

Home Water Emergency Checklist

A calm, practical 3-day starting plan for water storage, containers, household needs, pets, and the first actions to take during an outage.

Start simple.
Use this checklist to calculate a baseline supply, choose safer storage containers, record your household's special needs, and prepare a clear outage action plan.

Household size		Pets	
Plan date		Review date	

Preparedness guidance changes with local conditions. During an actual emergency, follow instructions from your water utility, health department, and emergency officials.

1. Calculate Your Baseline Supply

Baseline

Store at least 1 gallon per person per day for drinking and sanitation. This checklist begins with a 3-day supply. Some households need more because of heat, medical needs, pregnancy, illness, age, or other circumstances.

People	3-day baseline	People	3-day baseline
1	3 gallons	4	12 gallons
2	6 gallons	5	15 gallons
3	9 gallons	6	18 gallons

Your household calculation

People x 1 gallon x 3 days = Baseline gallons

Pet water add-on:

Special-needs add-on:

Total planned gallons:

Planning checklist

- ☐ I counted every person who may be in the home during an outage.
- ☐ I added water for pets based on species, size, diet, climate, and veterinary guidance.
- ☐ I considered infant formula, medications, mobility needs, and any equipment or care routines that require water.
- ☐ I separated drinking water from nonpotable water intended only for toilet flushing or cleaning.
- ☐ My containers are small enough for household members to lift and pour safely.

Practical note

A full gallon weighs about 8.3 pounds. Several medium containers are often easier to move and rotate than one very large container.

2. Choose and Store Containers Safely

Commercially bottled water is the simplest option. When filling containers at home, use durable food-grade containers with tight-fitting lids and follow current cleaning and sanitizing instructions.

Container-selection checklist

- ☐ The container is labeled food-grade or is specifically sold for drinking-water storage.
- ☐ It has a tight-fitting lid and a narrow opening or spigot that limits hand contact.
- ☐ It has never held fuel, pesticides, bleach, cleaners, or other toxic substances.
- ☐ It is not a used milk or fruit-juice jug, which can be difficult to clean thoroughly.
- ☐ It is durable, leak-free, and manageable when full.
- ☐ I can pour or dispense water without touching the water or inside surfaces.

Preparation and storage checklist

- ☐ I washed and sanitized reusable containers using current CDC instructions.
- ☐ Each container is labeled "DRINKING WATER" and dated.
- ☐ Home-filled water will be replaced every 6 months.
- ☐ Commercially bottled water will be stored and rotated according to its label.
- ☐ Water is stored in a cool location away from direct sunlight.
- ☐ Water is separated from gasoline, pesticides, paint, and other toxic substances.
- ☐ A clean scoop or pouring method is stored nearby; hands will not be dipped into the container.

Container / size	Quantity	Storage location	Replace / review date

3. Your Water-Outage Action Plan

First rule

Confirm what happened. A service interruption, a boil-water advisory, and a "do not use" notice require different actions. Follow the exact instructions issued by local officials.

Before an outage

- ☐ Save the phone number and alert page for the local water utility.
- ☐ Identify a nearby store or community distribution point that may provide bottled water.
- ☐ Keep clean pots, a manual can opener, disposable plates, paper towels, trash bags, and hand sanitizer with the water supply.
- ☐ Keep pet bowls, medications, and feeding instructions together.
- ☐ Review the plan with everyone in the household.

When water service stops or safety is uncertain

- ☐ Check utility, health-department, or emergency alerts before using tap water.
- ☐ Use stored safe water first for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, making ice, preparing infant formula, and washing food.
- ☐ Keep drinking-water containers closed and dispense water without touching the inside.
- ☐ Use separately stored nonpotable water for toilet flushing or cleaning only.
- ☐ Record how much safe water remains and ration by priority, not by guesswork.
- ☐ Do not use water from home heating radiators or boilers for drinking or hygiene.
- ☐ If water may contain fuel, toxic chemicals, or radioactive material, do not try to make it safe by boiling or disinfecting it.

When officials issue a boil-water advisory

Use bottled water when available. Otherwise, follow local instructions. EPA guidance generally calls for a rolling boil for at least 1 minute, or 3 minutes above 5,000 feet, then cooling naturally in a clean covered container. Boiling addresses germs; it does not remove fuel or toxic chemicals.

Water utility		Phone / alert page	
Local health department		Emergency contact	

4. Household, Pet, and Review Checklist

Household considerations

- ☐ Infants, older adults, and anyone who is ill have been considered.
- ☐ Prescription and medical-care water needs have been discussed with the appropriate professional.
- ☐ I have a plan for hand hygiene and simple food preparation.
- ☐ I know who will move heavy containers or obtain replacement water.
- ☐ A written copy of this plan is easy to find.

Pet considerations

- ☐ I stored extra water for each pet.
- ☐ Bowls, food, medications, leashes, and carriers are accessible.
- ☐ I know where pets can safely stay if the home becomes too hot or services are disrupted.
- ☐ Species-specific needs have been checked with a veterinarian.
- ☐ Pet water is included in the rotation schedule.

Final review

Baseline gallons stored		Home-filled water replace date	
Pet / special-needs add-on		Next household review date	
Primary storage location		Backup water source	

OPTIONAL NEXT STEP

See the Practical Ready Home water-preparedness resource:
practicalreadyhome.com/water-plan

Affiliate disclosure: If you choose to purchase through this link, Practical Ready Home may earn a commission at no additional cost to you. The recommendation is optional.



Credible sources used for this checklist

[Ready.gov - Build a Kit](#) (baseline quantity); [CDC - Create and Store an Emergency Water Supply](#) (containers, labeling, storage, rotation); [CDC - Make Water Safe in an Emergency](#); and [EPA - Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water](#).

This checklist is educational and does not replace instructions from local authorities or individualized medical or veterinary advice.