

# FOCUS: EMERGENCY WATER SUPPLY



This action sheet is produced as part of the Southern California Earthquake Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an effort to increase the level of individual and family preparedness in this region. It is coordinated by eight southern California counties and the Southern California Earthquake Preparedness Project.

## WHY?

You and your family can survive for many days without food but only a short time without water. Following an earthquake there may be significant damage to regional and local water supply systems and storage facilities. This translates to limited or no access to normal water supplies. Water is essential to us, the female body is 54% water and the male's is 60%. Through

normal processes we lose a certain amount of water daily. The stress associated with a catastrophic event such as an earthquake can affect the body in ways which can lead to significantly higher levels of fluid loss, a good example of this is increased perspiration. In a matter of hours the lack of water can affect the body's senses, thinking, reaction time and energy. If the body loses 10% of its water it is serious, losing 20-22% is fatal. At a time when the ability to think and act quickly will be crucial, you do not want to be physically hampered simply because you did not take the time to store a few gallons of water.



# MAY



## HOW MUCH DO I NEED?

A normally active person requires at least ½ gallon of water per day for drinking. Additional water is needed for brushing teeth, bathing and dishwashing. *Store at least a three day supply.*

## HOW DO I STORE IT?

Buy one gallon jugs at your market, or store tap water in well-washed soft drink bottles. Clearly mark the bottles with the current date. Store them in a cool, dark place. Use the water and discard the bottles within one year. Do not use empty bleach bottles; these are not “food grade” bottles and the plastic may leach into the water. Another option is to buy five gallon bottles from water distributors. These can be kept for many years in a cool dark place, as long as the seal is not broken.

## OTHER EMERGENCY WATER SOURCES

**Ice cubes** — melt and use.

**Toilet tank** (not the bowl!) — contains clean water which can be used directly from the tank. Do not use this water if you have added any chemical treatments (cleaners) to the tank.

**Hot water heater** — be sure your hot water heater is secured with metal strapping (plumber’s tape) and bolts. To drain water from the tank, first open the valve at the top of the tank or turn on a hot water faucet somewhere in the house. Put a clean container under the tap at the bottom of the hot water heater. Use this tap to fill the container, when you need water.

## HOW TO PURIFY WATER

**Boiling** — boil vigorously for ten minutes.\*

**Purification tablets** — follow directions on container. These tablets are available at drug stores and camping supply stores.

**Bleach purification** — use household liquid chlorine bleach. Check the label; it should contain 5.25% hypochlorite to be effective and safe. Add liquid chlorine bleach to water, using eye dropper, in the amount indicated below. Stir. *wait 30 minutes for water to purify before you begin using it.*

### EXPERIENCE SAYS...

- store water on floor rather than shelf where it could fall and burst.
- along with water store handkerchiefs, coffee filters, or filtering cloths.
- it’s time to check the water you stored last May. Date, rotate and check for leakage.
- consider purchasing a portable water purification device.

Amount of Water	Amount of Bleach If Water Is Clear	Amount of Bleach** If Water Is Cloudy
1 quart	2 drops	4 drops
1 gallon	8 drops	16 drops
5 gallons	½ teaspoon	1 teaspoon

\*Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791, or, from Washington D.C. or Alaska, (202) 382-5533.

\*\*Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Information for this document was provided by Peggy Brutsche, American Red Cross, Los Angeles Chapter.

