Your Emergency Water Plan

One of the most important preps you'll ever set up is water.

A water emergency can coincide with another type of crisis (like a natural disaster that takes down the grid and compromises the municipal water supply) or all on its own (like an industrial spill.)

A lot of people think you can just boil the problem away, but this is not always the case. With some contaminants, boiling can actually intensify whatever is tainting the water.

For this reason, you first step should always be water storage.

Your Water Storage Plan

To save money, the first step in any water storage plan should be filling any containers that you already have available.

Never let a container in your home sit around empty. Store jars, pitchers, and jugs filled with water.

You can use that water for cooking when you need the container and be sure to fill it back up when you're finished with it. You can also collect empty soda pop bottles and water bottles from friends and family for storing your water stash.

How much do you need?

The simple formula is 1 gallon per person and pet per day. But keep in mind that this does not include water you'll need for cooking or cleaning. It's simply water for drinking. You can double the numbers above to account for *some* sanitation. For a long-term water crisis, you'll need far more than this.

- At the rate of 2 gallons per person and pet per day, how many gallons should you store for a 1-day emergency?
- How many gallons should you store for a 7-day emergency?
- How many gallons should you store for a 30-day emergency?

By the end of this, you've probably got quite a lot of water. Where on earth will you store all this water? Particularly in a small space!

Here are a few places you can stash water.

Which would apply to you?

- Under beds (get those risers from Amazon to raise your beds a few inches)
- In the attic
- In the basement
- At the back of closets
- On the bottom shelves of bookcases (cover with an attractive curtain)

- In the utility room
- Outdoors in a shed or garage
- Outdoors in a large 275-gallon IBC tank

It seems simplistic, but you can only store as much water as you have room for in your home. If a family of 4 with 2 pets requires *360 gallons* of water for a one-month supply, you will have to find room for that water ***or adjust your plan***. Remember too that water is not the ONLY thing you're going to need to store, so you can't use up all your available storage space for this.

Where can you store your water supply?

What if you can't store as much water as you want?

If your space is extremely limited, you may only be able to reasonably store a one-week supply. (So, for the family above, that would be *84 gallons*.) We'll go deeper into your home storage plan later in this workbook.

This is okay if you account for it in your preparedness plan. You can work around just about any limitation if you account for it ahead of time.

In the case of water, if you can't store much, you'll just have to move on to your acquisition and purification plans sooner.

Your Water Acquisition Plan

After storing water, your next step is the acquisition of water. Even if you can put aside enough water for a full month, you need an acquisition plan. What if your crisis lasts longer than a month?

We'd all like to think this isn't very likely but a year after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico there were still people in rural areas who did not have access to clean running water.

Option One: Catchment

Your first step should be rainwater collection if this is possible for you.

Rain barrels at the corners of your house are a great way to collect water. They don't have to be the pretty ones that are in style at your local Target or Walmart. You can get food-safe barrels pretty inexpensively on Craigslist and modify them for water catchment. Make sure that your barrels are *food safe.*

- Here are some simple instructions for creating a rain barrel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0y0BmEFUcs
- Here are some other DIY catchment systems: https://morningchores.com/rainwater-harvesting/

If you live in an HOA or condo complex that doesn't allow rain barrels, Pinterest has some ways to disguise your catchment system so it looks decorative: https://www.pinterest.com/ksunlin/rain-barrel-decorating-ideas/?lp=true

More and more, things like water catchment are considered trendy and environmentally friendly. If you go with that vibe, no one ever has to realize that you are secure in your home and prepped to the rafters.

- Can you do water catchment at your home?
- What supplies do you need to create a catchment system?

Option Two: Local Acquisition

If you can't set up catchment where you live, the other option is finding a place nearby to acquire water.

This could mean:

- Rivers
- Creeks
- Streams
- Ponds
- Springs
- Fountains

Pay attention when it rains because there may be some low spots where water tends to collect briefly after a storm.

Find the nearby bodies of water on a topographical map of your area or on Google Maps.

You can get free topographic maps here by just typing in your address: http://www.mytopo.com/maps/

- ### Where could you potentially acquire water near your home?

The closer to your home, the better because bringing water home is not easy. One gallon of water weighs 8.3 pounds.

Remember our calculations above about 2 gallons per person and pet per day? You'd be hauling sixteen and a half pounds of water for each member of your family. Every single day.

It's a good idea to figure out some ways to transport water (remember that you may not be able to drive your car, depending

on the emergency). Hit the thrift stores and yard sales to pick up a transportation method if you don't already have one.

Which of these ideas will work best for you?

Remember – it's always better to use what you have if it's suitable, instead of going out to buy something new.

- Wagon
- Wheelbarrow
- Baby stroller
- Walker with basket
- Bicycle with trailer
- Those military water bladder backpacks

You'll also need vessels in which to put the water. Generally speaking, the vessels that contain your one-week supply will be able to be used to go acquire water, too.

Your Water Purification Plan

You can't just go grab water out of a nearby creek and expect to drink it – not without the possibility of getting really sick, anyway. You need to also have a plan for purifying the water you acquire.

There are many different methods of purification, but these tend to be the most practical:

- Gravity filter
- Purification pills (water will still require filtration to get the chunks out)
- Boiling
- Bleach

I can't recommend strongly enough that you purchase a good-quality gravity water filter before a disaster ever strikes. This is one of the most important pieces of preparedness gear you can have. If money is super-tight, at the very least, pick up a LifeStraw or Sawyer Mini. These gadgets get your water ready to drink in one step, without power.

- *How will you purify the water you acquire?*

As always, whenever possible, use what you have. However, if you don't have much room for water storage, a high-quality gravity filter is a good investment.

Your Water Conservation Plan

When you think about the hard work of carrying all that water home and then purifying it, you'll see why it's so important to conserver your hard- earned water. Keep some of these items on hand so you can use less water during your emergency.

- Paper napkins
- Paper plates
- Hand sanitizer
- Paper towels
- Bleach wipes
- Baby wipes

While these aren't things, I recommend using every day, they can really help your water supply to go further during an emergency.

Spend time figuring out how to capture gray water and use it. For example, your basin of dirty dishwasher could be poured in the back of the toilet for flushing if you're on a septic system.