



Planning Food for Summer and Winter Storm Emergencies

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If a summer or winter storm or other disaster strikes a community, there might not be access to food, water, and electricity for days, or even weeks. By taking some time now to store emergency food and water supplies, it can provide for the entire family.

Water Supplies

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot weather could double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need even more. Water is also needed for food preparation and hygiene. Store at least one gallon per person, per day. Store at least a one-week supply of water for each member of the family.

If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today, and try to find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.

How to Store Water

Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass, or enamel-lined metal containers. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. Food-grade plastic buckets or drums can also be purchased.

Seal water containers tightly with screw-down lids, label them, and store in a cool, dark place. Use and replace water every six months.

For more information on storing water for emergency use see the OSU Extension Facts publication "Emergency Water Supplies," F-1519.

Food Supplies

There is no need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. Use the canned foods, dry mixes, and other staples on the cupboard shelves. In fact, familiar foods are important. They can lift morale and give a feeling of security in time of stress. Also, commercially canned foods will not require cooking, water, or special preparation. Below are recommended short-term food storage plans.

Special Considerations

As you stock food, take into account the family's unique needs and tastes. Try to include foods that they will enjoy and that are also high in calories and nutrition. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking are best.

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<http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

Individuals with special diets and allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers, and elderly people. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to nurse. Canned low sodium and low sugar foods, juices, and soups may be helpful for people requiring those foods.

Make sure to have a non-electric can opener, disposable plates, cups, utensils, and do not forget nonperishable foods for pets.

Short-Term Food Supplies

In most parts of Oklahoma it is unlikely that an emergency would cut off the food supply for a week. But with our unpredictable weather it would be wise to prepare a supply that will last that long.

The easiest way to develop a one-week stockpile is to increase the amount of basic foods normally kept on the shelves.

Storage Tips

- Keep food in a dry, cool spot—a dark area if possible.
- Keep food covered at all times.
- When opening food boxes or cans do so carefully so that they can be reclosed tightly.
- Wrap cookies and crackers in plastic bags, and keep them in tight containers.
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or airtight cans to protect them from pests.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use.
- Use foods before they go bad and replace them with fresh supplies that are dated using ink or a marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.

Nutrition Tips

During and right after a disaster, it is important that you keep up your strength.

- Eat at least one well-balanced meal each day.
- Drink enough liquid for the body to function properly (two quarts a day).
- Eat enough calories to do any necessary work.

Shelf life of Foods for Storage

Here are some general guidelines for rotating common emergency foods.

Use within six months

- Powdered milk
- Dried fruit
- Dry, crisp crackers
- Potatoes

Use within one year

- Canned condensed meat and vegetable soups
- Canned fruits, fruit juices, and vegetables
- Ready-to-eat cereals and uncooked instant cereals
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Hard candy and canned nuts
- Wheat
- Vegetable oils
- Dried beans and corn

May be stored longer than one year if stored in a cool, dry, dark location

- Baking powder
- Instant coffee, tea, and cocoa
- Salt
- Noncarbonated soft drinks
- White rice
- Bouillon products
- Dry pasta

Selected References

American Red Cross. Food and Water in an Emergency. American Red Cross National Headquarters, 430 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006-5307. 2001. <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/foodwtr.html>

Food Safety and Inspection Service. Keeping Food Safe During a Power Outage. United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250-3700. [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/consumerpubs.htm#DISASTER ASSISTANCE](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/consumerpubs.htm#DISASTER_ASSISTANCE) 1999

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