

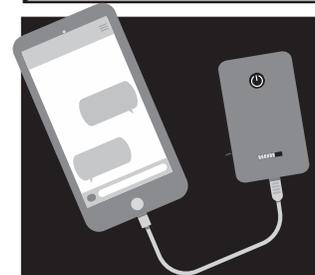
Don't Be Left



IN THE DARK



Plan Ahead



Stay Connected



Clean Up Safely

Advice for Floods, Storms, and Outages



Advice for Floods, Storms, and Outages

Don't Be Left in the Dark

This booklet was developed to help you prepare for power outages and weather emergencies, such as storms and flooding.

Being prepared means knowing what to do before, during, and after a storm or power outage. When the power goes out, most homes lose refrigeration, cooking capabilities, and lights. Some may not have running water or toilets that flush. Homes may also be without heat or air conditioning, which could be difficult depending on the season.

If properly prepared, many people may be able to stay at home and deal with these inconveniences for a few hours or even a few days. But others, including those with babies, older adults, or people who are ill, may choose to leave.

Whether you stay or leave your home, **Don't Be Left in the Dark** provides information about how to prepare for weather-related emergencies before they happen. Remember, you should always follow all health and safety advice from government organizations and other experts during an emergency.

Thinking about emergencies can be stressful. Try to familiarize yourself with this booklet. Read it a little at a time and use the *Takeaway Tips* to see key points.

Need Help?

Contact Your Health Department

Visit www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts and write the phone number on the Emergency Phone Numbers list on p. 31.

Contact the NYS Department of Health

www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp

ceheduc@health.ny.gov

518-402-7530

Inside this Booklet

Before: Be Prepared

- Stock Up on Supplies 4
- Safeguard Your Home 6
- Prepare Your Phone 6
- Plan for Medical Needs and Pets 7
- Buy a Battery-Powered Radio 7
- Get Timely Information 8
- Prepare for Possible Evacuation 9

During: Storm Safety

- Evacuating During a Storm 11
- Advice for Specific Emergencies 12
- Generators and Other Heating Sources 14

After: Storm Recovery

- Before Re-entering Your Home 17
- Wear the Right Gear 17
- Deal with Standing Water 17
- Avoid Bacteria and Mold 18
- Get Advice for Lead Dust and Asbestos 19
- Take Out the Trash 19
- Wash Your Hands 19
- Septic Systems 19
- Restock Your Supplies 19

Food Safety

- Stock Up on Food 20
- Storing Your Food 21
- Wash Before Preparing or Eating Food 21
- Cooking Without Power 21
- The Fridge and Freezer: When Power is Out 22
- Other Ways to Keep Food Cold 23
- Keep, Eat, or Discard? 23
- Handling Food After a Flood 24

Drinking Water Safety

- Stock Up on Bottled Water 25
- Drink Even if You are Low on Water 25
- Find Hidden Water 26
- How to Know if Water is Contaminated 26
- Disinfecting Water 27
- How to Know When Water is Safe for All Uses 28
- Well Contamination: Gas, Oil, or Chemicals 28

More Resources

- Other Information 29
- Notes 30
- Emergency Phone Numbers 31





Before a Storm or Outage

This Section

- Stock up on supplies
- Safeguard your home
- Charge your phone
- Prepare for family, medical, and pet needs
- Have a battery-powered radio and set up your information sources
- Be prepared in case you have to evacuate

Be Prepared

Stock Up on Supplies

Basics

- Battery-powered or hand crank radio
- Flashlights for each room of the house
- Cell phone and charger
- Battery-powered portable charger
- Extra batteries (for radios, flashlights, portable chargers)
- Candles, or oil lamps and lamp oil
- Matches and lighters
- Cash and credit cards
- Whistle (to signal for help)
- Fuel (for generator, grill, or camp stove)
- Fire extinguisher (canister “ABC” type)
- Liquid unscented chlorine bleach with no soaps or additives (for water disinfection and cleanup)
- Manual can opener

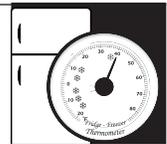
Food Safety p. 20 - 24

Maintain a food supply that can keep your family and pets fed for 3 - 7 days.

Put appliance thermometers in fridge and freezer.

Freeze containers of water, or purchase gel packs or block ice to keep food cold.

Keep ready-to-eat, non-perishable, high-energy foods in a cool, dry area.



Drinking Water p. 25 - 28

Stock up on drinking water to last 3 - 7 days.

Keep two gallons of water per family member, per day. Include pets in planning.

Know how to find and disinfect water if needed.



Household Info & Supplies

- Bank safe-deposit box for important papers and valuables
- Waterproof container for in-home storage of papers and valuables
- Electronic backup, portable storage devices for valuable information
- Disposable silverware, paper towels, napkins, plates
- Plastic bags: zip seal
- Appliance thermometers
- Block ice, frozen water containers
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket and pillow for each person

Health & Hygiene

- First aid kit: sterile gloves, bandages, gauze pads, antiseptic, antibiotic ointment, burn ointment, adhesive bandages, tweezers, scissors, anti-itch cream or gel, oral thermometer
- Prescription and non-prescription medicines: pain reliever, anti-diarrheal medication, antacid, laxative, etc.
- Toilet paper and tissues
- Pre-moistened hand wipes or towelettes
- Hand sanitizer
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, feminine hygiene supplies, body soap
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eyeglasses
- Baby supplies: disposable diapers, baby wipes, diaper rash ointment
- Portable toilet, like those used for camping

Pets

- ID, collar, leash
- Food and water, food and water dishes
- Crate and carrying cases
- Current photos and medical records (shots should be up to date)
- Pet supplies for bedding and waste

Emergency Car Prep

- Full gas tank
- Jumper cables
- Toolkit: pliers, wrench, screwdriver
- Shovel and ice scraper/snow brush in the winter
- Cat litter or sand (to assist if stuck in the snow or to weigh down the back end of the car)
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Blankets/sleeping bags
- Water
- Snacks
- Hats, mittens, boots
- Extra clothing
- Rain gear
- Matches or lighter
- Cell phone, charger with car adapter, portable charger with extra batteries if needed
- Fluorescent distress flag
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio
- Map of your area
- Compass

Cleaning Supplies

- Disposable N95 dust masks
- Rubber gloves
- Broom and dustpan
- Mop and buckets
- Rags
- Paper towels
- Heavy duty garbage bags

Tools

- Rope
- Shovel
- Hammer and nails
- Adjustable wrench to turn off water or gas
- Utility knife
- Work gloves
- Duct tape
- Electrical tape

Safeguard Your Home

Do you have proper insurance if flood damage occurs?

Learn more at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program

Takeaway Tips



Prepare your home



Prepare your phone

- **Know how to turn connections on/off.** Know ahead of time how and when to safely turn off your electric, water, and propane in case you have to evacuate. Have the tools needed if it becomes necessary to do so.
- **Storm proof your home.** Store plywood to cover windows during a hurricane. Check with your local code enforcement office (www.dos.ny.gov/dcea/reg_off_cty.html) about the appropriate thickness for your location.
- **Fasten your fuel tank to the ground or floor.** If the fuel tank is not fastened, it could float if the area floods, causing pipes to break and spill fuel oil. Oil spills create health hazards and cleanup problems. Call your oil company if you are unsure if your tank is secure.
- **Document valuables.** Keep a record of household possessions for insurance purposes. List model and serial numbers. Include photographs. Include expensive items and furniture too heavy to carry. Store the list in a safe-deposit box. Update it regularly.
- **Fill your bathtub with water if a heavy storm is predicted.** The water can be disinfected in batches and used for drinking or cooking (see p. 27), or used as is for flushing toilets, washing, and other purposes.

Prepare Your Phone

- **Have electric-free phones.** Have at least one mobile phone or corded, wall plug phone that works if the electricity goes out. Cordless phones won't work when there is no power.
- **Charge mobile phones.** Keep your mobile phone fully charged and have a portable charger. Portable chargers need either alkaline or watch batteries, or have a rechargeable battery. Know which type you have, stock up on the appropriate batteries, and keep your devices fully charged.
- **Maintain emergency contacts.** Keep emergency phone numbers for your electric company, gas company, and water supplier near your phone, and save them into your cell phone. Write them in this book (p. 31).
- **Save emergency information** so that you can access information quickly and easily on your cell phone and electronic devices. See p. 8 for a useful list.

Plan for Medical Needs

Check that you have a supply of your family’s prescription medications. Keep a current list of all medications, including dosages, schedules, and the prescribing doctor.

Prepare an emergency plan and kit for family members with mobility problems or special needs. The kit might include:

- Durable medical equipment
- Assistive technology
- Diabetic supplies
- Hearing aids and extra batteries
- A manual wheelchair
- Service animal supplies

Takeaway Tips



Plan for medical needs



Plan for pets



Get a battery-powered radio

Contact your electric company if anyone in your home uses life-sustaining equipment, such as a kidney dialysis machine or a respirator. Your electric company can advise you on how to prepare for power outages. See **Preparing for Emergencies: A Guide for People on Dialysis** (www.rsnhope.org/health-library/preparing-emergencies-guide-people-dialysis-helpful-tips-emergency/)

Plan for Your Pets

During severe storms, consider crating pets for safety and comfort. You should also plan for their needs in case you have to evacuate. Have a designated person to care for pets or identify shelters that accept pets. Make sure shots are up to date. Never leave pets behind in a crate because they would be rendered helpless until you or someone else reaches them.

Have these items for all pets:

- ID, collar, leash, 7 days worth of food and water, and food and water dishes
- Medications
- Crate and carrying cases for each pet
- Current photos and medical records
- Pet supplies for pet waste and bedding
- Garbage bags, hand sanitizer, paper towels for cleanup

Learn more at www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/safety-info/publicsafety/pet_safety.cfm

Buy a Battery-Powered Radio

Have a battery-powered radio for weather updates including official warnings, forecasts, and other hazard information. Make sure to have extra batteries. If you do not have a battery-powered radio, use your car radio. Depending on your car, it can be used for an hour or two without draining the car battery. Turn on the car engine **outdoors only** to recharge the battery. **Never run your vehicle in an enclosed space or garage because it releases deadly carbon monoxide.**

Takeaway Tip



Websites and services can help guide you during an emergency

Get Timely Information

Save these links into your cell phone and other electronic devices so they are easy to locate when you need them. Visit www.health.ny.gov/floodhelp for the latest links.

NY-Alert

www.nyalert.gov

Sign up to receive free warnings and emergency information via voice message, text message, or email. Or, download the free “iAlertz” app on your phone to receive alerts without signing up for an account.

National Weather Service

www.weather.gov

Your local National Weather Service office provides up-to-date information about current weather, forecast maps, discussion, bulletins, and storm reports

Department of Health

www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp

Get health and safety information during weather-related emergencies and advice for clean up.

www.facebook.com/nysdoh

www.twitter.com/healthnygov

www.youtube.com/nysdoh

NOAA Weather Radio

www.weather.gov/nwr/

www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/coverage/station_listing.html

Get information on the NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, a nationwide network broadcasting continuous weather information. You can also follow NOAA on their social media websites.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

www.fcc.gov/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts-wea

Most cell phone carriers participate in a nationwide text messaging alert system. WEA will alert you of extreme weather and other threatening emergencies in a specific geographic area. The message will show the type and time of the alert, the agency issuing the alert, and any action you should take.

Integrated Public Alert & Warning System

www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system

This national public Emergency Alert System (EAS) sends warnings via broadcast, cable, satellite, and wireless services to deliver important emergency information. It provides the President with the communications capability to address the American people within 10 minutes during a national emergency. EAS can be used when all other methods of alerting the public are unavailable.

Plan for Possible Evacuation

Sometimes, local officials will announce when hazards are serious enough for people to leave their homes. Other times, you may choose to leave to avoid situations that are difficult or dangerous. When community evacuations are necessary, local officials provide information through emergency broadcast TV or radio announcements, sirens, text alerts, emails, or telephone calls.

Preparing to Leave

Use the checklists on p. 4 - 5 and the tips on p. 6 to help you plan to leave your home and minimize damage while you are away. Make sure you have a full tank of gas and a stocked emergency car kit before you hit the road.

What to Pack

Pack supplies ahead of time in an easy-to-carry bag so your family can be ready to go.

- Change of clothes and footwear
- Sleeping bags, blankets, pillows
- Cell phone, chargers
- Medications and supplies/equipment: denture needs, crutches, prostheses, first aid kit
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra pair of eyeglasses
- Hygiene and toiletry supplies
- Baby food, formula, disposable diapers, toys
- Extra sets of keys
- Cash/travelers checks/credit cards
- Driver's license or identification for everyone in the family
- Homeowner's/rental insurance agent's telephone number
- Health insurance cards and health provider contact information
- Phone numbers of family and friends
- Important documents: insurance policies, social security cards, passports, deeds/leases, wills, vehicle registrations, tax returns, birth and marriage certificates, etc.
- Pet supplies and documentation including carrying cases, medications, food, water

Shutting Off Your Water

If the inside temperature could drop below freezing (32°F) for many days, you should turn off the water at the main valve. Shutting off your water prevents pipes from freezing and causing water damage to your home.

- **Shut off electric and gas to your hot water tank BEFORE turning off your main water service valve** to avoid the risk of a fire or damaging your hot water tank. Unless local officials advise otherwise, you do not need to shut off the main natural gas line to your home. If you shut off the main natural gas line, a licensed professional is required to turn it back on and it may take weeks for them to be available.
- **Drain your plumbing after turning off your water** by turning on the hot and cold water faucets in the home until the water drains from the water tank completely. Leave all water faucets in the on position.
- **Flush and remove water from the toilet bowl** to prevent freeze damage.

Takeaway Tips



Local announcements can help you decide to stay or go



Pack ahead in case you have to leave quickly



Know how to shut off your utilities



Check your emergency car kit (see p. 5)



This Section

- Follow evacuation safety tips
- Adapt plans for specific weather conditions
- Learn about generator and heat safety

During a Storm or Outage

Storm Safety

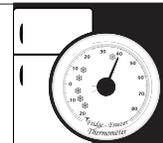
Safety First When a Storm Hits p. 10 - 15

Make good choices when weather emergencies happen. This section highlights key tips to protect you and your loved ones during a storm or outage.



Food Safety p. 20 - 24

Knowing what refrigerated food is safe to eat can be tricky when the power goes out. Eat the most perishable foods first. If power is out longer than 4 hours and you haven't taken steps to keep food chilled, see p. 24 for keep/toss recommendations.



Drinking Water p. 25 - 28

During an emergency, it can be difficult to find water. Always keep a supply of drinking water on hand, and know where to find more and how to disinfect it. Never ration your drinking water.



Remember, Stay Connected p. 8

Plan for multiple ways to get news and information. Check your social media accounts, websites, and apps if service is not interrupted by a storm. Use your radio to listen for weather and safety updates.



Evacuating During the Storm

Before you evacuate your home, make sure your emergency car kit (p. 5) is stocked and you have a full tank of gas. Stay informed (p. 8) by checking your emergency information sources, and follow safety and travel instructions provided by local officials.

Travel Safety Tips

- **Never drive around barricades.** Find an alternate route.
- **If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, abandon it immediately** and get to higher ground.
- **Always let someone know where you are heading** in case you get stuck or stranded. Let them know your planned route and when you expect to arrive. This way, if your car gets stuck, help can find you.
- **Plan for alternate routes and extra time.** Be alert and carry a map and compass in your car. Do not rely on GPS or online maps for road closures and accidents, particularly during an emergency when online services could be unavailable.

Takeaway Tips



Check your emergency car kit



Plan alternate routes



Share travel plans



Know what to do if you get stuck

If You Get Stuck or Stranded

- **Stay in your car.** Do not try to walk to safety unless there is rapidly rising water or the outside temperature is extremely hot. In those cases, abandon your car immediately.
- **Use a fluorescent distress flag** to help rescuers find you.
- **Keep a window cracked** away from blowing wind to let in air.

If It's Hot

- **Do not remain in a hot car or leave children, pets, or people with mental or mobility limitations in a parked car,** even briefly.
- **A car can reach deadly temperatures even when the outside temperature is in the 60s.** See [Keep Kids Out of Hot Cars!](http://www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeHeat) (www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeHeat)

If It's Cold

- **Start the car and use the heater for 10 minutes each hour.** This will provide heat and help recharge your car's battery. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so exhaust doesn't back up inside the car. **Never run your vehicle in an enclosed space or garage because it releases deadly carbon monoxide.**
- **When the engine is running, leave the overhead light and emergency flashers on** to help the car be seen. Turn them off when you turn the engine off.
- **Keep extra blankets and clothing in your car.**
- **Keep your arms and legs moving to stay warm.** See [Cold Weather Tips](http://www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeCold) (www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeCold)

Takeaway Tips



Take steps to cool off in extreme heat



Know how to stay warm in extreme cold



Have a plan if floodwaters rise

Advice for Specific Weather Emergencies

Extreme Heat

- **Get indoors in air conditioning for a couple of hours a day if possible.** Find cooling centers at www.health.ny.gov/environmental/weather/cooling/index.htm.
- **Look out for heat-related illness symptoms:** hot, red skin, rapid pulse, fever, and rapid and shallow breathing. If you think someone has heat stroke, call 911.
- **Never leave children, people with mental or mobility limitations, or pets in a parked car.** Temperatures in the car can become dangerous within minutes.

See **Extreme Heat Tips** (www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeHeat)

Extreme Cold

- **If your heat goes out, close off rooms that you don't need,** unless you are worried about pipes freezing.
- **Dress in layers and wear a hat.**
- **Look out for signs of hypothermia:** shivering, confusion, slurred speech, and exhaustion. Hypothermia lowers the body's temperature and seriously threatens your health. Babies and older adults are especially at risk.

See **Cold Weather Tips** (www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeCold)

Flooding

- **Consider whether you should stay in your home.** If evacuation is likely, see evacuation information on p. 9.
- **If there is time, relocate movable appliances and furnishings to the upper floors and collect important items:** documents, electronics, food, water, and tools.
- **Never enter a flooded basement before shutting off electric service.** You can experience electric shock if electrical wires are touching the water. Instead, contact your electric company as soon as possible.

Thunder and Lightning

- **Recognize the signs of an oncoming storm:** towering clouds, dark skies, and distant rumbles of thunder. Do not wait for lightning to strike nearby before seeking shelter.
- **Secure your home.** Close storm shutters and secure outdoor objects or bring them indoors.
- **Turn off electricity** to your home if instructed to do so.
- **Turn all refrigerators to the coldest setting and keep the doors closed** unless quickly getting food or checking the temperature.
- **Turn off propane tanks.**
- **Avoid using a corded telephone during a lightning storm.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.

If Outside, Seek Shelter

- **Find a large, enclosed building when a thunder or lightning storm is coming.** Avoid sheds or other small structures.
- **Avoid becoming a lightening rod or being near natural lightning rods,** like a tall tree in an open area, hilltops, open fields, beaches, or boats on the water.
- **Avoid contact with anything metal:** tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, umbrellas, and bicycles.

If You Are Inside

- **Stay away from windows and doors,** stay off porches, and do not sit or lay on concrete floors or lean on concrete walls.
- **Avoid contact with corded phones and devices that are plugged into electric outlets.**
- **Unplug electrical appliances and other items such as computers.** Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage. After unplugging appliances, avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords.
- **Turn off air conditioners.**
- **Avoid contact with plumbing.** Do not wash your hands, take a shower, wash dishes, or do laundry. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.

If You Are Driving

- **Try to safely exit the road and park.**
- **Stay in the car, keep the windows rolled up, and turn on the emergency flashers** until the heavy rain ends if your car has a hard topped roof. If the car has a soft roof, get inside a building as soon as possible.
- **Avoid touching metal and other surfaces that conduct electricity** inside and outside of the car.

Takeaway Tips



Secure your home



Seek shelter if outside



Avoid things that conduct electricity



Pull over if driving and follow advice

Takeaway Tips



Follow generator safety tips



Operate generators outside, away from your home



Store fuel outside and away from the generator

Generators and Other Heating Sources

Generators

Some people choose to use a generator to power a furnace, private well pump, or grinder pump during a power outage. Generators can also run essential medical equipment and appliances when the power goes out.

Generators can be gas or propane fueled. Choose a generator based on your personal and home needs and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Plug appliances directly into a generator or use a heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that has the watts/amps at least equal to the total of the appliance loads. If you choose to hardwire your generator, only a licensed electrician should install it into your household wiring system, either as a portable or permanent unit. An electrician should install a separate outdoor receptacle and a double-throw transfer switch to isolate the generator and protect utility workers repairing power lines. You should notify your electric company if you install this type of generator.

Safety Information

- **Generators should only be operated outside**, far away from windows, doors, and vents. Never run a generator inside your home, basement, carport, crawlspace, or attached garage, even with ventilation. Carbon monoxide from the generator's fumes can build up and lead to carbon monoxide poisoning, which can cause death.
- **Keep children away** from generators at all times.
- **Operate your generator according to manufacturer's instructions.** Overloading your generator can damage it and your appliances, and can cause a fire. Always install all recommended safety devices.
- **Check the extension cord frequently** to make sure it does not become hot during operation. Discontinue use immediately if the extension cord becomes hot. Never plug a generator into a wall outlet.
- **If fuel is spilled on a hot generator, it can cause an explosion.** If your generator has a detachable fuel tank, remove it before refilling. If this is not possible, shut off the generator and let it cool before refilling the fuel.
- **Store gasoline away from the generator and not inside your home.** Keep gasoline in properly labeled/color-coded storage containers. Improper storage can cause fires and explosions.
- **Be careful about using an old or borrowed generator.** If the manufacturer's instructions are not followed, users may be at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning or overloading the unit.

Other Heating Sources

If you need to use an alternate source of heat, such as a fireplace, wood stove, or portable kerosene heater, be sure it is vented to the outside. Never use stoves or outdoor grills to heat your home. Without enough fresh air, carbon monoxide fumes can build up in your home and cause sickness or even death.

You Need a Carbon Monoxide Alarm

Carbon monoxide (CO) is produced by burning fuels such as wood, oil, natural gas, propane, gasoline, and kerosene. Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home, and follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. If the CO alarm sounds, get out of the house immediately! **Learn more about carbon monoxide** (www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp)

Takeaway Tips



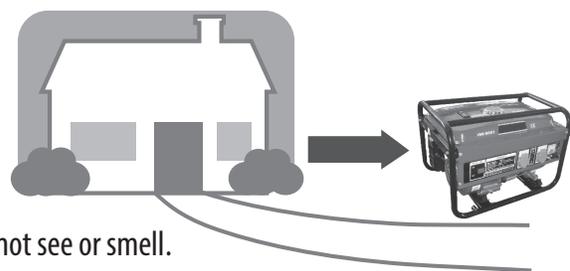
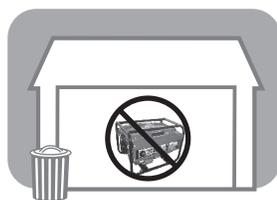
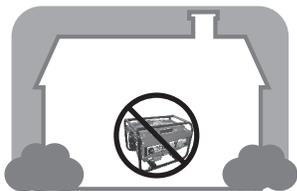
Vent and bring in fresh air when using alt heat



Install/check your carbon monoxide alarm

Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES.

Never use a generator inside your house or in partly enclosed areas such as garages.



Place generators outside, far away, and downwind from any buildings.

Exhaust contains carbon monoxide gas, a poison you cannot see or smell.



This Section

- Take precautions before re-entering your home
- Wear the right gear
- Remove standing water
- Don't pump floodwaters containing fuel oil
- Avoid bacteria and mold by drying out and tossing water-damaged items
- Get advice if you suspect your home has lead or asbestos
- Take out the trash
- Protect septic systems and plumbing
- Replenish your supplies

After a Storm or Outage

Storm Recovery

Cleanup Safety

p. 17 - 19

If you experience a flood, extensive cleanup is often necessary. This section summarizes what you need to consider as you restore your home.



Other Useful Resources

www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp

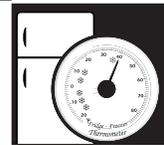
- Flood Cleanup and Home Repair
- Mold and Your Home: What You Need to Know
- What Homeowners Need to Know about Fuel Oil Spills and Flooding
- How to Avoid Getting Sick & Injured After a Flood
- How to Use an N95 Mask

Food Safety p. 20 - 24

Ensure that remaining food is still good to eat.

Throw out food containers that have been splashed with floodwater, or are swollen, rusted, dented, or no longer labeled.

Properly clean utensils, cookware and canned foods.



Drinking Water p. 25 - 28

After the storm, your water may not be safe to drink.

If you are on public water, check local alerts. If you use a private well and it might have been flooded or contaminated, take steps to test and disinfect your water.



Before Re-entering Your Home

- Wait for the water to go down.
- Walk carefully around the outside of your home and check for damaged power lines and gas leaks. Call your utility company to report downed power lines or gas leaks. See Red Cross's **Checking Utilities and Major Systems** (www.health.ny.gov/floodhelp) for more on electrical safety issues.
- Check for structural damage.
- Open windows and doors to reduce odors and improve indoor air quality.

Wear the Right Gear

Be sure to wear proper gear that will prevent you from coming in contact with floodwaters, sewage, and hazardous substances while cleaning up: rubber boots, waterproof gloves, and an N95 dust mask. See **How to Wear an N95 Mask** (www.health.ny.gov/floodhelp).

Deal with Standing Water

As long as fuel oil is not an issue, standing water should be removed as soon as possible because it can contain bacteria and mold that can cause health problems. Floodwaters containing sewage or decaying dead animals can spread disease. Water that soaks or seeps into walls after a flood can also cause structural damage and enable the growth of bacteria and mold (see p. 18).

Standing water is also a breeding ground for insects and pests outside your home. When possible, drain the water that may have collected in areas around your home.

Fuel Oil in Standing Water

If you see, smell, or suspect an oil spill, immediately report it to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) Spill Hotline at 800-457-7362. They will give you advice on next steps. **DO NOT pump the water out into your yard because fuel oil can contaminate nearby wells, water bodies, and homes.** If the oil is not removed first, your walls and floors will be coated with oil when the water is removed.

If the smell of oil is strong in your living space, make arrangements to stay somewhere else until the spill can be cleaned up. If you can't relocate, place a fan near a window or doorway so it blows fresh, outdoor air into the living space. Have a second fan blowing air out of the contaminated area to the outdoors. If you have no fans, open windows and doors. See **What Homeowners Need to Know about Fuel Oil Spills and Flooding** (www.health.ny.gov/floodhelp).

Takeaway Tips



Take precautions before re-entering a flooded home



Wear an N95 mask, gloves and boots



Remove standing water as soon as possible



Report fuel oil spills to NYS DEC at 800-457-7362

How to Remove Water and Moisture

- **Use a mop and pail, or a wet/dry vacuum** (follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electrical shock).
- **Open windows/doors if weather permits and use fans** to evaporate remaining moisture.
- **Once visible moisture is gone, close the windows/doors** and cover any sump pump wells. Then run a dehumidifier, if available, on the high setting.
- **Continue using a fan** to circulate air in any damp rooms.
- **Run the dehumidifier** until the water levels drop in the collection area of the unit.

Takeaway Tips



Dry out your home quickly to avoid mold and bacteria



Discard water damaged items



Disinfect surfaces and materials with unscented bleach and water



Never mix household cleaners

Avoid Bacteria and Mold

Bacteria and mold can grow quickly after a flood because the high humidity and moist materials provide the ideal environment. Contact with air or water containing mold and bacteria can become a health hazard in your home and may make you sick.

The quicker you can dry things out, the better; preferably within 2-3 days. If the home is not dried out properly, a musty odor, which signifies the growth of bacteria and mold, can remain long after the flood.

Active mold growth can be directly observed or smelled so there is no need for testing. All mold can be a health hazard so there is no need to know what type of mold is growing in your home.

Get Rid of Water-damaged Items

Water-soaked items grow mold and bacteria. Remove and discard water-damaged items and materials and dry out your home quickly and thoroughly. This includes items that cannot be easily cleaned in a washing machine, even those with sentimental value. In general, do not try to save wet items that absorbed water, such as:

- Carpet, padding, and rugs
- Upholstered furniture, mattresses, and box springs
- Computers, air conditioning units, and appliances with fans housed in moldy rooms
- Papers and books
- Fiberboard and insulation
- Disposable heating or cooling filters

Most hard and non-porous surfaces and materials can be cleaned.

Promptly Clean Soaked Items

- **Wash walls, floors, closets, shelves, and any hard surfaces** with soap and water. Then disinfect with a mixture of 1 cup of liquid unscented chlorine bleach in 5 gallons of water.
- **Wash linens and clothing in hot water** and dry larger items outdoors in the sun.
- **Clean heating and air conditioning ducts** that have been flooded.
- **Bring in fresh air** by opening windows and doors, or using fans.
- Cleaners, disinfectants, and sanitizers contain substances that could be irritating to your skin or respiratory system, or could cause other problems. **Read and follow label instructions.** Health effects can be caused by improper use.

Never Mix Household Cleaners

Check labels for warnings and directions. Mixing certain products like those containing ammonia and chlorine can produce dangerous, toxic fumes.

Wash Your Hands

Always wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning, especially before preparing or eating food. If you do not have clean running water, use hand sanitizer or water that has been boiled and cooled, or otherwise disinfected, before preparing or eating food (see p. 27).

Lead Dust and Asbestos

If you are concerned about lead or asbestos, you can contact the NYS Department of Health for advice at 518-402-7530 or 800-458-1158 before you remove walls, floors, ceilings, and piping. You might come in contact with lead or asbestos from old paint, plaster, or pipe wrap. When disturbed, lead dust or asbestos fibers can spread around your home.

Older homes may contain layers of lead-based paint. The lead dust can be released during remodeling and can pose a risk to children and adults.

Asbestos was used in building materials because it is strong and heat resistant. However, long-term exposure to asbestos can cause lung cancer and mesothelioma (cancer of the chest and abdominal lining).

Take Out the Trash

Local authorities will announce when and where trash collection will occur to pick up the large amounts of waste you will likely collect during cleanup.

- Avoid insects, bacteria, and rodents by storing garbage in heavy duty garbage bags inside containers with tight lids.
- Keep garbage in a convenient location, away from your drinking water well and home.
- Place flood-damaged, hazardous household materials (pesticides, fertilizers, paints) in leak-proof containers and remove them from the home for proper disposal.
- If pests are a problem, purchase mouse and rat traps at hardware, lawn, garden, and grocery stores.

Septic Systems

Do not use your septic system (toilets, washing machine, etc.) if the soil around the system is flooded. Wastewater can rise and mix with surface water, exposing people to human waste. If you are unable to use the toilet(s) in your home, use portable toilets, such as those used for camping. Your community may set up commercial portable toilets for use during emergencies.

Once floodwaters have gone down, have your septic system professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage. Signs of damage include sluggish plumbing, sewage backup, and soil erosion around the drainfield. Do not pump the septic tank and do not dig or construct around the drainfield while the area is flooded. Contact your health department for assistance at www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts.

Restock Your Supplies

Don't forget to replenish your supplies (see **Stock Up on Supplies** p. 4 - 5, **Food Safety** p. 20 - 24, and **Drinking Water** p. 25 - 28). Add a few items each week to your normal grocery list to replenish supplies.

Takeaway Tips



Wash hands after cleaning



Call 800-458-1158 if you need advice about lead or asbestos



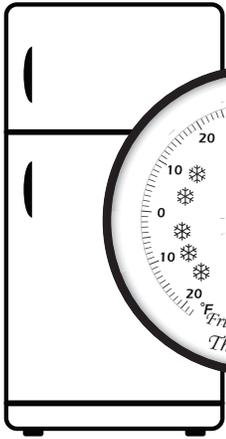
Keep trash covered and away from home



If plumbing is flooded, consider portable toilets



Restock supplies a little at a time



Food Safety

Before, During, & After a Storm

This section provides recommendations about how to care for and store your food at any stage of an emergency.

Takeaway Tips



Stock enough food for 3 - 7 days

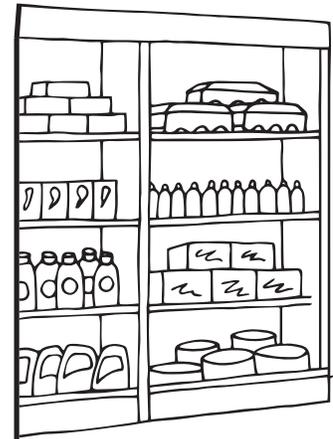


Store food in cool dark area

Stock Up on Food

Keep a food supply that will feed your household for 3 to 7 days. Having a reserve can relieve inconvenience and uncertainty until the storm passes or the power is restored.

- **Buy easy-to-store and easy-to-prepare foods.** Choose foods that don't need to be refrigerated and require little or no preparation or cooking.
- **Build up your supply by buying a few extra items each week.**
- **Plan to prepare familiar foods** to lift morale and give your family a feeling of security in times of stress.



Foods to Stockpile

Stock up on easy-to-prepare foods that will provide energy as well as comfort.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ready-to-eat packaged/canned food | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonperishable milk such as low-fat evaporated, canned, boxed, or dry milk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protein or fruit bars | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby formula and food for small children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry cereal or granola | <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty food for older adult family members or those on special diets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peanut butter | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dried fruit | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuts | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crackers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canned juice | |

Storing Your Food

- **Keep canned foods in a dry, dark area** where the temperature is fairly cool.
- **Store foods in containers with tight lids to protect them from pests and extend their shelf life.** Do not store your food in the basement if it is prone to flooding.
- **Sort and store foods by date.** If foods do not have a “best if used by” date, write in permanent marker the date you purchased the item. Place newer items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front. Try to use food by the “best if used by” date.
- **Inspect your stored food periodically** to make sure there are no broken seals or dented, swollen, or leaking containers. Discard and replace items that are no longer good to eat.
- **Update your stored foods** over time and as your family’s needs change.

Takeaway Tips



Wash hands before preparing and eating food



Never use outdoor grills or stoves indoors

Wash Before Preparing or Eating Food

Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food or eating food. If you do not have clean running water, use hand sanitizer or water that has been boiled and cooled, or otherwise disinfected (p. 27) before using.

Cooking Without Power

You can use a fireplace or wood stove to cook indoors when the power is out, or use a barbecue grill or camp stove outdoors. **Never use barbecue grills or camp stoves indoors.** They give off dangerous carbon monoxide (CO) gas that can build up and cause sickness and even death.

Takeaway Tips



Keep fridge and freezer doors closed to keep food cold

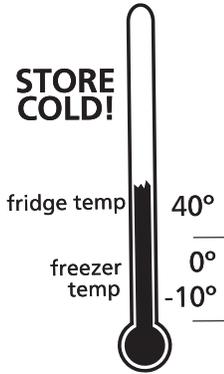


Use an appliance thermometer in fridge and freezer

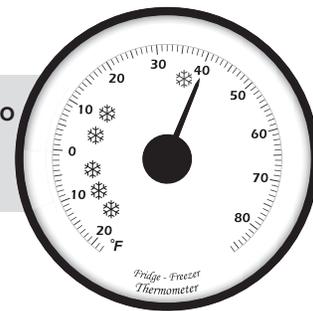
The Fridge and Freezer: When Power is Out

Cold Holding Tips and Temps

Keep fridge and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain ideal temperatures (shown right). Don't open the doors any more than is needed to quickly check the temperature and get your food.



Keep an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator and freezer so you can see how cold the unit is. Appliance thermometers can be purchased at most grocery stores.



Keeping the Refrigerator Chilled

- **Food in the refrigerator will remain cold for about 4 hours if the door stays shut.**
- **Eat the most perishable items first**, such as leftovers, meat, poultry, and foods containing milk, cream, sour cream, or soft cheese.

Keeping the Freezer Cold

- **A fully-filled freezer will stay at freezing temperature for about two days if the door stays shut. A half-full freezer will stay cold for about one day.**
- **The kind of food in the freezer makes a difference.** Foods with a high water content, such as meat or fruit, will stay frozen longer than food with a low water content, such as bread.
- **Group items so they form an “igloo” to protect each other.** Keep meats together on one side of the freezer or on a tray so that if they begin thawing, their juices won't get on other food.

Other Ways to Keep Food Cold

Use Block Ice, Dry Ice, or Frozen Water Containers in Fridge

If you think power will be out for several days, purchase dry ice or block ice for the refrigerator or freezer. This will help keep perishables such as meat, poultry, and dairy items cold. See **What is Dry Ice?** (www.health.ny.gov/publications/7081).

Takeaway Tips



Put ice or frozen water containers in fridge or freezer if the power is out



Never store food outside, even if it's cold out



Toss thawed foods if freezer is above 40°F

Don't Store Food Outside, Even When It's Cold Out

Do not put your food outside to keep it cold, even in the winter. This is not a good idea because temperatures cold enough for refrigerated food are too warm for frozen food. And, even if it is very cold outside, the sun could warm the food to a temperature that would allow bacteria to grow. Also, animals could get into your food and contaminate it.



Keep, Eat, or Discard?



When In Doubt, Throw It Out

Frozen Food

If the power is out long enough, the food in your freezer may partially or completely thaw before power is restored. If food has ice crystals, it may be safely cooked and eaten, or refrozen. Discard any food that looks or smells bad.

Foods that have thawed, but are still kept at 40°F or below may be safely eaten or refrozen, although refreezing thawed foods can affect taste and food texture. Purchase an appliance thermometer and use it to check your freezer temperature.

Refrigerated Food

Takeaway Tips

40°F

Follow **Toss! Keep!** advice for refrigerated foods



When in doubt, throw it out



Toss food containers touched by floodwaters



Clean/disinfect cookware, utensils, and commercially-canned foods

Toss! If fridge is above 40°F

- Meat, poultry, seafood
- Pizza
- Lunch meats
- Casseroles, stews, soups
- Cooked or cut fruits or vegetables
- Milk/cream, yogurt, soft cheese
- Cooked pasta, potatoes, rice, salads prepared from any listed foods
- Cookie or other refrigerated doughs
- Fresh eggs, egg substitutes
- Cream-filled pastries or custard
- Gravies, sauces
- Moldy food or food with an unusual odor or appearance

Keep! These foods should be safe, even at room temperature

- Butter, margarine
- Hard cheese
- Fresh whole fruit and vegetables (except raw sprouts)
- Unopened fruit juices
- Dried fruits
- Fresh herbs and spices
- Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressing, peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, hot sauce
- Mustard, ketchup, olives
- Fruit pies

Handling Food After a Flood

Food Containers

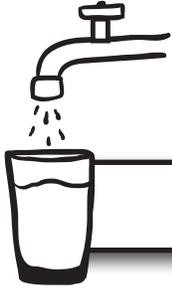
- Discard all foods exposed to floodwaters.
- Toss food containers that have been submerged in or splashed with floodwaters.
- Commercially-canned foods can be cleaned and kept unless cans are swollen, rusted, extremely dented, or the contents cannot be identified.
- Discard food containers with lids that are screwed on, snapped on, or pressed on, such as soda and beer bottles. They cannot be cleaned adequately.
- Toss all home-canned foods.

Disinfecting Food Containers, Dishes, Utensils, & Cookware

- Use soap and clean water to wash dishes, utensils, and cookware.
- Disinfect with a solution of 1 tablespoon of liquid unscented chlorine bleach per 1 gallon of water. Do not use this method on sterling silver. Bleach will cause items to tarnish. Instead, put sterling silver in boiling water for at least 2 minutes.

Disinfecting Commercially Canned Foods

- Remove labels from cans.
- Wash in soapy water and rinse.
- Disinfect with solution of 1 tablespoon of liquid unscented chlorine bleach per 1 gallon of water and air dry.
- Re-label cans and include the expiration dates.



Drinking Water Safety

Before, During, & After the Storm

Germs that might make you and your family sick can enter your water during floods and storms. These germs can cause diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, headaches, or other symptoms. This section provides advice for people on public water and private wells. Have the safe water you need before, during, and after the storm.

Stock Up on Bottled Water

- **Keep enough NYS-certified bottled water to last your family for 3 to 7 days.** This means having 2 gallons per person per day. Bottled water is the best choice for drinking and preparing food if your water is contaminated.
- **Individual needs can vary** depending on age, health, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate. Increase your supply accordingly.
- **Generally, an adult should drink 2 quarts of water per day.** Your clean water will be used for other purposes, which is why extra is recommended.
- **Use a clean container to hold water.**

Takeaway Tips



Stock up on bottled water: 2 gallons per person per day for 3-7 days



Don't limit drinking water

Bottled Water in Emergencies

Contact your health department about bottled water availability.
(www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts)

Drink Even if You are Low on Water

- **Try to drink the amount of water you need to drink, even if you find your supply of water is running low.** Being well-hydrated will help you think more clearly. Drink the amount you need today and try to find more for tomorrow.
- **An adult should drink two quarts of water per day.** Children, nursing mothers, and older adults will need more. Very hot weather can double everyone's needed amount.
- **Ice and fruit juices can serve as water substitutes in emergencies.**

Takeaway Tips



Know how to find and disinfect water, if needed



Tune in for advisories and alerts about public water safety (p. 8)



Don't drink water from a private well if the property is flooded



Use bottled water or disinfect if water could be unsafe

Find Hidden Water

If you cannot find water, try to access water from these sources. Always disinfect this water (p. 27) before using it for drinking or preparing food.

Pipes

Let air flow into the plumbing by turning on the faucet on the highest level of your home and collecting water until nothing comes out. Keep that faucet turned on, and empty any remaining water from the lowest drain in your home. Use a section of hose and a container to collect water if needed.

Hot Water Tank

Turn off gas or electricity to the hot water heater and open the drain. Turn off the water intake valve (if it's not already off) and turn on a hot water faucet on a higher level in the house to start the water flowing. Do not turn on the gas or electricity to the hot water heater when the tank is empty, or you could damage the unit. When power is restored, any hot water heater pilot lights will need to be re-lit.

How to Know if Water is Contaminated

Germs can enter drinking water, especially during floods, and can cause diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, headaches, or other symptoms.

Public Water Supply

Your health department (www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts) will issue advisories if the public water supply serving your home is not safe for drinking or preparing food. Follow any instructions provided.

Check social media or listen to your local radio station (p. 8) for alerts and updates about your water service and information about available bottled or other sources of water.

Private Wells

If your well has been covered with floodwaters, your drinking water could be contaminated. Use bottled water or follow the advice to disinfect any water used for drinking and preparing food until your private well is restored. See p. 28 for more about **Restoring and Testing Your Private Well**.

Disinfecting Water

Remember, bottled water is the best choice for drinking and preparing food if your water is contaminated. If you need to use water you are uncertain about, disinfect it before using it for drinking or preparing food. Before disinfecting, fill a container with water and let suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain the untreated water through layers of paper towels, clean cloths, or paper coffee filters.



Preferred Method: Boil Water

- Bring water to a rolling boil for one minute. Let it cool before drinking.
- Improve the taste by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. Water tastes better if you put oxygen back into it.

Alternate Method: Add Liquid Unscented Chlorine Bleach Mixture

When boiling is not possible:

- Add 1/8 of a teaspoon (8 drops) of liquid unscented chlorine bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not taste and smell of chlorine at that point, add another 1/8 teaspoon (8 drops) of bleach and let stand for another 15 minutes.

Takeaway Tips



Tune in for advisories and alerts about public water safety (p. 8)



Don't drink your water until you test and restore your private well



Contact your health department for help

How to Know When Water is Safe for All Uses

Public Water Supply

If your area was on a boil water notice and you are notified that you no longer need to boil your water, run your water through the pipes to flush your system with clean water. See **Boil Water Notices – Checklist for Residents and Homeowners** (www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp)

Check social media or listen to your local radio station for alerts and updates (p. 8) about your water service, and information about available bottled or other sources of water.

Your health department (www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts) will issue notifications when the public water serving your home is safe for drinking or preparing food.

Private Wells

After the floodwaters recede, water in your well may still not be safe to use for drinking and preparing food because of well contamination.

Follow steps for **Restoring and Testing Your Private Well** (www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp) before using your water for drinking and cooking. It describes steps you should take to get a flooded well back into service including:

- Checking the well and area around your well for flood damage.
- Repairing and flushing your well.
- Disinfecting your well water.
- Testing your well water to assure drinking water quality.

Your health department can also help (www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts).

Well Contamination with Gas, Oil, or Chemicals



Contact your health department (www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts) or the Department of Environmental Conservation Spill Hotline at 800-457-7362.

Other Information

New York State Department of Health

www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp, 518-402-7530 or 800-458-1158

Local Health Departments

www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts

NYS district, regional, and local health departments provide information and advice about weather-related emergencies. Your health department is the best resource for local emergency-related help and information.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

www.ready.gov

Get information about weather-related emergencies and preparedness from the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

www.fema.gov, 202-646-2500

FEMA provides information and services in response to natural and man-made disasters.

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org, Main number 800-733-2767

24/7 counseling and emotional support at the Disaster Distress Helpline 800-985-5990, or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

The Red Cross provides local and national disaster services programs. Staff and volunteers can help provide shelter, hygiene items, crisis counseling, and more.

Salvation Army

www.salvationarmyusa.org

Salvation Army staff and volunteers assist in both local incidents and major disasters. Salvation Army disaster response teams are coordinated and directed by commissioned officers and trained personnel and are supported by volunteers.



Before



During



After

Food Safety & Water



Emergency Phone Numbers



Your Health Department (Find yours at www.health.ny.gov/EnvironmentalContacts and write it down before an emergency)

Gas/Electric Companies _____

Water Department or Company _____

Hospital _____

Police Department _____

Fire Department _____

Family Physicians _____

Pharmacy _____

Medical Insurance Company _____

Homeowners'/Rental Insurance _____

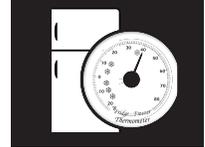
Emergency Contact(s) _____

NYSDEC Spill Reporting Hotline 800-457-7362 _____

Others _____



Food Safety & Water





Don't Be Left in the Dark

BEFORE Plan Ahead

Prepare and share an evacuation plan with your family.



Have emergency supplies on hand.



Charge your cell phone and portable charger.

DURING Safety First



Tune in for weather, safety and water supply alerts.

Only run generators outside, far away from your home.



Tell someone where you are going and when you plan to arrive, if you have to leave your home.

AFTER Clean up & Restock

Restock emergency supplies a little at a time.



Never mix household cleaners.

Remove standing water, moisture and wet materials to prevent mold.



If you see or smell fuel oil in your home, immediately call (800) 457-7362.



Keep trash covered and away from your home.



FOOD & WATER Before, During, After

Throw away spoiled food.

Stock up on non-perishable food.

Check local alerts to ensure water is safe to drink.

Know when to disinfect your private well or tap water.

Use bottled water if you suspect water contamination.



Keep 2 gallons of water per person for 3-7 days.



Department of Health