

# Disaster Preparation (Revised 10/03/2019)

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## General Preparation

Start planning early. That's what this is about. You may find many checklists and plans online. They have two basic parts: make a plan and store supplies. Know how/where to shelter. Buy and store water.

When (natural) disaster is imminent, store more water. Fill the bathtub and other food-friendly containers. You should already have bottled drinking water stored; get more. Sanitary use (toilets) can use gray water from bathing and washing food containers.

There are disaster situations for which advance warning is doubtful: acts of war, terrorism, active shooter, tornadoes, earthquakes, and flooding. You're either prepared or you're not.

Take measured steps toward finishing the planning and preparation. Can't get there if you don't start.

## Storing Water

Buy and know how to use water filters such as the Berkey. It will take dirty water and turn it to drinking water, with no moveable parts. Many such models are available, with a little internet research.

We need at least one gallon drinking water per day per person in temperate climates; figure another half gallon for sanitary purposes such as washing and general hygiene. Use gray water to flush toilets, water food plants, or run it through a water filter to reuse.

Store water away from heat and light. The basement is best and a garage could work; a leaking container is less likely to cause damage there. In addition to storing water in these places—and rotating the stock regularly—consider saving empty water containers (milk, soda, juice) to fill and use when warning is adequate. Saving empty containers allows you store them up high or on lightweight shelves while allowing easy access. A gallon of water weighs about 8.3 pounds so you don't want to have to heft and fetch a lot of it over your head. In the dark. When you're tired. And thirsty.

For short term storage, rotating the stock is important. Use and replace all stored water on a regular basis. For very short term storage, a filled bathtub (or other open containers) can be used for sanitary purposes.

Storing water over the long term may cause it to taste stale. Pouring it back and forth between containers can aerate it and improve the taste.

## Obtaining Water

Storing water for more than two weeks' use generally is not practical. Three gallons a day for two persons is 42 gallons for two weeks, weighing about 350 pounds. (The water, not the persons.) For the long term, then, finding water becomes important.

First of all, get a Berkey water filter. With such a filter, you can process pond scum into drinking water. But if you're not near a pond, there are many other sources to consider.

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Collect rainwater, unless it has nuclear fallout, in which case that's pretty much the holocaust, anyway. There are commercial systems that divert rainwater from your downspout into a plastic barrel. Crud in your gutters will sink to the bottom of the barrel and the rest of the water is usable. Run it through your water filter (to drink) or use as is for sanitary purposes. You can also collect runoff from an awning.

If you have no gutters or awnings (e.g., you've bugged out) then dig a trench or hole and line with plastic and collect what you can. You do have a shovel, right? If only to dig a slit trench for a toilet.

On the island country of Bermuda, there is no natural groundwater. Well, there is but it's saltwater. All their drinking water comes from rain, collected from their roofs into cisterns under their homes and other buildings. They even have large collection basins on hillsides to funnel the rainwater to tanks and cisterns. They are also conscientious about distinguishing between potable (drinkable) and non-potable (gray) water usage. This was innovation born of necessity. *Been there, seen it; next time you see a picture of those brightly painted Bermudan houses, look at their water-collecting roofs.*

Other sources of water besides lakes, ponds, rivers and creeks include a well on your property, swimming pools (below the surface scum), and water heaters. If you have a well with an electric pump, provide backup power to the pump.

Once collected, drinking water may be obtained by boiling, filtration or chemical treatment.

- Boiling kills bacteria and pathogens. Filter the water first to remove solids and other obvious impurities and cover the container while boiling to reduce water lost through evaporation.
- Filtration can remove solids, bacteria, bad taste and some pathogens. Get a Berkey and read the instructions. At least run the water through some cloth (T shirt, towel) to filter the solids.
- Chemicals include chlorine and iodine. Household bleach at two drops per quart of water for 30 minutes should do the job. Iodine from your emergency medical kit (you have one, right?) may also purify water to be able to drink it—assuming you have no health problems with iodine.

As water shortage becomes a problem, do not neglect drinking enough water. Manual labor, hiking and hot weather all demand more drinking water for your health. You can skimp on bathing (sponge baths, please) and smell more European after awhile. Just be sure to wash those areas most susceptible to infection: armpits, groin, toes. You know what to do.

### Disaster Planning

1. Plan for the likely disasters:
  - a. High winds, rain and debris from storms, tornadoes and hurricanes.
  - b. Rainwater runoff in streets and low areas make driving difficult; basement could flood.
  - c. Power outages resulting from high winds and ice storms that drag down power lines.
  - d. Any snow seems to shut down roads, schools, governments, and some commerce.
  - e. Earthquakes not likely to be of large magnitude.
  - f. Flash floods are more likely in mountains; waves and high water are likely near existing water.

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- g. Washington DC is a likely focus for terrorism. However, any area with shopping malls, theaters, and outdoor festivals are attractive public gatherings. Sadly, so are churches.
2. Who do we need to rescue, help, shelter, feed, etc?
  - a. In adult communities, the infirm and disabled are all around. Be a good neighbor and check for those most vulnerable on your street.
  - b. Adult children may need advice or help (food, water, shelter, escape) and their children, too.
  - c. Don't forget the pets. They may be edible. (Kidding!) More likely, they could be disease vectors.
3. Where to gather if separated when disaster strikes?
  - a. Terry and I will always go home if we are not already together; phones may not work.
  - b. If we are traveling together, a decision to go home depends on the situation (what happened, is travel possible/advisable, who needs us most?)
  - c. Contact adult children to determine their needs and our mutual response.
  - d. If bugging out is called for, get the vehicle, stock it, shut down the house, and go.
4. Plan at least two escape routes. Do not go towards heavy populations.
  - a. Hurricane-prone areas have posted evacuation routes.
  - b. When in doubt, go West. It's away from the ocean and large cities.
  - c. I'd find a route that takes me past the mountains into calmer areas.
5. If sheltering in place (staying home):
  - a. Prepare safe/secure area downstairs; bathroom is interior and has water.
  - b. Emergency water and food stored downstairs.
  - c. If you don't live on a hill as we do, then you may have to retreat to a high point.
  - d. Better have a good reason to stay put. Sure, it's inconvenient to leave, but it's more inconvenient to be pulled out of the new hole in your roof by first responders.
6. Prepare a disaster kit both for home and for escape.

### Disaster Kit

1. Maps and/or directions to new site, if leaving home. Portable GPS charged.
2. Food and water for at least 72 hours.
  - a. Should already have bottled water and filter ready to go
  - b. Should already have non-perishable food to go (with can opener)
  - c. Throw in some snacks, particularly energy bars
3. First aid kit
  - a. Bandages and gauze in various sizes
  - b. Antiseptic ointment or spray; iodine
  - c. Petroleum jelly
  - d. Bug spray
4. Extra clothing.
  - a. Consider expected weather
  - b. Extra shoes for hiking, working or to get dry
  - c. Change of socks and underwear
  - d. Extra pants, shorts, shirts

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5. Sanitary needs.
  - a. Toilet paper
  - b. Wet towelettes or wipes
  - c. Soap and disinfectant
  - d. Chlorine or bleach for raw water
6. Bedding.
  - a. Sleeping bags
  - b. Extra blankets for cold weather or as spares for unprepared persons
  - c. Inflatable pillow (to travel light)
7. Use bags, backpacks, small suitcase—whatever makes carrying easier.
8. Radio and flashlight with extra batteries.
9. Swiss Army knife or multi-tool.
10. Reading material and/or games if expected to be in place for several days; Bible.
11. Cell phone.
12. Cash (include small bills) and credit cards.
13. Personal identification. Passport if leaving the country.

### Special Needs Persons

Persons not able to care for themselves—particularly in a disaster—include children, infirm or disabled persons of any age, hard of hearing, vision problems, many seniors, and those paralyzed by fear into inertia. Extra care and planning will help them (and you) survive.

1. Admit when you need help. It's like the first step in any recovery program: Help me.
2. Establish a support system of family and friends available to help plan, if not execute.
3. Let others know your needs. Put a sign in your window when disaster hits.
4. Prepare a purposeful plan that acknowledges and deals with limitations. Share the plan with persons expected to help you.
5. Consider mobility, medications, and mental state necessary to execute the plan.
6. Prepare the emergency kit, tailored to specific and special needs.

### If You Have to Leave

If the home or building is on fire or collapsing, get out! By building code, a home must have at least two exits. Know how to open a window if the door is blocked or unsafe. Every public building has posted evacuation routes; know where to find them. Hotels/motels have posted evacuation routes in each room on the back of the main door. Be aware of your surroundings.

If there is more warning time to leave your home, have a destination and alternate routes planned as part of your disaster planning. Get the pre-planned travel gear and go. Soon, to avoid the crowds.

Practice evacuation to become familiar with the challenges and to identify and correct shortcomings in your planning. There is nothing like bundling a family into the car for a short-notice weekend away from the usual comforts. That will reveal not only flaws in planning but also in attitude.

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There's a reason for having a radio, besides entertainment. It will provide current information and instructions from professionals and persons trained in such matters. Listen and obey.