

[The Top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness - #1 Make a plan.](#)

Sometimes it is hard to know where to start with your [emergency supplies](#). If you aren't careful, you can end up spending a lot of time, energy and money on items and in areas that really won't help you and your family [be prepared](#). Because there is a lot of information to cover in how set your "[Emergency Preparedness Priorities](#)", I am going to break this out into a few different categories. Here are the main categories I want to discuss:

1. **[Make a Plan](#)**. Review, Rotate, Replace. Make adjustments for family size, age and local community needs.
2. **[Gather Grab and Go Supplies](#)**. 72 hour kits, MREs, food bars, water pouches, water purification, first-aid, storage.
3. **[Gather Shelter in Place Supplies](#)**. Radios, flashlights, first-aid, sanitation, hygiene, warmth, shelter, storage.
4. **[Clean Water](#)**. Water storage, barrels, filters, storage.
5. **[Shelf Stable Food](#)**. Items in pantry, short term and long term food storage items.

Priority #1: Make a plan

Sometimes when people begin to think of their [emergency supplies](#) it is when something has caused them to be afraid or very concerned. Many times individuals, families and even communities don't put a lot of thought into emergency planning until it after a disaster has struck. That is, of course, the worst time to think about it. At that point, you are at somebody else's mercy.

Your first priority in getting prepared and gathering [emergency supplies](#) is to make a plan. This is a critical step because it helps you organize in your mind what you want to accomplish and how you are going to get there. Having a plan will minimize your mistakes and will help you include the right items for the right prices. Here are some ideas in formulating your emergency preparedness plan:

- **Gather information** – go to trusted sources for information on what to include in your plan and how to do it. There are many websites and books available. Here are some national websites to consider: www.Ready.gov, www.FEMA.gov, www.redcross.org. Also, go to your city, county and state emergency planning websites. That information will be extremely helpful.
2. **Write it down** – It is very important to write down your [emergency plan](#) and keep it in a place that allows you to review it regularly.
 3. **Make a list of all your items (include expiration dates if possible)** – Your emergency plan should include a list of all the items that you have stored. If possible include where they are [stored](#) and their expiration dates (if applicable). This will help you follow the principle of Review, Rotate, Replace.
 4. **Family communication plan** – Make sure you include emergency contact information, an out of state contact as well as local contacts and meeting locations in case of disaster. Also, include

[evacuation](#) routes out of the house and your community.

5. Important Documents – Make copies of important documents, like insurance policies, birth certificates, social security cards and wills. Keep those documents with your plan in a [water](#) tight container.

6. Product Instructions and Emergency Instructions – As you do your information gathering in step one, print out copies of important emergency instructions. You may want to keep a [survival](#) book on hand to give valuable information. Also, remember to include a product instructions that might be helpful as well.

7. Consider Grab and Go vs. Shelter in Place – Make a plan to evacuate (grab and go) as well as [shelter](#) in place. Include how you will do it, where you will go, what you will include in these supplies and where they will be stored.

8. Make a plan for water – Make sure you know where to get [clean water](#), how to clean water and where it will be stored.

[Top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness: Priority #2 – Gather Grab-n-Go Supplies](#)

After you have completed priority #1 which is to make a plan, your next priority is to gather [Grab and Go Supplies](#). To do this, let me first explain what Grab and Go supplies are designed to do. Like we have discussed in other posts, you should anticipate that following a disaster you will not receive any help from authorities for at least 72 hours. Your Grab and Go supplies should allow you to evacuate quickly and survive the first [72 hours](#) after a disaster. With that in mind, you should keep these qualities in mind with your Grab and Go supplies:

- 1. Make them lightweight and portable** – Don't pack a lot of heavy, bulky items. Store your Grab and Go supplies in an easy to transport bag or [backpack](#). Try to keep them all in one place.
- 2. Store them in an easy to get to place** – Remember your Grab and Go supplies need to be designed for [quick evacuation](#). If they are buried beneath a pile of boxes or scattered all around the house, you won't get everything you need.
- 3. Store shelf stable items** – Rotating items in your Grab and Go supplies will be your least favorite thing to do and you won't do it as often as you should. With that in mind store [shelf stable food](#) and [water](#) with a 5 year shelf life at a minimum.
- 4. Review, Rotate, Replace** - Don't forget the 3 R's in maintaining your Grab and Go supplies. For the most part, your Grab and Go supplies will be comprised of comprehensive [72 hour emergency survival kit](#). This month, I posted a list of items that you should have in your 72 hour emergency survival kit. I am reposting that list below for your review:

FOOD AND WATER (Remember that these items cannot be cooked or refrigerated.)

[Protein/Granola/Calorie Food Bars](#)

[Crackers/Cereals \(for munching\)](#)

[MREs/Canned Food](#) (Remember that cans can leak/explode)

Candy/Gum (These items could melt, so it's best to keep them in a zip lock baggy)

[Water](#) (1 Gallon/4 Liters per person, drinking water can be found in water boxes or pouches)

CLOTHING/WARMTH/SHELTER

[Change of Clothing](#) (short and long sleeve shirts, pants, socks, jackets, etc.)

Undergarments

[Rain Coat /Poncho](#)

[Emergency Heat Blankets](#)

[Lightweight Tent](#)

LIGHTING AND FUEL

[Flashlights, Lanterns \(Battery, Solar, or Crank powered\)](#)

Extra Batteries

Flares

[Candles](#)

[Light Sticks](#)

[Water-Proof Matches](#)

EQUIPMENT/TOOLS

[Can Opener](#)

Dishes/Utensils

[Shovel](#)

[Radio](#) (with batteries or solar or crank powered!)

Pen and Paper

Axe

[Pocket Knife](#)

[Rope](#)

[Duct Tape](#)

PERSONAL SUPPLIES AND MEDICATION

[First Aid Supplies](#) (make sure you know what it is in it and how to use it!)

Toiletries, Feminine Hygiene, Folding Brush/comb etc.(Roll of toilet paper—remove center tube to easily flatten into a zip-lock bag)

[Sanitary Supplies](#) (mini hand sanitizer, soap, shampoo, dish soap, etc.)

Immunizations Up-to Date

Medication (Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, asthma inhalers, children's medication, etc.)

Prescription Medication (for 3 days)

PERSONAL DOCUMENTS AND MONEY (Place these items in a water-proof container!)

Scriptures (Miniatures are lighter)

Legal Documents (Birth/Marriage Certificates, Wills, Passports, Contracts)

Vaccination Papers

Insurance Policies
Cash
Credit Card

MISC

Infant Needs (if applicable)
Small, Lightweight toys and games for Children (For calming effect, comfort, and entertainment)

[The Top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness – Priority #3 – Gather Shelter in Place Supplies](#)

After you have completed priority #2 which is to gather Grab and Go supplies, your next priority is to gather [Shelter](#) in Place supplies. Over the years, I have found it very helpful to divide my emergency supplies into two broad categories: Grab and Go supplies and [Shelter](#) in Place supplies. My definition of these two categories might be slightly more detailed than the traditional ones. As we reviewed in my previous section, Grab and Go supplies are designed for short term survival, about 72 hours. Shelter in Place supplies are [long term](#) emergency supplies that are designed to keep you and your family alive much longer than 72 hours.

Traditionally, the concept of sheltering in place has been limited to a short term “stay put” strategy. In case of [biological](#), chemical or nuclear contamination, local authorities may ask you to shelter in place. That essentially means to stay put inside, get your grab and go supplies, go into a windowless interior room and do what you can to prevent the outside contaminant from getting in and harming you. Here is a link to a great article from the American Red Cross on this traditional approach to sheltering in place:

<http://www.redcross.org/wwwfiles/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/shelterinplace.pdf>.

Because emergency preparedness needs to be much broader than just evacuation or duct taping yourself into a room, I have expanded what it means to “shelter in place” to mean anything that keeps you and your family alive beyond the first 72 hours. The types of supplies you will need to shelter in place will be similar to your grab and go supplies, so expect some crossover. Because you could shelter in place for anywhere from a week to a [year](#) or longer, there is a wide variety of items that people will need in their shelter in place supplies. Depending on your personal circumstances, location, budget, and expertise, your supplies may vary greatly. Here are some of the important concepts to consider in gathering your shelter in place supplies:

- **If possible, make your “shelter” your home** – Your best chance for long term survival for you and your family is in your home. As long as it is safe to inhabit, you will have [resources](#) there that will help you stay alive. For long term survival, staying safe out of the elements is critical. This is especially true for children and the elderly.
- **Determine the length of time you are preparing for** – It is important to know the approximate length of time that you are prepared for. Knowing this will help you make good decisions as far as [rationing food](#), [water](#) and other [critical supplies](#). Start small and

gather a two week supply and then gradually build from there as time and finances permit.

- **Be able to store and filter large amounts of [water](#)** – Every shelter in place supply should have water storage. There are many great posts on the blog about [water storage](#). You should also have equipment that allows you to filter and [clean water](#).
- **Store shelf stable food** – I strongly recommend storing a combination of [freeze dried food](#) meals and basic staples. These foods should be stored in [#10 cans](#) or heavy duty pails to give you the longest shelf life possible. These foods should be able to store safely for decades.
- **Sanitation, Hygiene and First-Aid** – Do not scrimp in these areas. Having a [port-a-potty](#) and necessary [hygiene supplies](#) will keep you safe from illness. Cleanliness is critical to long term survival. Have a substantial [first-aid kit](#) and know how to use it.
- **Decide how you will cook, heat and get power to your home** – Comprehensive shelter in place supplies will have a generator and some way to safely [stored fuel](#).
- **Light and communication** – A really good dynamo radio is a must (or two) and make sure you have more than just flashlights. You should have lanterns, fire starter (flint and steel) and extra batteries.
- **Review, Rotate, Replace** – Like with your [grab and go](#) supplies you should regularly review, rotate (which means to use) and replace items in your shelter in place supplies.

[The Top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness – Priority #4 – Clean Water](#)

Before we get to priority #4 here is the summary of your top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness.

They are:

1. **[Make a Plan](#)**. Review, Rotate, Replace. Make adjustments for family size, age and local community needs.
2. **[Gather Grab and Go Supplies](#)**. 72 hour kits, MREs, food bars, water pouches, water purification, first-aid, storage.
3. **[Gather Shelter in Place Supplies](#)**. Radios, flashlights, first-aid, sanitation, hygiene, warmth, shelter, storage.
4. **[Clean Water](#)**. Water storage, barrels, filters, storage.
5. **[Shelf Stable Food](#)**. Items in pantry, short term and long term food storage items.

Priority #4 – [clean water](#) is something that I have addressed in different ways on this blog. The reason I keep going back to it, is because having access to clean water in an emergency is so critical and almost always overlooked until it is too late. Here are a few obvious points to understand about [water](#), but that I want to make very clear:

- **[Without water you die very quickly](#)** – Depending on your health and age, you will live for 5-7 days without clean water. You can live much longer without food.

- **[Water is heavy and takes up a lot of space](#)**– A gallon of water weighs about 8.3 pounds. Water is not easy to transport because it is so heavy. That means your emergency water plan should account for that.

Keep these items in mind when you are doing your planning. For example, you may want to put a gallon of [water](#) per day in your 72 hour kit. But, that will weigh about 25 lbs. Are you strong enough to carry that [water](#) around? Are your children strong enough? Will it even fit? So make sure you plan.

The recommended amount of water from a variety of sources like the American Red Cross is 1 gallon of water per person per day. That is [water](#) for drinking, cleaning, cooking and sanitation. It is not for just drinking. You and I don't drink a gallon of [water](#) on a normal day. But to be safe and to take of other needs, 1 gallon of water is the recommendation. If you start doing the math on how much storage space that would require for you and your family for 1 year, you will start to understand my recommendations below.

Here is my approach to [water](#) and what I recommend. In an emergency, you need to have a 3 ways of getting to [clean water](#):

1. **[Store water](#)** – Every Shelter in Place supply should have water storage. A small word of caution: don't try to go cheap on your water storage. Buy a food grade [water](#) storage container like a 55, 30 or 5 gallon container and use that. Don't fill up your old juice bottles or worse your old milk jugs. The barrels and water containers are not to terribly expensive and when the time comes that you need the [water](#), you will be glad you stored water you can actually use. Also, have a variety of sizes of storage containers. Don't just have a 55 gallon barrel that you never move and never clean out or worse fill up. Use smaller, easier to transport containers like a 5 gallon stackable. Remember, [water](#) is heavy!

Also, you won't rotate your water as much as you think you will, so make sure you use some sort of water stabilizer that allows the water to be stored safely for 5 years without rotating. We have a [Water Preserver](#) that works well. But, if you do have the water stored but you are not sure if it is safe or you come across [water](#) in an emergency and you don't know if it is safe, that leads me to my 2nd point.

2. **[Have a portable water filter](#)** – These portable water filters are extremely handy and will allow you to clean suspect water that you come into contact with and make it drinkable. These [portable micro filters](#) are will remove bacteria and protozoa from the water, but won't kill viruses. If you have a stream, lake, pond, river or well by your house, you will be able to clean the water from those sources uses these filters. Each [filter](#) will clean up to 500 gallons of water. That is nearly ten 55 gallon drums worth of water. An impossible amount of water for most people to store. I really like or [MSR MiniWorks water filter](#) and the [Katadyn Combi](#). They are also great for backpacking and camping can have that dual purpose.

3. **[Have water purification tablets](#)** – These are very handy to have around and a small bottle will chemically treat up to 25 quarts of water. They work fairly quickly (typically in less than a half an hour) and will kill bacteria, protozoa and viruses. Remember that if you don't have any of these three things, you can still clean water by boiling it. As a matter of fact, boiling is most effective way to [clean water](#) except it won't take out the floaties like a filter will. The problem with boiling water to drink is it uses a lot of fuel that you may not want to use for that purpose.

Also, don't forget to have portable water pouches in your emergency supplies. They have a 5 year shelf life and are very handy to have around.

[The Top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness – Priority #5 – Food Storage](#)

We have finally arrived at the last installment of the Top 5 Priorities of Emergency Preparedness. [Food storage](#) is critical to be able to survive a disaster. In our modern society we can go to the local grocery store any time of day or night and buy whatever food we need. It is so easy and convenient that we don't consider what we would do if that resource was not available. The idea of [food storage](#) can seem so drastic when we have a fully stocked Wal-Mart right around the corner. But, speak with someone who has gone through a hurricane and ask them how quickly the store shelves get cleared out of [canned food](#) and [water](#). Not only will those food stuffs disappear within hours or days, but they will not be replenished quickly. At that point you will have to rely on your own food storage to survive. You may have to survive only days, but it may be weeks or even months.

Because [food storage](#) is a very in depth topic I will do my best to keep it brief. Here are the areas that we need to understand:

- **Why** – Specific reasons why you should [store food](#)?
- **What** – What type of [foods](#) should I store?
- **Where** – Where should I store my foods?
- **How** – How much food should I store? How do I get started?
- **Who** – For whom should I store food? What should I consider when I am storing food?

[Why](#)

First, let's talk about why you should have food storage. Here are 4 great reasons:

1. **Insurance** – As we have discussed in previous posts, [food storage](#) is on the best insurance policies you will ever buy. And best of all, unlike other insurance policies, you can still use it even if you don't ever really *need* it. Just remember, when the house is on fire, it is too late to buy fire insurance. You need to prepare ahead of time by having your [food storage](#) in place when you need it.
2. **Hedge against inflation** – As fuel and oil prices go up, so do food prices. This will happen. Since July 2008, oil and correspondingly gas prices have come down a ton, but never fear, they will go back up. The food you buy today will be considered a deal 20 years from now when it is still usable and good. That is also why you [buy long shelf life](#) items.
3. **Peace of mind preparedness** – What is peace of mind worth to you? With so many worries in our lives isn't nice to be able to take one off the list? Having your food storage in place and [being prepared](#) will help you diminish the fear cycle that we experience when we watch the evening news.

4. **Food storage is a sound investment** – Every expense in your life is some kind of investment. Money spent of long term [food storage](#) will pay dividends as a usable insurance policy, as a hedge against inflation and by giving you peace of mind.

What

Now, let's talk about what food you should store. Here goes:

- **Store food based on how you cook** – a 50 lb. bag of wheat is great, but you have to know how to turn it into food. That is why I really like the [freeze-dried](#) prepared meals like Mountain House and Saratoga Farms.
- **Store food with the longest shelf life possible** – To get the most out of your food storage investment, you will need to buy foods that will store for the longest time possible. Look at your food storage as an annual cost. If you spend 1,000 on food that will store for 10 years, your annual cost is \$100/year. If you spend the same amount on [food](#) that will store for 30 years, your annual cost is \$33/year. A big savings. It also means you have to rotate your food a lot less. Which means you will be able to use the food when you need it.
- **Store a variety of foods** – You should have prepared meals (like [Mountain House](#)) and fruits, vegetables and other staples (like [Saratoga Farms](#)) in all varieties in your long term food storage. The more variety, the better the nutrition will be and the healthier your food storage will be.
- **Work towards at least a 3 month supply for everyone in your family** – Having a [3 month supply](#) of long term food storage will give you a good buffer against whatever emergency you may face. After you have built it up to that point, than move to 6 months, then 9 months and then a year.
- **Store foods that are easy to prepare** – Simplicity goes a long way in your food storage. Don't store complicated foods or meals. You don't know what resources will be available to you when you will need to use the food. That is another reason I like [Saratoga Farms](#) and [Mountain House](#). You just add hot water and stir. No cooking is required.

Where

Now, you know why you should have food storage and you know what to store. So, let's talk about where to put all this stuff once you get it. Store the food in a cool, dry place. This one you have heard over and over, but it is the rule of thumb for storing your food. Two things cause your food to loss nutritional value and spoil: oxygen and moisture. Hence the dry place. Keeping your [food storage](#) cool slows down spoilage dramatically. The cooler, the better. Make sure you have your food stored in such a way that it has little or no contact with air. Basements are perfect for food storage because they maintain a steady cool temperature year round. But many people across the country don't have basements, so storing your [food](#) at room temperature (typically 75 degrees year round) will be just fine. I know a lot of people that store their food in cases under their beds or in closets. Just make sure you can get to it when you need it and it won't get damaged.

I recommend keeping your food off the ground and in the original packaging as much as possible. By keeping the food off the ground on shelves or stacked, you will prevent the food from being damaged by somebody stepping on it, dropping it or kicking it. You also want to keep your food in a place where you can get to it, but that isn't in the way. If you dent a #10 can it may affect the seam of the can and thereby affect the shelf life.

Also, by maintaining as much of the original packaging as possible, you will prolong the shelf life. So, if you buy a bunch [food](#) of in #10 cans, keep the food in the #10 cans. You may even want to keep them in the cases that they were shipped to you in. You can repackage your food in zip lock or even vacuum sealed bags, but it will reduce the shelf life.

[How](#)

Let's talk about how much food you should store and how to get started. Basically, you want to have at least a 3 month supply of long term food storage. Meaning that is food that will store for at least 10 years. You have that much [food](#) for each person in your family. After you reach that point keep adding to your storage until you feel comfortable. To get started, just do what you can. Work within your budget and buy the food you need. The most important part about getting started is to get started today!

[Who](#)

Who should you have food storage for? Of course yourself, but also everyone in your family. Make sure you take into consideration children and special diets as you store your [food](#). You should also consider your neighbors and others in the community that might be in need of your help. Just make sure you have enough food to take of your family and neighbors if possible. It is always better to have more food than you would need, just in case.