

Food, Water, and Sanitation After a Disaster

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Food storage

The American Red Cross recommends a 72-hour supply of nonperishable food for each family member. By having a supply of food, you can reduce the stress of locating food during a disaster.

The kind and specific amount of food will depend on the ages and food preferences of everyone in the family. Convenience may be the highest priority, since fuel sources for cooking may not be available. Nutrition also should be a concern since disasters and emergencies put extra stress on people.

Regularly rotate food stored as a part of an emergency preparedness kit to maintain freshness and maximum nutritional value.

The online document, *Food Storage for Emergencies* (see “Resources”), provides specifics on what to consider when assembling a supply of nonperishable foods.

Water storage

Store a 72-hour supply of water for each family member during an emergency. This means storing 1 gallon of water for each person per day for drinking, food preparation, and personal hygiene.

Keep supplies on hand for treating water in the event of an extended disaster or emergency. The online document, *Water Storage for Emergency Use* (see “Resources”), has more information. The options depend on the method(s) of storage and/or collection:

- Unscented, liquid household bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite)
- Dropper to measure bleach
- Containers for treating and storing water
- Food-grade container for dipping or collection
- Food-grade filtering material (cheese cloth, kitchen dish-towels, coffee filters)

Private wells

Floodwaters can compromise private wells. It is necessary to disinfect a well and water system after flood water recedes. Visit with your local office of the OSU Extension Service for information.

Sanitation

For a number of reasons, such as a treated water supply and sanitary toilets, families may decide to stay in a campground rather than an emergency shelter. If, however, there is not a treated water supply at the campground, sanitation and human waste pose greater challenges. Drinking or using untreated water increases the risk of contracting diseases.

To reduce the risk of contracting microscopic, protozoan parasites that cause health problems in humans and some animals, boil water before using it for drinking, or for washing hands and washing dishes and utensils. Use 1 to 2 drops of chlorine bleach per gallon of boiled water.

If there are no sanitary toilets and disposal of human waste is permitted:

- Identify a toilet area at least 200 feet from any lake, stream, or spring; avoid gullies where rapid runoff is likely.
- Dig a small hole and deposit feces. Cover with soil and leaves to enable slow decomposition (do not cover with a rock).
- Use biodegradable toilet paper or burn used toilet paper.

Adapted for use in Oregon from The Disaster Handbook, 1998 National Edition, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

Resources

OSU Extension Service. The Extension Service has materials on related topics. To locate the local office of the OSU Extension Service, go to “County Government” in your telephone book.

Publications and videos are available for viewing on the OSU Extension website (extension.oregonstate.edu, then “Publications”). You may order copies by fax (541-737-0817), e-mail (puborders@oregonstate.edu), or phone (541-737-2513).

Available only online:

SP 50-833, *Food Storage for Emergencies*
(extension.oregonstate.edu/fcd/foodsafety/pdf/foodstorage.pdf)

SP 50-835, *Water Storage for Emergencies*
(extension.oregonstate.edu/fcd/foodsafety/pdf/waterstorage.pdf),

American Red Cross. The alphabetical listing in local phone books will point you to a local chapter of the American Red Cross. The agency’s website includes information and materials in English and Spanish (www.redcross.org).

Emergency Management. The “County Government” section in local phone books lists each county’s emergency management unit. Listings vary by county (look under Sheriff or Health departments, Emergency Management services, Civil Defense, Public Works, or related units).

Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN). This website provides a list of resources developed in other states about floods; drought; snow, ice, and wind damage; animal emergencies; and general disaster (www.agctr.lsu.edu/eden,

then “Extension websites” and “Other on-line sources”).

Emergency Animal Rescue Service (EARS). This site provides tips for animal owners and links to emergency shopping lists for owners of dogs, cats, birds, horses, reptiles, and amphibians (www.uan.org/ears/index.html).

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The federal website includes the publication, EPA-813-F-93-001, *Private Wells: Guidance for What to Do After the Flood* (www.epa.gov/safewater/consumer/whatdo.htm).

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The online library offers publications and videos in English and Spanish and includes materials specifically developed for children (www.fema.gov).

Oregon Emergency Management (OEM). Affiliated with the Oregon State Police, the OEM website offers emergency-related information on earthquakes and tsunamis, and provides disaster recovery resources (www.osp.state.or.us/oem).

Social Security Online. The official site of the Social Security Administration, this site links to hundreds of publications in 21 languages and provides information on survivor benefits and programs (www.ssa.gov).