PEE & POO – WHAT TO DO?

Human waste disposal during a disaster is a critical component of emergency preparedness. Frequently, there are more deaths following a disaster due to poor sanitation, than lives lost in the initial event. The 2021 earthquake in Haiti is a classic example as it was followed by a horrific cholera outbreak which killed thousands of people.

Mother Nature's call cannot be put off for long, regardless of the nature of the emergency or crisis. Charbonneau's sewer system is connected to Wilsonville under the Boone bridge, when we lose the bridge in an earthquake, we will lose our sewer system. EPPS wants you to consider alternative toilet options, make a plan, and get the supplies needed to ensure you can safely manage the waste your family creates during an emergency. Each person generates approximately five gallons of human waste each week. This waste, if not managed properly, becomes a source of odor, illness, disease, and other problems.

Feces are a dangerous substance and can spread deadly diseases. Urine, however; is generally safe. When possible, separate urine from feces to reduce the amount of hazardous material. If you are using a bucket toilet, consider having one for urine and another for feces.

Consider the alternative toilet options listed below, make a plan, and get the supplies needed to ensure you can safely manage the waste your family creates.

Luggable Lou or bucket toilet may be a good option for a lightweight portable toilet that you can grab along with your survival kit. Take time to actually sit on a bucket toilet to determine if it is stable enough to support your size and weight. Most are not designed to accommodate large or tall people.

The thought of sitting on a bucket toilet full of stinky contents is bad enough; but the image of falling over while sitting on it, splashing the contents all over, makes us cringe.

Keep basic supplies inside the bucket so that it is ready to go – toilet paper, baby wipes, garbage bags, disinfecting wipes, feminine products, spray deodorizer, and a sanitizing chemical.

Line the bucket with a plastic garbage bag. Mix one cup liquid bleach, or an appropriate amount of another sanitizing chemical, with two quarts of water and pour into the lined bucket. Add a little more disinfectant after each use. Change the bag when it is one-third to half full. Carefully tie the top and place in a larger lined can. Close the lid after each use to control odors.

This will definitely work for an emergency, however, the smell is offensive and it is not our favorite option. ChemiSan powder, Bio-Gel Waste Gelatin, Poo Powder or WAG bags are very nice, but pricey solutions. The powder instantly solidifies to prevent messy spills and controls germs and odors.

A WAG bag fits inside the bucket and is ready-to-go with Pooh-Powder. It may be used multiple times. The bag is engineered to break down in 6-8 months to make disposal environmentally friendly.

Permanent Port-a-Potty is a great option if you can stay in your home, but do not have running water or sewer. Your household toilet can be easily converted to a permanent port-a-potty in an emergency and provide a familiar, inexpensive toilet option.

- Turn off the water supply to the toilet tank.
- Empty the toilet bowl and lift the lid and seat.
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Place a garbage bag in the bowl and duct tape the edges around the back and sides of the bowl.
- Use the toilet as usual.
- Pour a small amount of disinfectant into the bag after each use to help prevent the spread of germs and disease. Do not use strong disinfectants which might

compromise the plastic bag. You may want to add sawdust, kitty litter, soil, or Poo Powder to solidify liquids.
• The bag may be used several times before changing.
• Change the bag by lifting the lid and seat. Carefully remove the bag by loosening the taped edges, twisting the edges of the bag together, and seal the bag.
• Place an empty plastic bucket right next to the toilet and lift the bag into the bucket. Use this bucket for transport to avoid accidental spills.
• Cover the entire toilet with a 30-gallon trash bag to control odor. Air fresheners or room deodorizers may also be helpful.

Chemical toilets are a great option and are regularly used by boaters and campers. They use very little water and the chemicals help to keep the smell and spread of disease to a minimum.

Chemical toilets have a removable tray at the bottom for easy disposal of waste. They are light-weight and portable when empty. The nice thing about chemical toilets is that they flush so you do not have to smell or view anyone else's business.

Keep a stock of appropriate chemicals for the toilet. The chemicals have a limited shelf life. Check with the manufacturer for specifics. If the chemicals are unavailable in an emergency, use an alternative disinfectant.

Bedside commodes are commonly used for individuals with limited mobility and can be purchased online or anywhere that carries medical supplies. They can be a great alternative toilet.

Bedside commodes are well-built. Some can hold up to 350 pounds and the seat height is adjustable. They easily fold up and require little storage space. The bucket can be emptied as often as desired.

Most bucket liners come with a gelling agent, odor neutralizer, and decaying catalyst. Liners can be used 3-5 times before changing.

Potty chairs are great for small children. Hang onto that chair for emergencies.

We actually take our potty chair camping. It is much more convenient for a seven-year-old, who outgrew the chair many years ago, to go outside the tent in a potty chair than to make the long scary trek to the outhouse in the middle of the night. It might come in very handy in an emergency.

Composting toilet (sometimes called a biological toilet, dry toilet, or waterless toilet) is frequently used in remote locations, such as cabins.

A composting toilet system converts human waste into fertilizer or useable soil through the natural breakdown of organic matter back into its essential minerals. This compost is not safe for use on vegetable gardens. Composting toilets are expensive, but use little or no water and are practically odorless.

Septic Systems are quickly being replaced by sewer systems for a lot of good reasons. If you are fortunate enough to be on a septic system, you may avoid the necessity for backup toilets if your system remains intact. Be sure to perform regular routine maintenance on your septic system.

We recommend you still have a contingency plan in the event your system fails or you are required to evacuate.

A trench latrine may be a good choice if an outdoor toilet becomes necessary. It can be quickly constructed. Be sure to locate it away from the home and all water sources.

Create some type of shelter to provide protection from the weather and for privacy. Dig a trench 1-foot wide x 4 feet long and 2 ½ feet deep. Add a little bit of soil, ash, or lime after each use to help control odor and flies.

When the trench is filled within one foot of the surface, sprinkle with lime, fill with soil, and mound with an additional foot of soil. This toilet is used by squatting or straddling the trench.

Deep pit latrine would be a long term solution for an extended crisis. A single-seat latrine may be built over a hole that is 2 feet wide x 2-6 feet long x 6 feet deep using available materials to create a shelter and seating area.

Make sure the seating area is large enough to prevent it from collapsing into the pit. It is important to consider potential groundwater contamination when locating a site or the depth of the latrine. Be sure to sprinkle with soil, ash, or lime after each use and before closing the pit.

Waste storage may be something you need to plan for. In the event you are confined to a shelter, make sure you have buckets with tight-fitting lids for short-term storage of human waste. Plan for 5 gallons of waste from each person each week. That can add up to a lot of buckets!

Sewage backflow can be a terrible thing to deal with. Sewer systems require electricity to function properly. In some places, raw sewage is pumped uphill to the treatment plant. In some events, such as a line break or plug, sewage can back up into your home.

When the power is out that sewage can back up in the line and enter homes through drain pipes. If this occurs, you will most likely need to leave your home due to the potential of disease and the stench associated with raw sewage.

You may be able to prevent that sewage from backflowing into your home by stuffing a foam ball or bag of rags into the drains. Put the ball or rags into a larger sock or nylon to make removal easier by providing a handle.

Inflatable rubber test ball plugs are used to pressure test the plumbing in systems. They may work nicely to plug drainpipes and prevent sewage from backing up into the home. Evaluate your risk and, if necessary, consider installing some type of back-flow prevention device.