

STEP 5: Store Drinking Water

Why Store Water

Water is essential for survival. Disasters, like earthquakes, could potentially damage the community's water system which might disrupt water supplies to your house. If your water supply is cut off or disrupted, you will have to rely on water you have stored ahead of time.

How much water do I need to store?

At a minimum, every household is strongly encouraged to store one (1) gallon of drinking water per person per day plus extra water for pets, food preparation, and hygiene. The amount of water that you will need will also depend on the time of year. In the desert, we generally drink more water in the summer than in the winter. Store enough water for at least three (3) to seven (7) days for each member of your family including the pets. As time and resources permit, work towards at least two (2) to three (3) weeks of stored water for each member of the household. It may take a while to restore/repair water lines after a disaster.

FEMA does NOT recommend rationing water during a disaster! Under no circumstances should a person drink less than one quart (four cups) of water each day. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day and staying cool. Avoid substituting carbonated beverages for water! Caffeinated and alcohol dehydrate the body and increase the need for water.

Tips on how to store water

1. You can purchase various sized containers that are designed to store water at grocery, camping supply, hardware or warehouse stores. Containers are available in sizes ranging from one (1) gallon to 55 gallon drums. Whatever your storage system, date and replace stored water based on the expiration date on the container or every six (6) months if you have not treated the water with bacteria inhibitors. The larger the container the heavier it will be when filled with water. Think about how you will access the water when you need it.
2. Purchase cases of water to store. Date and replace based on the expiration date or every 6 months. Another thing to consider is rotate it through your usual stock of bottled water.
3. You can store tap water in screw-cap plastic containers such as soda bottles and food grade plastic jugs. Avoid using plastic milk jugs as they are difficult to seal tightly and the plastic becomes very fragile and brittle over time.

Soda bottles and food grade plastic containers need some pretreatment to make sure they are safe for storing water. Thoroughly rinse out the container with water. For extra safety, rinse the container with a weak solution of liquid chlorine bleach (8-10 drops in two cups water). Empty out this solution and fill the container with tap water. Seal the container tightly. Then, label the drinking water container with date. Empty and refill every six (6) months.

A general rule is to store water in a cool dark place (under the bed, behind the couch, in a closet) and replace it every six (6) months.

Ways to treat water for safe consumption

Cloudy water from regular faucets or water from streams or ponds can be used after it has been treated. If the water is cloudy, you will need to filter the water through a coffee filter, cheese cloth, etc before treating the

water. If water treatment is not possible, put off drinking suspicious water as long as possible. Do not become dehydrated.

1. **Boiling Water:** This method is the safest way to treat water. Put water in a large pot or kettle. After it comes to a boil, continue to boil water for at least one minute. Let cool before drinking. Plan for how your household will boil water during a disaster! Do you have a camping stove or other heat source? How about the backyard bar-b-que?
2. **Chlorination:** Place eight (8) drops of bleach in a one gallon jug. After adding the bleach, cap the container and shake. Then, let the water stand for at least 30 minutes before drinking. Make sure the bleach is not scented because these varieties contain oils that can make the water undrinkable.
3. **Emergency Filtration:** Emergency water filters can be purchased at warehouse and hardware stores. Keep one at home, one in your vehicle and one at work.

Hidden sources of water in your home

Know the location of your **incoming water valve**. If you hear reports of broken water or sewage lines, or a failure at the water treatment plant, shut the valve off to prevent contaminated water from entering your home.

1. **Hot water heater:** Water in your hot water heater can be used for drinking and cooking as long as the water heater remains upright and the main water valve to the home is turned off immediately. When you open the drain faucet at the bottom of the water heater, close the water intake valve at the top of the tank and open a hot water faucet in the house. Then, water will start to flow.
2. **Water in your pipes:** Shut off the incoming water valve. Let air into the plumbing by turning a faucet on in your house. If you have a two story house, turn on a faucet that is located on the upper level of the home. A small amount of water will trickle out. Collect the water from the lower level faucet in the house or any other faucet if you have a single story home.
3. **Pool Water:** Water in your pool can be used to flush toilets. Pool water is not recommended for drinking or cooking because after a few days the water is not being filtered. Pool filtration requires electricity.

Emergency services professionals will handle the most critical situations first. It may take three (3) days or longer for them to get to neighborhoods in an emergency. When a disaster affects a large number of people like in Hurricane Sandy, Katrina or even in a wildland fire, preparing our own household is extremely important!

Let's get ready Palm Springs! Step by step, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood!