

## Preparing Water for Use in an Emergency

**Becky Schuerman**  
*Extension Domestic Water/  
Wastewater Associate*

It's that time of year again in Nebraska, when we can experience severe weather such as flooding, thunderstorms and tornadoes. These events can create power outages. If you are a private well owner without power, your well pump won't work, therefore you will not have running water. Public water customers can also experience disruptions in their water supply.

Having an emergency water supply on hand can be very helpful in these situations. One option is to purchase bottled water, but another option is to prepare and store water from

your private or public drinking water source. Your current source of drinking and cooking water is probably suitable for storage. Water to be stored for consumption should be free of bacteria and pathogens.

### Containers

It is safest to store water in food grade, durable, unbreakable containers that have secure caps. Food-grade glass containers may also be used, but present a risk because they are breakable. Avoid recycling plastic milk containers because traces of fat may remain that can contaminate the water.

Wash all containers and lids thoroughly with hot, soapy tap water and rinse everything thoroughly with hot tap water. Containers can be sanitized by pouring 1 quart of water and 1 teaspoon of non-scented bleach into the container, securely cap it and shake well, making sure the entire inner surface of the container has come into contact with the bleach solution. Let the container sit for at least 30 seconds before emptying the solution out. You can either let the container air-dry or rinse with the clean water you plan to store.

### Treatment

Bacteria being introduced into the water during the collection and storage process is always a possibility. If the water collected for storage is non-commercially treated water you should consider treating it with bleach after filling your storage container, and definitely before consuming it, to kill any pathogens that may exist. Use non-scented, liquid household chlorine bleach that contains at least 4–6% sodium hypochlorite. It is important to use the freshest container of bleach available, preferably not more than three months old.

Add six drops of bleach per gallon of water using a clean, uncontaminated medicine dropper. Securely cap the container and shake to thoroughly mix the water and chlorine, then let it sit for 30 minutes. Uncap the container, if you do not smell chlorine after letting it sit for 30 minutes, add another two drops of bleach per gallon being treated. Cap and shake to mix, then let it sit for another 15 minutes.

### Storage

Be sure all containers are securely capped

**EXTENSION POSTPONEMENTS, CANCELLATIONS & CHANGES**

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19), Nebraska Extension statewide is following University of Nebraska–Lincoln guidelines for teaching classes, workshops, etc. All teaching or gathering events between March 16 and May 9 (end of UNL spring semester) will be cancelled or postponed unless they can be delivered remotely (webinar or teleconference).

As of press time, the Lancaster County Extension office remains open during regular office hours. The conference rooms have been closed to meetings/events until May 9.

Extension is planning for summer events as normal, and will publish the status of events scheduled after May 9 as far in advance as possible.

## Census Reminder

Census results affect your voice in government, how much funding your community receives and how your community plans for the future. Multiple languages are available. By law, your information is confidential!

### 4 Ways to Respond

1. **Secure internet:** New and quick, respond online at <http://2020census.gov>
2. **Respond by phone:** Number will be listed on invitation.
3. **Respond by mail:** If you haven't responded online by early April, a paper questionnaire will be mailed to you.
4. **In-person interview:** If you have not responded by May, a census worker will follow up in person.

For more information:  
**2020CENSUS.GOV**

Follow on social media:  
**@uscensusbureau**

United States®  
**Census  
2020**

### HOW MUCH WATER TO STORE

While everyone's needs will differ, the general rule-of-thumb is to store at least one gallon of water per person or pet, per day. Store at least a three-day supply (or three gallons) for each person or pet in your household. Consider storing more water if you have the space to do so.

**Tips for Safe Drinking Water Storage for Use in an Emergency**



and label each with the date of preparation before storing. Store containers in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. Never store any water supplies — particularly those in plastic containers — near gasoline, kerosene, pesticides or similar substances because vapors from some of these products can penetrate plastic. Storage shelving needs to be sturdy and stable because water weighs over eight pounds per gallon. Stored water supplies should be replaced every six months, particularly if water hasn't been commercially treated.

You can also store water in the freezer. Be sure to use freezer-safe containers, particularly avoiding the use of glass containers. Leave 2–3 inches of air space in the top of each container to allow for

expansion as the water freezes. If you lose electricity, frozen water containers can help to keep foods frozen for approximately two days.

*This article has been peer-reviewed.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension related resources:

- NebGuide "Drinking Water Treatment – Emergency Procedures" (G1494) at <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g1494.pdf>
- Article "Water Options and Treatment During and Following Flooding" at <https://disaster.unl.edu/water-options-and-treatment-during-and-following-flooding>

## CONNECT WITH US

Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County  
444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A  
Lincoln, NE 68528  
402-441-7180  
<http://lancaster.unl.edu>



## IN THIS ISSUE

Food & Health . . . . . 2  
Farm & Acreage . . . . . 3  
Early Childhood . . . . . 3  
Pests & Wildlife . . . . . 4  
Weed Awareness . . . . .  
Special Pullout Section  
Horticulture . . . . . 5  
4-H & Youth . . . . . 6–7