

Emergency Water Supplies

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts (half gallon) of water each day. You also need water for food preparation and hygiene, so store at least one gallon per person, per day.

It is recommended to purchase food-grade water storage containers from surplus or camping supplies stores to use for water storage. If you decide to re-use storage containers, choose two-liter plastic soft drink bottles – not plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have had milk or fruit juice in them.

To prepare the safest and most reliable emergency supply of water, it is recommended that you purchase commercially bottled water.

If You Are Preparing Your Own Containers of Water.

1. Thoroughly clean the bottles with dishwashing soap and water, and rinse completely so there is no residual soap.
2. Sanitize the bottles by adding a solution of 1 teaspoon of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to a quart (1/4 gallon) of water. Swish the sanitizing solution in the bottle so that it touches all surfaces. After sanitizing the bottle, thoroughly rinse out the sanitizing solution with clean water.
3. Fill the bottle to the top with regular tap water. (If your water utility company treats your tap water with chlorine, you do not need to add anything else to the water to keep it clean.) If the water you are using comes from a well or water source that is not treated with chlorine, add two drops of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to each gallon of water.
4. Tightly close the container using the original cap. Be careful not to contaminate the cap by touching the inside of it with your fingers. Write the date on the outside of the container so that you know when you filled it. Store in a cool, dark place.
5. FEMA recommends you replace the water every six months if not using commercially bottled water.

HIDDEN WATER SOURCES IN YOUR HOME

Safe water sources in your home include the water in your hot- water tank, pipes, and ice cubes. You should not use water from toilet flush tanks or bowls, radiators, waterbeds, or swimming pools/spas.

You will need to protect the water sources already in your home from contamination if you hear reports of or know of broken water or sewage lines, or if local officials advise you of a problem. Shut off incoming water from the main water valve. To use the water in your pipes, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your home at the highest level. Then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the home.

To use the water in your hot-water tank, be sure the electricity or gas is off, and open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve at the tank and turning on a hot-water faucet.

EMERGENCY OUTDOOR WATER SOURCES

If you need to find water outside your home, you can use these sources, but be sure to treat the water before drinking it.

Rainwater

Streams, rivers, and other moving bodies of water

Ponds and lakes

Natural springs

WAYS TO TREAT WATER

These instructions are for treating water of uncertain quality in rare emergency situations when no other reliable clean water source is available and you have used all of your stored water.

There are many ways to treat water, though none are perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods. Boiling or chlorination will kill most microorganisms but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts, and most other chemicals.

Boiling is the safest method of treating water. Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 full minute.

You can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color-safe bleaches, or bleaches with added cleaners. Add 16 drops (1/8 teaspoon) of bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight bleach odor. If it doesn't, then repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes. If it still does not smell of bleach, discard it and find another source of water.