Emergency Water Storage

Water is essential for survival. The ground trembling and shaking caused by earthquakes can crack or break the lines that bring fresh water to your house. Stocking water reserves and learning how to purify contaminated water should be among your top priorities in preparing for a disaster. At the very minimum, you should store a 72-hour emergency supply of water for each member of your family.

Emergency officials estimate that you should plan on being self sufficient for the first 72 hours following a major disaster. But, in reality, it may take your community weeks or months to get back to normal. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you store more than the recommended amount of water for each member of your family. Since everyone's needs differ depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet and climate, the amount of water you will need to store may vary from official recommendations. A normally active individual needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and those ill of health will require more. You will also need additional water for food preparation, hygiene purposes, and for your pets.

As a general rule store a total of one to three gallons of water per person, per day.

- Decide how much water to store for you and your family as well as what container you will use to store the water, then obtain it.
- Clean your container(s) thoroughly and fill to the top with water.
- Seal your container(s) tightly.
- Label it "drinking water" and date it.
- Store it in a cool, dark place.
- Calendar a date six months from now refresh your water supply. Drain old water into the garden, clean out your container(s) and fill with fresh

In March, 1994, the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency stated:

- Tap water does NOT need any thing added to it before it is stored because it has already been chemically treated.
- Commercially purchased water does NOT need anything added to it. Keep it in its original, sealed container. *

HINT: If you use two-liter soda pop bottles, you can store these under beds, in the corners of closets, behind your sofa....think about this activity as a priority rather than an inconvenience and you'll find many places where you can store your emergency water.

If your supplies begin to run low, remember:

- Never ration water. Drink the amount you need today, and try to find more for tomorrow.
- You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.
- You can store your water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers.

- Never use a container that has held toxic substances, because tiny amounts may remain in the container's pores.
- Sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.
- Avoid the use of plastic milk or other similar containers. This plastic becomes brittle over time and can easily crack during the ground shaking of an earthquake.
- Before storing your water, treat it with a preservative, such as chlorine bleach, to prevent the growth of microorganisms. Use liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite and no soap or fragrances. This should be readily available at your local grocery store. Some containers warn, Not For Personal Use. You can disregard these warnings if the label states sodium hypochlorite is the only active ingredient and if you use only the small tities in these instructions. (*) see box on right, above
- Add four drops of bleach per quart of water (or two scant teaspoons per 10 gallons), and stir.
- Seal your water containers tightly, label them and store them in a cool, dark place.

The above adapted from the FEMA library: Emergency Food and Water Supplies

- Go to http://www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/Foodwtr.pdf for more water storage information, including Hidden Water Sources in your Home, and Emergency Outdoor Water Sources.