Emergency Water Supply Guidelines

Water is essential for survival – build your emergency water supply today.

How do I . . .

• . . . Decide how much water I need?
• . . . Store water for emergency use?
• . . . Find safe alternative sources of water?

From the Ready.gov Emergency Preparedness Website: http://www.ready.gov
and
The Centers for Disease Control Emergency Preparedness Website: http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/safe_water/personal.html

Water is an essential element to survival and a necessary item in an emergency supplies kit. Find out how you can build a supply of water that will meet your family’s requirements during an emergency.

Things to remember:

• Allow people to drink according to their needs. Never ration drinking water unless ordered to do so by authorities.
• Do not drink carbonated beverages, alcohol or caffeinated drinks as these dehydrate the body, which increases the need for drinking water.

When disaster strikes, water utilities might not be available, wells may become contaminated or electricity may not be online to operate pumps, and water supplies at local stores may quickly sell out.

The safe drinking water supply we depend on every day may be interrupted by a tornado, flood, blizzard, extended power outage or other types of emergency situations.

The interruption might be for a few hours or it might last for days or weeks. Even if local stores have bottled water in stock, you may not be able to reach the store due to storm debris or flooded roadways. Every household should have an emergency water supply to meet water requirements during these types of situations.

How much water do I need?

You should store at least one gallon of water per person per day, for at least three days. Most people need to drink at least two quarts (64 ounces, or eight cups) of water each day. If you are in a warm climate, or if people are ill, water requirements may increase. Children and pregnant or nursing women will also need more water. Additional water will also be needed for food preparation and personal hygiene needs. If you have pets, plan for at least one quart per day for each dog or cat.

If storage space is available, try to store a two-week supply of emergency water.

(continued)
Emergency Water Supply Guidelines

How should I store water?

Commercially bottled water provides the safest water for your emergency water supply. Keep the bottled water in its original package and observe the expiration date. Store the bottles in a cool, dark place.

Food grade water storage containers are another option; however, you may have to properly prepare the container for water storage as well as the water itself.

Storing Water in Plastic Bottles

- Using an appropriate food grade bottle or plastic soda bottle, thoroughly clean the bottles with dishwashing soap and water, and rinse completely so there is no residual soap.
- Sanitize the bottles by adding a solution made by mixing 1 teaspoon of unscented liquid household chlorine bleach to one quart of water.
- Cover the container and shake it well so that the sanitizing bleach solution touches all inside surface of the container.
- Wait at least 30 seconds, then pour the sanitizing solution out of the container.
- Let the empty sanitized container air-dry before use or rinse the empty container with clean, safe water that is already available.

- Label containers as “drinking water” and include storage date.
- Replace stored water that is not commercially bottled every six months.
- Do not store water in areas where toxic substances such as gasoline or pesticides are present.

Emergency Water Treatment

Treat all water of uncertain quality before using it for drinking, food washing and preparation, washing dishes, brushing teeth or making ice. Contaminated water can contain micro-organisms that cause diseases.

Important! Water contaminated with fuel or toxic chemicals will not be made safe by boiling or disinfection. Use a different source of water if you know or suspect that water might be contaminated with fuel or toxic chemicals.

- Boiling

Boiling is the surest method to make water safer to drink by killing disease-causing organisms, including viruses, bacteria and parasites.

If the water is cloudy, filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel or coffee filter or allow it to settle. Draw off the clear water, and bring the clear water to a rolling boil for one minute (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for three minutes). After the water is cooled, store the boiled water in clean, sanitized containers with tight covers. If the water is clear, there is no need to filter the water before boiling it.

- Chlorination

If boiling water is not possible, you can make water safer to drink by using unscented household bleach as a disinfectant. Filter the water through a clean cloth, paper towel or coffee filter, or allow it to settle. Draw off the clean water. Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of unscented liquid household bleach for each gallon of clear water. Stir the mixture well; let stand for 30 minutes or longer before use.

(continued)
Unopened commercially bottled water is the safest and most reliable emergency water supply. Food-grade water storage containers, available at surplus or camping supply stores, are recommended if you wish to prepare and store a water supply for use during an emergency.

Avoid using containers that cannot be sealed tightly or containers that can break, such as glass bottles. Do not re-use containers that have been used for any toxic chemicals (including household bleach), or any containers used for milk or fruit juice as these may contain a permanent residue, allowing for bacteria to form in the stored water.

Safe Alternative Sources

- Melted ice cubes.
- Liquids from canned goods, such as fruit or vegetables.
- Water drained from pipes: After turning off the incoming water valve to your home, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your home at the highest level. A small amount of water will trickle out – then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the home.

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following items – but make sure you include other items that you need that may not be listed below:

- Water (one gallon per person per day, for at least three days)
- Non-perishable food (per person supply for at least three days); manual can opener
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels, and plastic utensils
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio; flashlight
- Extra batteries; small hand tools
- First Aid Kit; prescription medications; glasses
- Infant formula, diapers, medications
- Pet food, extra water for your pets
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, plastic garbage bags and plastic ties for sanitation
- Household chlorine bleach (non-scented) and medicine dropper
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Change of clothing and sturdy shoes (adapt for season)
- Important family documents in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash, change