation's leaders. We can take steps to protect the grid. It won't be cheap or easy, but it can be done. My hope is that Koppel's book will attract enough attention that we will no longer ignore this very real vulnerability.

126 of 131 people found the following review helpful. Cyber Pearl Harbor

By David Wineberg
Because he's Ted Koppel, he gets to interview cabinet secretaries and their senior staff, as well as senior civil servants, politicians and agency heads. To set up interviews across the country, he simply called US Senators. That quality alone makes *Lights Out* a higher level read. The other plus is the way Koppel has organized and written this book. It is broken out into bite-sized chapters, like television news items, keeping interest but delivering the salient points succinctly. And he leaves no stone unturned. Every time you think Yes, but he has the answer in the next paragraph, page or chapter. So *Lights Out* is both challenging and satisfying, fascinating and horrifying. And important. The core of the horror is our electrical grid. It is no secret that it old, old fashioned, creaky, decrepit and vulnerable to physical attack. Koppel adds that in addition, it is even more vulnerable to cyberattack. Hackers could, if they so desired, crash the whole electric grid, much as the United States and Israel ruined Iran's uranium processing plants and as Iran turned 30,000 Saudi computers into useless doorstops. We have the technology; we have successfully deployed it ourselves. If similar efforts were made against the USA, it would mean weeks and months before power was restored. Water would stop flowing, gas would stop flowing, gas stations would close, hospitals would close, banking systems would cease. Debit and credit cards would not operate. Replacements for Very Large Transformers run to over a year lead time. The US has hundreds, all custom made. And the government? Clueless. There are no plans to deal with this or prevent it. Cabinet Secretaries contradict agency heads on the existence of plans, administration experts minimize the possibilities, first responders hope they can retire before they have to deal with it. That is the state of American preparedness. There is no policy, no oversight, no budget, no contingency, no planning at all. Well deal with it when it happens, like global warming. It's just not real enough for Americans to worry about. The best advice from Washington? Ensure you have a portable radio and fresh batteries. Koppel is clearly worried about it, and all the really nonpolitical experts are unanimous in saying it's a matter of when and not if. Without a doubling of America's capacity to feed and house itself somewhere where there's electricity, there is no way to see everyone through such a period. And no one is even trying, except for handfuls of

survivalists/preppers. They are individually preparing for a Mad Max sort of post-apocalypse era, where bullets matter as much as dried food. It's a short, fast read, a slap up the side of the head, and a national scandal. We spend billions on 800 foreign bases and ensuring dangerous liquids like chocolate frosting don't make it into airplane cabins, but the national electrical grid limps to its almost inevitable fate, unattended. David Wineberg 177 of 188 people found the following review helpful. It seems to have a good list of references but there are not a lot ... By gemniii In response to the age old question "Where were you when the lights went out?" Same place where I was, in the dark. This book reflects the authors capability to interview important people. However their responses are fairly uniform across the board. Yes, there might be a problem and we are doing very little to prepare. The book is short, I read it on a Sunday afternoon. It seems to have a good list of references but there are not a lot of details in the recommendations. Three chapters and about 27 pages are used to discuss the Mormons, which can be summed up as they are prepared. Based on a TV interview I expected more details, such as a ranking of which geographic areas are most in danger. Are there areas of much older facilities likely to be difficult to repair? Actions to take if a problem occurs, rather than just "have a plan". Hard examples of major recent power outages and time it took to recover, instead of just a few examples. For instance if 1 major transformer is lost do we stay or do we go? If you know nothing about the grid and the potential for it failing, nothing about cyberwarfare and the possibilities, this might be a good introduction. It's a very easy read without a ton of details. And it shows what the government is not doing. If you remember the Northeast blackout of 2003 in which a software bug plunged 55 million in to the dark then you know the possibility of computer failure taking down the grid.

In this New York Times bestselling investigation, Ted Koppel reveals that a major cyberattack on Americas power grid is not only possible but likely, that it would be devastating, and that the United States is shockingly unprepared. Imagine a blackout lasting not days, but weeks or months. Tens of millions of people over several states are affected. For those without access to a generator, there is no running water, no sewage, no refrigeration or light. Food and medical supplies are dwindling. Devices we rely on have gone dark. Banks no longer function, looting is widespread, and law and order are being tested as never before. It isn't just a scenario. A well-designed attack on just one of the nations three electric power grids could cripple much of our infrastructure and in the age of cyberwarfare, a laptop has become the only necessary weapon. Several nations hostile to the United States could launch such an assault at any time. In fact, as a former chief scientist of the NSA reveals, China and Russia have already penetrated the grid. And a cybersecurity advisor to President Obama believes that independent actors from hacktivists to terrorists have the capability as well. It's not a question of if, says Centcom Commander General Lloyd Austin, it's a question of when. And yet, as Koppel makes clear, the federal government, while well prepared for natural disasters, has no plan for the aftermath of an attack on the power grid. The current Secretary of Homeland Security suggests keeping a battery-powered radio. In the absence of a government plan, some individuals and communities have taken matters into their own hands. Among the nations estimated three million preppers, we meet one whose doomsday retreat includes a newly excavated three-acre lake, stocked with fish, and a Wyoming homesteader so self-sufficient that he crafted the thousands of adobe bricks in his house by hand. We also see the unrivaled disaster preparedness of the Mormon church, with its enormous storehouses, high-tech dairies, orchards, and proprietary trucking company the fruits of a long tradition of anticipating the worst. But how, Koppel asks, will ordinary civilians survive? With urgency and authority, one of our most renowned journalists examines a threat unique to our time and evaluates potential ways to prepare for a catastrophe that is all but inevitable.

.com An Best Book of November 2015: Investigative reporting that reads like fiction - or maybe I just wish it was fiction. In *Lights Out*, Ted Koppel flashes his journalism chops to introduce us to a frightening scenario, where hackers have tapped into and destroyed the United States power grids, leaving Americans crippled. Koppel outlines the many ways our government and response teams are far from prepared for an un-natural disaster that won't just last days or weeks - but months - and also shows us how a growing number of individuals have taken it upon themselves to prepare. Whether you pick up this book to escape into a good story, or for a potentially potent look into the future, you will not be disappointed. Penny Mann "[Koppel's] suggestion that the United States look back to the era of mass civil defense as a model for how we might start to make preparations is provocative and sobering at the same time." -The New York Times Book Ted Koppel has set off a firestorm with his explosive new book. A devastating cyberattack on our powergrid [is] the risk Koppel has brought to the attention of the American public. -The Energy Times "Lights Out is a timely warning about the vulnerability of America to a massive cyberattack that would cripple all we take for granted electricity, communication, transportation. This is not science fiction. Hats off to Ted Koppel for putting us all on alert." TOM BROKAW "Without a single bullet, bomb, or missile, a foreign enemy can now launch a devastating attack on the United States. Koppel explores how cyberwarfare threatens all of us, assesses the risks, criticizes the lack of government action, and finds praise for the Mormon way of disaster preparedness. I hope he's wrong about the danger but fear he's right on the mark." ERIC SCHLOSSER, author of *Command and Control* and *Fast Food Nation* "Ted Koppel's unparalleled reporting skills are on full display in *Lights Out*. A fascinating and frightening look

at just how vulnerable we are to a cyberattack." ANDERSON COOPER As readers would expect from Ted Koppel, *Lights Out* is dramatic but not hyped, tied to today's news of shaky infrastructure and cyber attacks but also forward looking. This is an engrossing and significant book. JAMES FALLOWS, national correspondent, *The Atlantic*; author of *China Airborne* In *Lights Out*, Ted Koppel uses his profound journalistic talents to raise pressing questions about our nation's aging electrical grid. Through interview after interview with leading experts, Koppel paints a compelling picture of the impact cyberattacks may have on the grid. The book reveals the vulnerability of perhaps the most critical of all the infrastructures of our modern society: the electricity that keeps our modern society humming along. MARC GOODMAN, author of *Future Crimes* "Ted Koppel has written an important wake-up call for America on the threat of a crippling cyberattack. The danger we face right now is great, but so is the failure to acknowledge that the threat exists at all." LEON PANETTA, former U.S. Secretary of Defense "Lights Out illuminates one of the greatest vulnerabilities to our nation: a cyberattack on our power grid. It is a wake-up call for all of us. We are the nation that created the internet; we should be the first to secure it. This powerful book could be the catalyst for just such a change." GENERAL (RET.) KEITH ALEXANDER, former director of the National Security Agency "Try to imagine what a malevolent government, armed with the latest computer sophistication, could do to another nation's complex and entirely digital-dependent economy and social infrastructure. Fortunately, Ted Koppel has imagined it for us. We have been warned." GEORGE F. WILL "When the lights go out after the cyberattack, this is the book everyone will read." RICHARD A. CLARKE, author of *Cyber War* and former National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counter-terrorism "A bold enumeration of the challenges posed by the digital age; an appeal to safeguard new instruments of human flourishing by studying the ways in which they could be exploited." HENRY A. KISSINGER About the Author TED KOPPEL, a 42-year veteran of ABC News, was anchor and managing editor of *Nightline* from 1980 to 2005. New York University recently named Koppel one of the top 100 American journalists of the past 100 years. He has won every significant television award, including 8 George Foster Peabody Awards, 11 Overseas Press Club Awards (one more than the previous record holder, Edward R. Murrow), 12 duPont-Columbia Awards and 42 Emmys. Since 2005 he has served as managing editor of the Discovery Channel, as a news analyst for BBC America, as a special correspondent for Rock Center, and continues to function as commentator and non-fiction book critic at NPR. He has been a contributing columnist to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal* and is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Off Camera*.