SET YOUR CLOCKS CHECK YOUR STOCKS

Your water supply: Do you have enough stored in case of an emergency?

Whether you're drinking, cooking or taking a shower, water is essential for everyday life. After an emergency such as a tornado, flood or earthquake, the water that comes out of your tap might not be safe to drink — if it's running at all. That's why you need to have at least a three-day supply of bottled water stored at home at all times.

APHA American Public Health Association

How much bottled water do I need to have stored?

You should have at least one gallon of water per person per day in your emergency stockpile. That means if you have three people in your family, you should have nine gallons stored, for example. And that's just for drinking.

The average American uses 80 gallons to 100 gallons of water per day, including flushing the toilet, showering, handwashing and cooking. In the case of a storm or unexpected water supply interruption in your community, you could be without water much longer than three days. So if you have the room, it's a good idea to store extra bottled water.

Take a look at your household and think about how much water you use. Keep in mind that children, nursing mothers and sick people may need more water. Don't forget to set aside a water supply for your pets, and if you live in a warm weather climate, you should stockpile additional bottles of water.

Beyond your home, it's also smart to have extra water at your workplace. Stash a personal supply under your desk or in your locker. Ask your boss to purchase emergency supplies such as water and food in case you have to shelter in place at work. The Federal Emergency Management Agency also recommends keeping water among the emergency supplies you store in your car.

Where do I get water for my stockpile?

For the safest and most reliable water supply, purchase commercially bottled water (the kind you find in your local grocery store). Keep bottled water in its original container and don't open it until you need to use it.

You can bottle your own tap water, but make sure you use the right kind of bottles (never reuse milk or juice bottles, for example, because they may have bacteria) and sanitize them first. FEMA's Web site, www.fema.org, has instructions on how to bottle your own water.

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How do I store my bottled water stockpile?

Don't stack your water bottles, as this might cause them to leak. It's best to store your stockpile somewhere that is easy to access during an emergency. The ideal location is a cool, dark place away from any solvents or cleaners that can leak or transfer fumes. Be sure to keep your supply in an area of the house that is not at risk for flooding.

Look for the "use by" date on your drinking water for best quality. Rotate your stockpile at least twice a year and replenish any bottles that may have leaked. A good reminder is to check your emergency supplies when you change your clocks for daylight saving time.

When should I use my emergency water supply?

You'll definitely need to use your emergency water supply if your tap water stops working, but there are also occasions — such as floods or contamination — when tap water becomes unsafe to drink. In the event of an emergency, follow advice from local officials. Your health department or public water authority may issue alerts advising you not to use tap water for drinking, eating or brushing your teeth.

In an emergency where your only option is to use water that may not be safe as is, boiling the water or disinfecting it with chlorine bleach or tablets may be an option. The Environmental Protection Agency offers instructions for safely treating water on its Web site, www.epa.gov.

If there's no water, how do I clean my hands?

When our hands are dirty, most of us grab some soap, turn on the faucet and scrub away without even thinking about how easy it is. But if you don't have running water, you'll quickly learn to miss that flow from the tap. To keep your hands clean during an emergency, include some alcohol-based sanitizer and moist towelettes in your emergency stockpile. Look for a sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol, and save your bottled water stockpile for drinking.

For more tips on creating an emergency preparedness stockpile, visit www.getreadyforflu.org/clocksstocks

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www.aphagetready.org

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