



Analog Resilience: ECMA's Response to the EU Preparedness Strategy

Position Paper

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Executive Summary

The European Candle Manufacturers Association (ECMA) proposes the inclusion of candles in the EU's recommended 72-hour emergency preparedness kits, with clear safety guidance and product standards. Candles offer a reliable, low-tech, and cost-effective lighting and utility solution during emergencies where access to electricity or functional digital devices is compromised. Already referenced in preparedness protocols of several EU Member States, candles are a practical and scalable tool for enhancing resilience across the Union. The European candle manufacturing industry stands ready to support such inclusion with compliant, safe, and sustainably produced products.

In this regard, the European Candle Manufacturers Association (ECMA) seeks to promote the safe use of candles, increase the knowledge and safety of candles and take an active role in developing the regulatory and standardisation environment.

1. Background and Policy Context

The EU Preparedness Union Strategy, proposed on the 26th of March 2025, seeks to boost the EU's ability to anticipate, prevent and respond to the varying natural, cyber and geopolitical risks the EU is facing. To this end the strategy called for the development of guidelines to reach a population self-sufficiency of minimum 72 hours. This model aims to ensure that citizens can cope independently in the immediate aftermath of major disruptions, including power outages, cyberattacks, or extreme weather events. The EU guidelines would help Member States reach population self-sufficiency.

However, many existing national guidelines place strong emphasis on electric or digital tools, such as battery-operated torches and mobile devices, without sufficient consideration for analogue fallbacks should these fail. Moreover, while references to battery-powered light sources are largely consistent across Member States, recommendations concerning candles vary, with some including them explicitly and others omitting them entirely. This concern is acknowledged

at the EU level in the Commission's Communication on a Union-wide approach for strengthening emergency preparedness (COM(2023) 222final), which under point 14 calls for the harmonisation of emergency supply guidance across Member States.

Including candles, as clearly regulated tools in such harmonised guidance would help address the current over-reliance on digital tools and improve the practical robustness of national preparedness strategies. Candles, as a non-electric light and heat source, present a logical and already widely adopted complement to modern tools. Several EU Member States include candles in national preparedness lists. This paper sets out the case for harmonising that approach at EU level.

2. Arguments for Inclusion of Candles in Preparedness Kits

2.1 Functional Redundancy

Candles provide light without reliance on electricity, batteries, or charging infrastructure. In an emergency, even high-quality torches or solar lights may fail due to drained batteries, damage, or lack of maintenance. A candle remains functional regardless of surrounding infrastructure, making it a vital backup.

2.2 Accessibility and Cost-Effectiveness

Candles are inexpensive, shelf-stable, and already present in many households across the EU. They do not require maintenance or periodic testing, unlike electronic tools. For low-income, rural, or elderly populations, candles represent an accessible preparedness option that is easy to stockpile and distribute.

2.3 Safety Standards and Risk Mitigation

Fire safety is a legitimate concern, but it can be addressed through proper regulation and communication. The European candle industry adheres to harmonised standards, including specification for fire safety of candles and product warning labels for safe use.

With the right public guidance—e.g. “Use only on stable, non-flammable surfaces. Never leave unattended.”—the inclusion of candles can be responsibly managed, just as the EU already does for other risk-bearing items like matches, gas stoves, and fuel containers.

2.4 Practical Utility Beyond Lighting

Candles provide limited but useful heat output in no-power scenarios. They can be used for:

- Providing warmth in cold rooms or enclosed spaces.
- Supporting basic tasks such as navigation and reading.
- As a last resort, heating small quantities of water or food where no other options are available.

While not substitutes for heaters or cookers, candles can serve as practical interim solutions during full infrastructure failure.

2.5 Alignment with Existing National Practices

Several EU Member States already recommend or reference candles in civil protection advice:

- **Germany:** The Federal Office of Civil Protection (BBK) lists candles on its official emergency supply checklist.
- **France:** National guidance includes candles for blackout preparedness.
- **Finland:** The National Emergency Supply Agency promotes candles for lighting during outages, with safety warnings.

These examples provide a foundation for broader EU-level harmonisation.

3. Proposed Wording for EU Guidance

To reflect the importance of resilience through redundancy and analogue tools, ECMA proposes the following language:

"Preparedness kits should include at least one non-electric lighting option, such as candles, provided products meet EU safety standards and are used in accordance with clearly communicated safety instructions."

This language offers:

- Flexibility to Member States;
- A risk-managed framework for safe use;
- Recognition of candles' practical role without undermining reliance on modern tools.

4. Conclusion and Industry Commitment

Candles are a proven, accessible, and regulated fallback tool that meet multiple functional needs in the context of short-term emergency preparedness. Their inclusion in the EU's 72-hour guidance, with appropriate safety framing, fills a practical gap while supporting EU resilience and sustainability objectives.

The European candle industry is prepared to:

- Support distribution and packaging for preparedness campaigns.
- Contribute to public risk communication and safety messaging.
- Ensure continued compliance with EU environmental and product safety regulations.

We hence respectfully urge the Commission and Member States to consider including candles in future revisions of EU preparedness guidance. We remain at your disposal to further discuss this matter in person.

***ECMA** represents candle makers, their national associations and suppliers to the industry. As **the European candle industry's collective voice**, ECMA ensures a continuous exchange of information with authorities, non-governmental organizations, the media and other relevant stakeholders and guarantees that its members' interests are heard and understood.*

Signature Secretary General:



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