

## FROM LOCAL OFFICIALS

Tips on how to prepare for disasters are readily available from public safety officials, surplus stores and emergency preparedness experts. Here is a sampling to keep on hand:

- When preparing a stash of food for emergency situations, remember salty snacks will make you thirsty, said Jeff Daquila, manager of Union War Surplus in San Pedro.
- "A transistor radio is going to be indispensable," said Redondo Beach Fire Chief Bob Engler. Assuming other communication systems fail, "we'll be given instructions through the emergency broadcast system."
- Attitude is everything when preparing for natural disasters, said Norris Beren, author of *When Disaster Strikes Home* and executive director of the Emergency Preparedness Educational Institute. Get as excited about making emergency plans as you would

preparing for Christmas. "You have to want to do it," he said.

- The Emergency Preparedness Educational Institute recommends families prearrange two meeting places: one near home for evacuation in case of emergency, and one outside the neighborhood in case of wide-area evacuation or inability to return home because roads are closed.
- Water beds hold up to 400 gallons, but some contain toxic chemicals that are not fully removed by many purifiers. If you designate a water bed in your home as an emergency resource, drain it yearly and refill it with fresh water containing two ounces of bleach per 120 gallons, according to tips on the *Los Angeles Almanac*.
- In the event of an emergency situation during the school day, administrators expect parents and caretakers will show up to check on their children, said Laurie Love,

assistant superintendent of educational services for Torrance Unified School District. "If there is an emergency we would urge parents to follow the directions of the site administrator," she said. "The big thing is just to stay calm and follow the direction of the person in charge."


- Los Angeles Unified School District's Office of Environmental Health and Safety suggests parents visit their child's school to ask what will happen during an emergency. At the same time, make sure emergency contact information is up to date and complete.
- Check no-pet policies in emergency shelters, and make sure pets have up-to-date shots, the Emergency Preparedness Educational Institute suggests. Update animals' ID tags and identify emergency care facilities for them.

— Kristin Agostoni, *Daily Breeze*

### FOOD STORAGE TIPS

- Keep food in a dry, cool spot — a dark area if possible.
- Keep food covered at all times.
- Open food boxes or cans carefully so that you can close them tightly after each use.
- Wrap cookies and crackers in plastic bags, and keep them in tight containers.
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from pests.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies, dated with ink or marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.


# How to get water in an emergency



If a disaster catches you without a stored supply of clean water, you can use the water in your hot-water tank, pipes and ice cubes. As a last resort, you can use water in the reservoir tank of your toilet (not the bowl).

To stop contaminated water from entering your home if you hear reports of broken water or sewage lines, you'll need to shut off your incoming water valve.


To use the water in your pipes, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your house at the highest level. A small amount of water will trickle out. Then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the house.



To use the water in your hot-water tank, be sure the electricity or gas is off, and open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve and turning on a hot-

water faucet. Do not turn on the gas or electricity when the tank is empty.

### Three ways to treat water



In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis. You should treat all water of uncertain purity before using it for drinking, food preparation or hygiene.

There are many ways to treat water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods.


Two easy treatment methods are outlined below.

These measures will kill most microbes but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals. Before treating, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain them through layers of paper towel or clean cloth.

**Boiling:** Boiling is the safest

method of treating water. Bring water to a rolling boil for 3-5 minutes, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking. Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.

**Disinfection:** You can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color-safe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners.




Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes.

The only agent used to treat water should be household liquid bleach. Other chemicals, such as iodine or water treatment

products sold in camping or surplus stores that do not contain 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient, are not recommended and should not be used.

**Distillation:** While boiling and disinfection will kill most microbes in water, distillation will remove microbes that resist these methods, and heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals.



Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting the vapor that condenses back to water. The condensed vapor will not include salt and other impurities. To distill, fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so that the cup will hang right side up when the lid is upside down (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water) and boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.