

Review: Goal Zero Yeti gives you hours of power with zero emissions

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Be prepared. That's a good motto. Just ask the Boy Scouts of America.

Being prepared can mean many things. Today we will talk about a gadget that will help you be prepared for a power outage.

We've all been in a situation where the electricity goes out at home.

What do you do?

Fumble around for a candle or flashlight, I suppose.

Well, today we'd just turn on our phone's flashlight mode.

If you're prepared, you know exactly where the flashlights are, and you know to not open the freezer. If you're really prepared, you have a plan for providing power for your necessities.

I have sleep apnea, so I use a CPAP machine every night to keep my airway open. The machine runs on electricity, and if I don't use it, my sleep tends to be very poor and I snore a lot.

It just happens that I had my annual sleep doctor appointment, and he remarked that the machine's memory card showed I used it 364 nights in the last year.

I remember exactly the one night I didn't use it because the power was out. I told myself then that I'd look into alternate ways of powering the machine so I'd be prepared the next time.

I've been testing a new power generator from Goal Zero that's been powering my CPAP every night for the last two weeks.

The Goal Zero Yeti 1400 Lithium Portable Power Station (\$1,999, www.goalzero.com) isn't a gasoline-powered generator; it uses lithium batteries to provide hours, or days, of power.

SPECS

The Yeti 1400 is about the size of a small cooler. It's 10.1 inches by 15.3 inches by 10.4 inches and weighs 45.6 pounds.

Inside you'll find a 1,428-watt-hour lithium-ion battery pack with a life expectancy of 500 charge cycles. The battery is replaceable when it wears out.

You can charge the Yeti 1400 from a normal electrical outlet, which takes 25 hours, or from [solar panels](#). Goal Zero sells several types of solar panels or you can use other brands with an adapter.

Goal Zero says that if you use 30 to 40 percent of the battery power in a day (or night), you can keep it charged up with one 100-watt solar panel.

You can daisy-chain several solar panels for much faster charging. You can also charge from the wall and solar panels at the same time.

Goal Zero recommends you keep the Yeti 1400 plugged into the wall until you are ready to use it. If you can't keep it plugged in, the company recommends topping it off every three months.

Not cheap, but it's interesting to see what a few thousand dollars will buy in terms of really living off the grid.

The Yeti 1400 provides its power through several types of outlets.

There is a built-in inverter to provide two AC ports to plug in your gadgets or appliances. The plugs provide up to 1,500 watts of power with a 3,000-watt surge capability. There are also four USB ports and a 12-volt power port, like the accessory power ports in your car. There is an on/off button over each bank of ports so you can turn off the ones

you're not using.

OUTPUT CAPACITY

So how much power is available?

Goal Zero says the Yeti 1400 can charge your smartphone more than 70 times. It can charge your laptop more than 16 times. It can power your refrigerator for up to 24 hours.

In my CPAP testing, one night's sleep used 7 percent of the Yeti's capacity, which means I can go up to 14 nights on one Yeti 1400 charge. Not too shabby.

Batteries don't like cold weather. Goal Zero recommends keeping the Yeti 1400 in a cooler if you have to use it in cold conditions. The heat generated by the unit will work with the cooler to keep the battery warmer for longer use.

DISPLAY INFORMATION

The Yeti 1400 has a small LED display to show you its status. It has to be one of the most informative and well-designed displays I've ever seen.

The display will show the amount of power going into or out of the unit. If you're using the wall plug or solar panels to charge it, you'll see exactly how many watts are being used.

Similarly, when you have devices plugged into the Yeti 1400, you'll see exactly how many watts they're using. You can also choose a mode to see exactly how many hours until full if you're charging, or how many hours until empty if something is plugged in and using the power.

There is a five-segment battery gauge that flashes during charging.

The output gauge units can be changed to show volts, amps, watts or watt-hours.

It truly showed me every aspect of the unit's status.

WHO'S USING THESE?

So why would you want one?

Well, my CPAP use is a good one, but how about for camping?

I could see one or two of these in a motor home or tiny house - especially with a solar panel or two.

How about a musician who would like to use an amplifier and microphone someplace without handy access to power? This type of battery-powered generator is perfect because it makes no noise.

I also saw a Goal Zero promo video showing a rancher using a Yeti 1400 on his ATV with a power miter saw out in a pasture to fix a fence.

Plus, there's always the [power outage](#) scenario. Being able to plug in your refrigerator or chest freezer is nice.

THE COST

If you were paying attention earlier in the review, you noticed the Yeti 1400 costs \$1,999. That's really expensive. Almost too expensive.

I can buy a Honda 2,000-watt gasoline-powered generator for \$1,000.

I realize it's not as convenient. Gas is smelly and dangerous, and the generator needs to be outside and cords would need to run inside to power things.

Goal Zero does make a smaller version of this product - the Yeti 400 Lithium Portable Power Station - with 428 watt-hours of power for \$699.99.

I think the Yeti 400 is a better choice for many people.

Of course, it has about a third as much power capacity, but that's probably enough for many situations. In my CPAP example, I could run it for several nights before needing a recharge.

Of course, the smaller version won't exactly keep your refrigerator running all day and all night either.

FYI, Goal Zero also has an older (and much heavier) version of their Yeti battery-powered generators with lead-acid batteries. The newer models have "lithium" in their names. Don't be confused.

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Goal Zero Yeti 1400 Lithium Portable Power Station

Pros: Small, powerful, quiet and clean, many charging and output options

Cons: Expensive, long charging times

Bottom Line: Great [power](#) generator but shop for the model that meets your needs. It might be the smaller/cheaper model.

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