



Water Quality Association Water Safety Guide

One of the most important elements in any response to a natural disaster such as a hurricane, earthquake or major flooding event is access to safe drinking water for homes and businesses affected by the disaster. This is a helpful guide from the Water Quality Association.

BEFORE THE STORM

If there is time to prepare for a major storm such as a hurricane, it's important to stock up on bottled water. Officials recommend one gallon of water per day for each individual in a home. For example, a family of four would need 12 gallons of water to last for three days, the recommended minimum amount of water to have on hand, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In addition, it's important to have extra water available for pets.



But what if you can't get to the store or you can't find any bottled water? The next best thing is to fill reusable containers such as clean milk jugs with filtered water.

Water should be stored where it is easily accessible but not where it might come into contact with flood waters. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends homeowners consider freezing bottles of water which can be used to keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers in the event of a power outage. Melting ice will also be an additional source of drinking water should the local water supply become contaminated.

WHEN FLOODING OCCURS

In the immediate aftermath of a storm, WQA recommends drinking bottled water until the local water supply is determined to be safe to drink. If bottled water is unavailable, any water used for drinking or cooking should be boiled or disinfected. Residents should pay attention to local boil water alerts and other warnings following severe flooding because local water supplies can be tainted with debris, bacteria and other contaminants.



The alert will instruct residents to boil all water used for drinking, cooking, food preparation, brushing teeth, and making ice. Bathing and showering is typically fine if no water is accidentally ingested. For more information on a boil water alert notice, consult the municipality, water district, or regulatory agency that has oversight for your water.



To boil water

Boil tap water even if it is filtered. Most kitchen and other household water filters typically do not remove a wide range of microbiological contamination that may be in the water.

- Fill a pot with filtered water.
- Heat the water until bubbles come from the bottom of the pot to the top.
- Turn off the heat source and let the water cool.
- Pour the water into a clean container with a cover for storage.

Disinfecting water

If you are unable to boil your water, disinfect it instead.

If tap water is clear:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent) certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 60.
- Add 1/8 teaspoon (8 drops or about 0.75 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in clean container with a cover.

If tap water is cloudy:

- Filter the water.
- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent) certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 60.
- Add 1/4 teaspoon (16 drops or 1.5 milliliters) of the liquid bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in clean container with a cover.

Remember that containers may need to be sanitized before using them to store safe water.

To sanitize containers:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent) certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 60.
- Make a sanitizing solution by mixing 1 teaspoon (5 milliliters) of the liquid bleach in 1 quart (32 ounces, 4 cups, or about 1 liter) of water.
- Pour this sanitizing solution into a clean storage container and shake well, making sure that the solution coats the entire inside of the container.

AFTER THE FLOOD

Water treatment systems in a home can become contaminated by flooding or contact with microbiologically compromised water. WQA recommends homeowners resume regular use of the water treatment system once it has been disinfected by a water treatment professional.

Private well owners are strongly encouraged to test their systems and seek local water treatment and well water professionals for disinfection of their well as soon as the water recedes.

Contact a local water treatment professional for information on disinfecting your well or water treatment system. Visit WQA's website for a searchable database: <http://www.wqa.org/find-providers>.

More resources are available on the [WQA Crisis Response Blog](#) and [Flood Resources Page](#).

