

STORING EMERGENCY WATER

After an emergency, your local water supply may not be available or safe to drink. If this is the case, you will need your own water supply until your water service is restored or an alternate emergency supply is available. Here in the Pacific Northwest, where there is a risk of a major earthquake, your emergency water supply should include enough water to sustain your entire household (pets too!) for 14 days. After a subduction zone earthquake, **it is estimated that it will take 400 days to restore normal water systems in communities.**

How much water do you need?

At a minimum, each person in your home will consume 1 gallon of water per day. How much water you need to Be 2 Weeks Ready depends on several factors. Each person will need water each day for drinking, meal preparation and cleanup, and personal hygiene. The amount of water you'll need will also be impacted by the kinds of foods you plan to eat (pasta, oatmeal, baby formula, powdered milk, etc.) and if you have pets.

Store what you can, where you can. You have options!

Option 1: Purchase bottled water.

Option 2: Use your own sanitized containers. (if your home has a [water heater](#), this could provide you with 30-80 gallons of water in an emergency).

Types of containers to store your emergency water supply

You can keep your emergency water supply in bottles that you purchase from a store, or you can use your own container. If you purchase commercially bottled water, keep it in its original container and do not open it until you need to use it.

If you choose to store water in your own container, make sure that it has a tight seal, is made of food-grade plastic or steel that is designed to hold water, and is properly sanitized before you fill it with tap water. You can find a variety of food grade containers at most camping or outdoor stores. Two liter soda bottles can also be reused to store water.

Types of containers to avoid:

- Glass: too heavy, may break
- Containers that previously held milk or fruit juice: milk protein and fruit sugars cannot be adequately removed from these containers and provide an environment for bacterial growth

How to sanitize your storage container:

1. Wash the container and lid with dish soap and water
2. Rinse it completely with clean water
3. Mix 1 teaspoon of unscented liquid household chlorine bleach and one quart of water
4. Pour the bleach water solution into your container

5. Cover the container and shake it for 30 seconds – make sure that the bleach water covers all inside surfaces of the container
6. Pour the bleach water out of the container
7. Air-dry your empty sanitized container
8. Your container is ready to fill

Filling your storage container with water

1. Fill your sanitized container to the top with water.
2. Tightly close the container using the original cap. Be careful not to contaminate the cap by touching the inside of it with your fingers.
3. Label and date your container so that you know when you filled it.
4. Store it in a cool, dark place.

Where to store your emergency water supply

Your emergency water supply should ideally be stored in a consistently cool, dark location. Storage locations will vary depending on the amount of space that you have available in your home, and the size and number of your storage containers.

For example, if you live in an apartment where space is tight, you may opt to store your emergency water supply in the back of a closet or under a bed. Get creative with your water storage! Store what you can where you can, and make use of those tight, awkward spaces that you can't really use for anything else. Bottled water or slim containers such as jerrycans will fit nicely in small spaces.

On the other hand, if your home has more space available, you may choose to tuck smaller containers throughout the house or to store larger ones in your garage or basement. Either way, you should make sure that some of your emergency water supply is easily accessible and to carry with you in case you have to leave your home in a hurry.

When to replace your emergency water supply

Your emergency water supply should be periodically switched out. The general rule is to follow best by dates on store bought water, and to switch out water in your own containers every six months.

However, properly stored water, unlike food, does not go bad. So, if you need to access your emergency water supply and you've had it longer than the best by date on the bottle or stored it longer than six months, not to worry! It may not taste like the best water you've ever had, but it will be safe for you to drink. You may be able to improve the taste slightly by letting it stand for a while, or pouring it from clean container to clean container to expose it to air. And, you may want to [treat water](#) that you've stored in your own containers before drinking it as a precaution.

Things to think about when using larger containers to store emergency water

- Fill larger containers where they will be stored. Water weighs about eight pounds per gallon, so you'll want to take that into consideration when you go to fill your container. You may be able to lift a five-gallon container when it's filled (40-pounds) easily, but you'll need to fill larger containers such as a 55-gallon barrel where you're going to store it (440 pounds).
- Use these tools to fill and seal larger containers. Since larger containers need to be filled where you plan to store them, you likely need to run a hose from an outdoor spigot or basement faucet in order to fill your container. Be sure to use a drinking water hose rather than your garden hose to fill up your container because they are specifically made for this purpose, and do not contain potentially harmful materials that will leach into your water.