



Preparing an Emergency Food Kit

This bulletin replaces Michigan State University (MSU) Extension bulletin *Be Prepared With a 3-Day Emergency Food Supply* (WO1029), June 2006.

Prepared by Joyce McGarry, MSU Extension Food Safety Educator

Having an emergency food kit on hand is important when a disaster strikes. Safe food, drinkable water and electricity may not be available for days or weeks. An emergency food kit contains enough water and food for each household member for at least 3 days. Store it in a cool, dry place that is easily accessible and separate from your usual groceries.

Water

Have on hand at least 1 gallon of clean water per person per day (for at least 3 days) for drinking and hygiene. (Clean and sanitize all containers before filling.)

If safe drinking water is not available, purify it by either boiling it or disinfecting with bleach.

- Disinfect by boiling: Bring water to a rolling boil and boil for at least 3 minutes. Cool water before you use it unless you will cook with it.

Disinfect with bleach: Add 1/8 teaspoon of unscented household bleach to 1 gallon of water. Stir and wait 30 minutes. There should be a faint odor of bleach remaining, if not, repeat the procedure. (The amount of bleach used to purify water is different from the amount used to make a sanitizing solution, which involves using more bleach.)



Food

Have on hand enough food to feed everyone for at least 3 days. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water.

- Dried foods: beef jerky, crackers, fruit, powdered milk, ready-to-eat cereals
- Canned foods: beans; fruit; fruit juices; meats and fish, such as tuna and chicken; soups; vegetables
- High-energy foods: breakfast bars, cookies, granola bars, nuts, peanut butter, protein bars, trail mix
- Baby formula and baby food, if needed

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Low-acid canned goods such as meat, poultry, fish and most vegetables will keep 2 to 5 years. High-acid canned goods such as tomatoes, grapefruit and pineapple can be stored for 12 to 18 months.

Never use food from cans that are leaking, rusting, bulging or badly dented or have a foul odor. Don't use food from cracked jars or jars with loose or bulging lids.

Check expiration dates on food and replace with new groceries.

To keep these foods at their best quality, store in clean, dry and cool conditions (below 85 °F). Extreme hot and freezing temperatures are harmful to canned goods. Throw out any food you suspect is spoiled.

Additional Items

- Batteries
- Can opener
- Flashlights
- Hand sanitizer
- Important family documents such as passports, birth certificates, social security numbers
- Medical supplies, first-aid kit
- Paper plates and plastic utensils
- Portable radio
- Prescription drugs
- Waterproof matches

References and Resources

Godwin, S. L., Coppings, R., Speller-Henderson, L., & Stone, R. W. (2012). What will you do when a disaster strikes? *Cooperative Extension Faculty Research*, pages 7-8.

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