



Storing emergency water

This fact sheet explains why storing water is one of the most important actions you can do to be prepared for an emergency.

Why store water?

When a big quake hits and the Wellington faultline moves, the region's water supply network will be disrupted, meaning there may not be any water flowing from the treatment plants to the reservoirs in the cities.

Councils will have to shut off reservoirs to preserve the water that is already there. As a result, the water supply to our houses and work places will be cut off. The water in the reservoirs will be allocated to people living locally in the days that follow.

We cannot live without water. It is essential not only for drinking, but also for personal hygiene and food preparation.

It makes sense to store water so that you and your family will be self-sufficient for the initial period after the disaster strikes. Storing water is something that we can all do to become more prepared.

How to store water

It's easy to store water. Wash out large, plastic soft drink bottles (not milk bottles) or buy plastic water storage containers and fill with cold tap water. Fill until the container is overflowing and then put the lid on tightly. Store the water low down in a cool, dark place like a storage cupboard, garage or shed. Label the bottles with the date and replace the water every 12 months.

You may be able to use water from your toilet cistern (if it has no chemical cleaners in it) or your hot water system. But don't count on these sources – specially stored water is better.

It's difficult to say how much water you should store. The old instruction of three litres of drinking water per person for three days is only enough for survival. You will need more for personal hygiene and food preparation. This could be 15 to 20 litres per person a day, for at least three days. But don't think it's too hard – storing some water is better than none at all!



Be like Ben - store emergency water at home. (Photograph: Mark Coote)

For more information, check the Yellow Pages or contact a civil defence emergency management advisor at your local council.

When will the supply be restored?

The restoration of full water supplies will take several weeks, particularly in Wellington City, which is furthest from the water treatment plants. After community supply points have been established, you will probably have to travel to them with your containers (five or ten litre containers are ideal) to collect water.

The councils are working to make sure water facilities are more secure and are preparing response and recovery plans so that water supply will be restored as quickly as possible.



Fill until the container is overflowing.

Further reading

Protecting your health in an emergency, Ministry of Health, available at www.healthed.govt.nz/upload/PDF/10163.pdf

Regional emergency management and hazard information, available at www.gw.govt.nz/em/hazard.htm

What about rest homes, hospitals and schools?

If you are responsible for an organisation such as a rest home, hospital or school, you must provide for people in your care. You need to plan for this and store enough water.

You might need more water than you think – people may come to you seeking assistance – and you need to have a plan for dealing with this.

All organisations should store emergency water, you never know when a disaster might strike.



Storing water is easy - a range of plastic containers can be used.

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Greater Wellington is the
promotional name of the
Wellington Regional Council
Published October 2003
GW/EM-G-03/56