

# Water Storage For The Home And The Homestead

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0 Comments

If you are fortunate enough to have a well or some other stable, reliable source of off-grid water, you probably can stop reading. Or should you? When it comes to storing water for emergencies or a SHTF situation, nobody can be certain of the reliability or safety of their water supply. While humans can go a long time with little or no food, the same cannot be said for water, and that is why an emergency store of water is one of the most important supplies you can have on hand.

But how do you [store water](#) for the long term? How much should you store? And how do you keep it sanitary and clean? These are all important questions with fortunately very simple answers, that will set you down the path of full self-sufficiency in the event of a grid-down emergency.

## How Much Water Should I Store?

A general rule is one gallon per person per day. When I lived off grid on my sailboat, that was a common one, that allowed half a gallon for drinking and half a gallon for minimal basic sanitation. A better option was two gallons per day, which allowed for more cleaning and drinking water.

However, this general rule probably is almost useless as a real-world guide. The temperature, your physical health, size, diet, and other factors all determine how much water you need to have on hand for sanitation and drinking. And don't forget your pets and other animals while you are at it!

VIDEO [https://youtu.be/-3w7wId\\_VAM](https://youtu.be/-3w7wId_VAM)

I'm not going to tell you a magic amount of water per day to store per person. The best way to figure that out is to carefully measure the amount of water you use for drinking and cooking each day, average it out, and add a bit extra as a margin of error. Allow for the fact that in hotter weather you may need a gallon or more just for drinking. If you are relying on freeze dried foods in your preps, allow extra water just for preparing your food.

Sanitation allows for the bare minimum of washing hands and other important parts of your body. It does not allow for showers or toilet flushing. However, you can flush toilets with non-potable water, or in an emergency use an outdoor latrine.

The bottom line is the amount of water you need per day at a minimum depends on you and you alone. Once you've figured out that daily amount, then it's time to start storing.

A minimum of three days stored water is a good idea but presumes an ideal circumstance where emergency response crews can restore utilities, or start distributing stores of water. A week is good, two weeks is better, a month is fantastic, more than it is amazing. How much you store depends on how much space you have to store it in. Try for at least a week though, it gives a better margin in an emergency.

## How Do I Store Water?

The simplest way is to simply buy commercially bottled gallon jugs and cases of bottled water. While more expensive, it gives you a pure product in sealed containers that can easily fit in closets, under beds, or in other handy locations. Just choose a cool, dry place and avoid excessive heat or cold, and you are done!

Another option which I like is to buy [dedicated water jugs](#). These can be more expensive up front than a similar amount of commercially bottled water, but offer benefits of better container strength, portability, superior reusability, convenience, and are a better choice if you have to transport stored water in an emergency. These tough containers will fare better than flimsy water bottles.

VIDEO <https://youtu.be/Ju3heLQOx5I>

You can also go hardcore and opt for [food grade 55-gallon drums](#). [You'll also want a pump](#) if you go this route so you can easily get water out when you need it. The upside to a 55-gallon drum system is that if you have the room, you can easily store a generous supply of water for multiple people. They are great for storing in a garage, or as a storage solution for your off-grid homestead.

There may be other options, like repurposing marine or RV water tanks for stationary storage, but for the most part, these three primary choices are the well-equipped prepper's best choices. Personally, I'd opt for the 7-gallon jugs, but that's because they best suit my personal uses. I mix them up with a couple of cases of bottled water and a couple of one-gallon jugs and feel quite secure with my emergency water supply.

## How Do I Keep My Water Clean?

If you are storing commercially bottled water, then you have nothing to worry about as long as the seals are unbroken. But if you are filling up drums or jugs, then you are right to worry about your water going bad.

Presuming you are working with a sanitary source of water in the first place, and your storage vessels are clean and sealed from the outside, you can keep water for a few days or weeks under good conditions without worrying. Rinsing your drum or jug out with bleach water to kill germs, and wiping down spigots and the like with bleach water will give you a clean container to start with.

[Adding a small amount of non-perfumed bleach](#) will disinfect water for storage. [There are other ways](#) that some consider superior, but any of these will work. There is no hard and fast rule for how long you can safely store water in drums and jugs. It depends on how well you purified the container, how clean the water was that went into them, and how sealed they are from the outside.

VIDEO <https://youtu.be/g7D7FjK4ffI>

It is said that travelers used to put silver coins inside water barrels as a way to kill germs in water, but I wouldn't rely on that when there are better choices.

Changing out your stored water every 3-6 months is going to be your best bet for ensuring a constant supply of safe water (commercially bottled water can last longer, longer even than the expiration date marked on the container.) and you can always filter and boil it if you still feel unsure about its safety.

Another option would be to can your own water in mason jars, but that is time-consuming, takes up space, and should only be considered if you have no other option available. The most important step you can take is to store water. It can always be cleaned and purified before use if needed.



## Conclusion

Storing at least a few days of water for your family and animals is a crucial part of your long term survival plans. Without it, you are at the mercy of others or are doomed. Each gallon of water you store gives you that much of an edge during an emergency. Looking at how confused and hectic things are after a disaster, do you really want to rely on the government to bring in emergency water supplies? I sure as heck don't!

How much you store, and how you do it will depend on where you live, your budget, and the practical aspects of storing large amounts of water. Don't forget that if you have a hot water heater, that will also be a source of potable water during a grid-down emergency. This can provide several days worth of drinking water, and for the first few

hours after the grid goes down, can probably save you on fuel by still being warm enough to make freeze-dried meals with.

Even if you have a well, or access to a stream or lake, storing potable water gives you an edge during a disaster. Having clean, drinkable water already on hand means you have one less thing to deal with while coping with an emergency. It also protects you in case your well pump breaks, or there is a problem with groundwater supplies. If you rely on a lake, river or stream, having stored water is a shield against drought or a sudden outbreak of disease or pollution in whatever body of water you normally use. Having a backup is always prudent, and being aware of the possible shortcomings of off-grid water supplies is a must.

Fortunately, putting water aside isn't terribly difficult or expensive. You can start small by buying a couple of gallons of bottled water every week, or just go straight to the 55-gallon drum, and go that route. There is no wrong way as long as you are putting water aside for emergency use. With a little luck, you'll never have to call on your water stores, but if you do need them, you'll be glad you have them!

### **Author's Bio**

*Steve Coffman is a freelance writer and consulting historian. He has a BA in US history from The Evergreen State College and lives near Tacoma, Washington. He collects antique telephone insulators and is presently researching labor union relations in Washington State during WWI.*