

THE **SANE** PREPPER

Prepared... WITHOUT the crazy!

Water Sanitation & Hygiene

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WATER SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Clean water is only part of emergency preparedness. Sanitation and hygiene become equally important during power outages, storms, floods, broken water mains, and other disruptions. When normal water service becomes limited, households quickly discover how dependent daily life is on basic sanitation.

Without proper hygiene, illness can spread rapidly inside a home.

Poor sanitation can lead to:

- Bacterial contamination.
- Foodborne illness.
- Skin infections.
- Digestive illness.
- Dehydration.
- Increased disease transmission.

A practical sanitation plan helps reduce those risks.

During emergencies, sanitation does not need to be perfect. The goal is maintaining basic cleanliness and reducing contamination as much as possible until normal services return.

EMERGENCY TOILET SOLUTIONS

Toilet problems become one of the first major sanitation issues during extended outages.

Homes connected to municipal sewer systems may temporarily continue functioning during short outages, but systems can eventually fail if water pressure disappears or treatment facilities become overwhelmed.

Homes using septic systems may continue operating longer if limited water is available for flushing.

When flushing is no longer possible, emergency toilet systems become necessary.

BASIC BUCKET TOILET SYSTEM

One of the simplest emergency toilet systems uses:

- A five-gallon bucket.
- Heavy-duty trash bags.
- Absorbent material.
- A secure lid.

Absorbent materials may include:

- Kitty litter.
- Sawdust.
- Wood shavings.
- Dry leaves.
- Shredded paper.

STEP-BY-STEP BUCKET TOILET SETUP

First, line the bucket with a heavy-duty trash bag.

Next, place a small layer of absorbent material in the bottom.

After each use, add additional absorbent material to help reduce moisture and odor.

Keep the bucket covered when not in use.

Replace bags regularly and dispose of waste safely according to local emergency conditions.

Separate liquid waste from solid waste whenever possible. This helps reduce odor and extends the usefulness of absorbent material.

HAND WASHING DURING WATER SHORTAGES

Hand washing remains one of the most important ways to prevent illness during emergencies.

Hands should be cleaned:

- After using the toilet.
- Before handling food.
- After handling waste.
- After caring for sick individuals.
- After handling contaminated materials.

Even limited hand washing is far better than none.

LOW-WATER HAND WASHING

First, wet hands lightly using a small amount of clean water.

Apply soap thoroughly.

Scrub for at least twenty seconds, including:

- Fingertips.
- Between fingers.
- Under fingernails.

Rinse using a small stream of water.

Allow hands to air dry or use clean towels.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer may help supplement hand washing when water is limited, but soap and water remain preferable when hands are visibly dirty.

DISH CLEANING DURING EMERGENCIES

Dirty dishes can quickly become a sanitation problem during outages.

Food residue encourages bacterial growth and attracts insects.

When water is limited, households should conserve carefully while still maintaining basic sanitation.

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LOW-WATER DISH CLEANING METHOD

First, scrape food residue from dishes immediately after meals.

Use paper towels or cloths to remove grease and remaining debris before washing.

Heat a small amount of water if possible.

Wash dishes using minimal soap and water.

Rinse dishes with clean water.

Allow dishes to air dry whenever possible.

Disposable plates and utensils may help conserve water during short-term emergencies.

GRAY WATER USE

Gray water refers to lightly used water from:

- Hand washing.
- Dish rinsing.
- Bathing.
- Laundry.

Gray water may sometimes be reused for:

- Toilet flushing.
- Outdoor cleaning.
- Limited non-drinking purposes.

Gray water should never be used for:

- Drinking.
- Cooking.
- Food preparation.

Store gray water only briefly because bacteria can grow quickly.

Dispose of gray water away from:

- Drinking water sources.
- Gardens producing edible food.
- Living areas.

PREVENTING ILLNESS DURING WATER EMERGENCIES

Poor sanitation increases disease risk quickly during disasters.

Common problems include:

- Contaminated hands.
- Improper food handling.
- Unsafe waste disposal.
- Dirty water containers.
- Cross-contamination.

Basic sanitation habits greatly reduce these risks.

Families should:

- Wash hands regularly.
- Keep drinking water covered.
- Separate clean water from dirty water.
- Clean food preparation areas.
- Dispose of waste properly.

CLEANING MINOR WOUNDS

Minor cuts and scrapes can become infected more easily during emergencies.

First, wash hands if possible.

Next, rinse the wound gently using clean water.

Remove visible dirt carefully.

Apply antiseptic if available.

Cover the wound with a clean bandage.

Monitor wounds for:

- Redness.
- Swelling.
- Warmth.
- Pus.
- Increasing pain.

Seek medical attention if infection appears serious.

BASIC BATHING DURING WATER SHORTAGES

Full showers may become impossible during outages.

Even limited cleaning helps reduce:

- Odor.
- Skin irritation.
- Bacterial growth.
- Discomfort.

SPONGE BATH METHOD

Use a small container of clean warm water.

Wash the cleanest body areas first.

Use minimal soap.

Pay particular attention to:

- Hands.
- Face.
- Armpits.
- Groin area.
- Feet.

Dry thoroughly afterward.

Even basic hygiene improves comfort and morale during stressful situations.

LAUNDRY DURING EMERGENCIES

Laundry may become difficult during outages or water shortages.

Prioritize:

- Undergarments.
- Socks.
- Baby clothing.
- Items contaminated with bodily fluids.

Small amounts of clothing can sometimes be hand washed using buckets or tubs.

Allow clothing to dry completely before reuse.

Damp clothing encourages bacterial and fungal growth.

SANITATION FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Children require additional sanitation planning during emergencies.

Families should prepare for:

- Diaper disposal.
- Extra hand washing.
- Bottle sanitation.
- Formula preparation.
- Illness prevention.

Babies and small children are more vulnerable to dehydration and sanitation-related illness.

Store extra sanitation supplies whenever possible.

SANITATION FOR PETS

Animal waste management becomes important during emergencies.

Pet waste should be removed regularly and disposed of safely.

Keep pet food and water containers clean.

Animals may also track contaminated water or mud into living areas during floods or storms.

COMMON SANITATION MISTAKES

Several sanitation mistakes appear repeatedly during emergencies:

- Ignoring hand washing.
- Using contaminated water containers.
- Allowing waste to accumulate.
- Cross-contaminating clean water.
- Failing to separate drinking water from gray water.

Another common mistake is waiting too long to prepare sanitation supplies.

Simple supplies stored ahead of time can prevent major problems later.

Useful sanitation supplies include:

- Trash bags.
- Soap.
- Bleach.
- Paper towels.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Disposable gloves.
- Bucket toilets.
- Absorbent material.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Sanitation and hygiene are critical parts of emergency preparedness. Clean drinking water alone is not enough to maintain health during extended disruptions.

Simple sanitation practices greatly reduce the spread of illness and help households function more safely during outages, storms, floods, and other emergencies.

Even basic preparation and modest sanitation supplies can significantly improve comfort, safety, and health during difficult situations.

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