THE 90-DAY HOUSEHOLD PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

A practical plan for preparing when only a few days remain

Start with the next 72 hours. Secure immediate household needs, then build a 14-day base and extend ordinary supplies toward 90 days. This guide focuses on decisions and tasks a household can actually complete.

Use this guide to: identify what your household truly needs; prioritize water, food, medicine, sanitation, communication, and safe shelter; organize a rapid first few days; then establish a rotation system for a longer reserve.

Scenario boundary: This guide uses a hypothetical 90-day self-sufficiency announcement as its premise. It does not verify that an actual government 90-day household mandate exists. In any real emergency, follow current local instructions and public-health advisories.

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Prepared for household use | Review and update as family needs change

Read this first

The goal is continuity and safe choices, not a perfect stockpile. A few days of preparation can reduce avoidable problems, but it cannot make every household fully independent for 90 days.

Important reality check: A 90-day reserve is especially difficult for water, prescription medicines, fuel, and temperature-controlled needs. Store what you can safely manage, identify reliable replenishment options, and keep an evacuation plan. Do not assume food alone equals self-sufficiency.

What official guidance says

U.S. emergency guidance commonly begins with several days of household supplies. CDC recommends storing at least 1 gallon of water per person per day for 3 days and trying for a two-week supply if possible. The 90-day target in this guide is an expanded scenario goal, not a standard minimum in those sources. [1, 2]

Use four planning layers

Layer	Purpose	Practical target
Immediate	Handle the first disruption	72 hours of essentials; charge devices; act on medical needs
Base	Cover delays in local assistance or resupply	Build toward 14 days of food, water, medicines, hygiene, and pet needs
Extended	Reduce dependence on frequent shopping	Add 13 weekly meal plans and household consumables, rotating as you go
Continuity	Handle needs that cannot be stored for 90 days	Safe water source, medical plan, energy choices, communications, evacuation and community options

Keep the order straight

- ☐ People and medical needs first.
- ☐ Water reserve and safe-water plan second.
- ☐ Ready-to-eat food, sanitation, and essential medicines next.
- ☐ Light, communication, safe cooking, temperature protection, documents, and evacuation readiness.
- ☐ Build the longer pantry by purchasing foods the household already eats and rotating them.

If there is an evacuation order, dangerous heat or cold, fire, flooding, contamination, or a medical emergency, leave or seek help as directed. Preparedness supplies do not replace emergency services or official instructions.

Your first 72 hours

When time is short, organize the work and meet immediate needs before buying long-term quantities. Assign roles so one person is not responsible for everything.

Day 1: assess, charge, and secure

- [ ] Count household members, pets, prescriptions, medical devices, food restrictions, and mobility or communication needs.
- [ ] Inventory supplies already at home. Make a short list of gaps; do not shop before checking closets, pantry, freezer, and vehicle kit.
- [ ] Charge phones, power banks, battery lights, radios, and necessary devices. Refill vehicle fuel if feasible.
- [ ] Contact pharmacy or clinician about refill timing, refrigerated medication, power-dependent devices, and any care plan.
- [ ] Identify official local alert channels and one out-of-area contact.

Day 2: cover basic needs

- [ ] Close the immediate water gap with safe commercially bottled water or clean food-grade containers. Start with at least 3 days and work toward 14 days if feasible.
- [ ] Add ready-to-eat foods for three days, plus a manual can opener and food for special diets.
- [ ] Gather soap, toilet paper, trash bags, wipes, first aid supplies, and personal-care items.
- [ ] Put flashlights/headlamps, batteries, radio, chargers, and contact information in one known place.

Day 3: make it usable

- [ ] Prepare a go-bag for each person and a pet carrier/supply bag. Keep bags light enough to carry.
- [ ] Confirm how you would cook safely and what you would do if the home becomes too hot, cold, or unsafe.
- [ ] Write down meeting places, routes, contacts, utility shutoff locations, and household roles.
- [ ] Check alarms, vehicle readiness, and documents. Make a second shopping list for the next 11 days.

After the first 72 hours: Do a short household practice. Pretend the phone and power are out. Can everyone find water, medicines, light, food that needs no cooking, and the exit kit? Record gaps before expanding the pantry.

Build your household profile

A good plan starts with people, routines, and local hazards. Use this page as the control sheet for the rest of the guide.

Household worksheet

Planning item	Write your answer
People / ages / languages	_____
Pets / service animals / livestock	_____
Medical devices / prescriptions / refrigerated items	_____
Infant care / allergies / special diet / religious needs	_____
Mobility, hearing, vision, or communication needs	_____
Likely local hazards and season	_____
Primary and backup contacts	_____

Map the home

- ☐ Where is the safest sleeping area during the hazards most likely in your area?
- ☐ Which route exits the home quickly? Where are the keys, shoes, and flashlight at night?
- ☐ Where can water containers be stored without blocking exits or overloading shelves?
- ☐ Where are the main water, gas, and electrical shutoffs? Learn safe operation; do not approach damaged utilities.
- ☐ Where can supplies remain cool, dry, pest-resistant, and protected from likely flooding?

Map your community

- ☐ Identify local emergency management alerts, weather alerts, public shelters, cooling/heating centers, pharmacies, urgent care, and veterinarian.
- ☐ Identify two ways out of the immediate area and a place to stay that accepts your household and pets.
- ☐ Ask a trusted neighbor about checking in, accessibility needs, or a ride if evacuation becomes necessary.

Write the actual town, county, and state resources in your local copy. Conditions and available services vary; official local directions take priority.

Water: calculate the reserve

Water is the first large storage challenge. The baseline below is simple math for planning, not a guarantee that it meets every household need.

Baseline: Plan at least 1 gallon per person per day. CDC recommends at least a 3-day supply and says to try for two weeks if possible. Plan more for hot climates, illness, pregnancy, and pets. [1]

Quantity worksheet

- ☐ People in household: ____ x 1 gallon x 3 days = ____ gallons for 3 days.
- ☐ People: ____ x 1 gallon x 14 days = ____ gallons for 14 days.
- ☐ People: ____ x 1 gallon x 90 days = ____ gallons for 90 days, before extra needs.
- ☐ Pets: species/number _____ daily estimate _____ gallons x 14 days = _____ gallons.

Household	3 days	14 days	90 days
1 people	3 gal	14 gal	90 gal
2 people	6 gal	28 gal	180 gal
3 people	9 gal	42 gal	270 gal
4 people	12 gal	56 gal	360 gal
5 people	15 gal	70 gal	450 gal
6 people	18 gal	84 gal	540 gal

Understand what the gallon figure means

The gallon-per-person figure is a minimum planning baseline. Actual demand can rise with heat, illness, physical work, cooking, children, pregnancy, and pets. This calculation does not create a complete water-and-sanitation system. A four-person household at this baseline would need 56 gallons for 14 days and 360 gallons for 90 days. Five gallons weighs about 42 pounds.

Choose storage that is safe and manageable

- ☐ Use unopened commercially bottled water or containers specifically intended for drinking-water storage.
- ☐ If filling containers yourself, follow CDC and manufacturer cleaning/sanitizing instructions; use safe water; close tightly; label “drinking water” and the date.
- ☐ Store in a cool place, away from sunlight and toxic chemicals, where containers cannot fall or block an exit.
- ☐ Replace home-filled water every six months; inspect containers and stored commercial water regularly. [1]
- ☐ Use clean hands and a clean pour method. Do not dip a cup or hand into stored water.

Storage capacity should match your home, budget, lifting ability, and floor support. Do not place heavy containers on weak shelves or elevated areas.

Water: source, treatment, and limits

A stored reserve buys time. A safe-water plan must also account for what the water may contain and which official advisory applies.

Set your decision sequence

Situation	Safer action
Tap water available and no advisory	Use normally; keep stored reserve clean and closed.
Boil-water advisory	Follow the issuing authority's exact instructions. CDC says boiling is the best way to kill germs; use bottled water if unable to boil.
Chemical/toxin concern or "do not drink/use" advisory	Do not assume boiling or bleach makes it safe. Use commercially bottled water or a different source and follow health officials.
Unknown outdoor source	Assume contamination is possible. Surface water can contain sewage, animal waste, and chemicals; identify the source and treatment limits before use.

If officials say boiling is appropriate

CDC's general emergency guidance: if water is cloudy, let it settle or filter through a clean cloth, then bring clear water to a rolling boil for 1 minute (3 minutes above 6,500 feet). Cool and store in clean, sanitized containers with tight covers. Follow local advisories if they differ. [2]

Treatment does not solve every problem

- ☐ Boiling and ordinary disinfectants address many germs, but do not remove fuel, toxic chemicals, radioactive materials, or all contaminants.
- ☐ Bleach strength and product labels vary. Use CDC's current instructions for the active ingredient and source; never mix bleach with other cleaners.
- ☐ Portable filters vary in what they remove. Read the exact certification and manufacturer limits; filtration may need disinfection afterward.
- ☐ Do not use water from a home radiator or boiler for drinking, cooking, or hygiene.

Action before an emergency: Write down where you would get safe water, who can confirm advisories, what containers you have, how you would carry the water, and which treatment method fits that source. CDC source and disinfection directions are listed in the Sources section. [2, 3]

Where to look for water

In a grid-down emergency, water may be available in the home, through an official community source, or outdoors. Treat every source according to what could contaminate it; appearance alone does not establish safety.

Best order: Use sealed or officially distributed drinking water first. Next, use a known potable source or a household reserve. Collect outdoor water only when needed and only if you can treat it for the likely hazards. Do not drink water with suspected fuel, chemicals, toxins, or sewage contamination. [3]

Inside the home

Potential source	What to know
Stored bottled / food-grade water	Preferred reserve if sealed and properly stored. Use clean handling and protect containers from heat, chemicals, and floodwater.
Water-heater tank	CDC lists the tap-water heater tank as a possible emergency source. Use the domestic hot-water tank only; never use a boiler or radiator heating system tank. Follow the heater maker's instructions and beware hot water/scalding.
Toilet tank	CDC lists clear water from the tank, not the bowl, only when it has not been chemically treated with toilet cleaners. Do not use if dirty, colored, or exposed to contamination.
Ice cubes / frozen containers	Melt only ice made from water that was safe before the emergency. Keep it in a clean covered container.
Canned fruit or vegetables / packaged drinks	The liquid can contribute fluid if the food/package is intact and safe. Plan for nutrition and household needs; salty liquids are not a substitute for drinking water.
Pool or spa	CDC says use for hygiene, cleaning, and related non-drinking uses, not drinking. Pool chemicals and contaminants make a straw filter an unsafe shortcut.

Community and neighboring sources

- ☐ Official bottled-water or tanker distribution points; public shelters, cooling/heating centers, and emergency water stations announced by local officials.
- ☐ A neighbor's municipal tap, tested well, or maintained potable-water cistern, with permission and a clean way to carry the water. Confirm any local advisory still applies.
- ☐ Publicly designated springs, wells, fill stations, or community cisterns only when the responsible agency identifies them as potable or gives treatment directions.
- ☐ Do not assume a hydrant, irrigation line, fire station, business, school, or public fountain is operating or safe; use sources identified by authorities.

Outside the home

CDC identifies rainwater, streams, rivers and other moving water, ponds and lakes, and natural springs as possible sources that may be treated for germs. This does not mean they are automatically drinkable. Surface water can contain human/animal waste, chemicals, or other contaminants. Rainwater catchments can collect germs and chemicals from roofs and storage systems. [3, 11]

Outdoor water: screen the source first

Choose the least suspicious source available, but understand that a clear stream or spring can still carry germs. If contamination may include chemicals, ordinary field treatment is not enough.

Potential sources and the conditions that matter

Source	Screen for	Planning note
Rainwater / roof catchment	Roof material, bird/animal droppings, dust, smoke, pesticides, first-flush debris, dirty gutters/cistern	CDC says rainwater is not necessarily safe without removing germs and chemicals. Use maintained food-safe collection and source-specific treatment; it cannot be assumed potable. [3]
Stream / river	Upstream farms, sewage, road runoff, mining, industry, dead animals, algal blooms, floodwater	Moving water may have less sediment than a pond but is not inherently safe. Avoid visibly polluted water or a known spill; treat for microbes only when chemical contamination is not suspected.
Pond / lake	Stagnation, algae, livestock, sewage, runoff, shoreline contamination	More particles and biological growth can clog filters. Harmful algal toxins may not be removed by standard filters or boiling; follow health advisories.
Natural spring	Surface runoff, animal access, nearby septic systems, mining or geologic contaminants	A spring is not guaranteed clean. Use a tested/officially managed source or appropriate treatment and testing.
Private well	Flooding, damaged casing/pump/wiring, changes in color/odor, nearby chemical release	After suspected contamination, use bottled water and contact local health officials/well professionals. A private well should be tested; a filter straw is not well remediation. [12]
Snow / ice outdoors	Road salt, soot, animal waste, fuel or chemical residue	CDC allows melted snow as a last resort in winter; boiling kills most germs but does not remove chemicals that may be in snow. Melt and treat; do not eat snow as a water plan. [13]

Reject these as drinking-water sources

- ☐ Floodwater, stormwater, water with fuel/solvent/pesticide odor or sheen, or water downstream of a known spill.
- ☐ Ocean or brackish water for ordinary straws and camping filters: they do not remove salt. Desalination requires a device specifically designed and rated for it.
- ☐ Pool/spa water, toilet-bowl water, radiator/boiler water, water from unknown chemical containers, and untreated wastewater.
- ☐ Water affected by a “do not use” advisory or suspected chemical/radiological contamination. Boiling, bleach, and typical portable filters do not make it safe. [2]

Source rule: If you cannot identify the likely contamination, do not assume a filter solves it. Seek bottled or officially distributed water, ask local health officials, or relocate to a safer source.

Match the treatment to the hazard

Water treatment has separate jobs: remove particles, remove germs, or remove dissolved chemicals/salts. One method rarely handles all three.

Method	What it can do	What it cannot reliably do	Best use / cautions
Cloth / settling	Reduce grit and visible particles before another treatment.	Does not disinfect or remove dissolved chemicals.	Use as pretreatment for cloudy water; collect the clearer layer without disturbing sediment.
Portable microfilter / straw	Model-dependent removal of protozoa and bacteria; may reduce particles.	Most do not remove viruses, salt, fuel, or dissolved chemicals.	Check exact pore size, test claims, flow capacity, and use instructions. CDC notes many portable filters do not remove viruses or all bacteria. [9]
Purifier / ultrafilter	Certain units with verified finer filtration can remove viruses, bacteria, and parasites.	Does not automatically remove chemicals or salt.	Confirm the exact unit's performance data and use conditions; "purifier" is not a universal guarantee.
Boiling	Kills bacteria, viruses, and parasites when done according to current official directions.	Does not remove chemical contamination or salt; may concentrate nonvolatile contaminants.	Good for microbial hazards when water is not chemically contaminated; requires fuel and safe cooling/storage. [2]
Chemical disinfectant	Label-directed chlorine, chlorine dioxide, or other products can inactivate some germs.	Does not remove particles, chemicals, or salt; effectiveness differs by pathogen and product.	Follow label and public-health directions. Some parasites resist certain disinfectants; filter first when indicated. [2, 9]
UV device	Can inactivate microbes in clear water with the required dose.	Does not remove particles, salt, or chemicals.	Needs power/batteries and clear water; prefilter and follow the unit's dose instructions. [9]
Reverse osmosis / desalination	Can remove microbes and salt; selected contaminants may be reduced by a specific certified system.	Not every portable unit removes every chemical; needs pressure, maintenance, and reject-water handling.	Use when salt removal is needed only with equipment specifically rated for that source and contaminants. [9]
Activated carbon	Can improve taste/odor and reduce specific chemicals if the product is designed and certified for them.	Does not reliably disinfect water or remove all chemicals.	Read the label for exact contaminant claims and replacement schedule; do not treat taste improvement as proof of safety.

Key distinction: A "filter" is not automatically a "purifier." CDC states reverse osmosis removes parasites, bacteria, viruses, and salt; portable microfilters usually have narrower performance. Check the exact model, not the brand name alone. [9]

How to use a LifeStraw or similar filter

A personal straw can be useful when the source is microbiologically risky but not known to contain chemicals or salt. It is one component of a plan, not a substitute for source selection, water storage, or household-scale capacity.

What to check on the exact model

- [ ] Look up the exact model and its performance data sheet. Product lines include different microfilters and purifiers.
- [ ] Confirm whether it is tested for bacteria, protozoa, and viruses; read the standard, test conditions, and replacement/end-of-life indicator.
- [ ] Check whether the device is designed to drink directly from a source, fill a container, or process household volumes. A straw is usually point-of-use and may not fill a family water jug.
- [ ] Check whether it reduces any chemical contaminants; this varies by model and does not cover every chemical or fuel.
- [ ] Follow instructions for cleaning, backflushing, storage, freezing exposure, and replacement. Keep spare parts if appropriate.

LifeStraw example, not a blanket endorsement

LifeStraw's current product help page says most individual-use LifeStraw products are 0.2-micron microfilters that remove bacteria and parasites, while its 0.02-micron ultrafilters/purifiers also remove viruses. Some advanced models add carbon or ion-exchange media for selected chemicals or metals. These are manufacturer claims for product families; verify the current data for the exact model and do not infer salt or broad chemical removal from a "LifeStraw" name. [10]

A cautious field workflow

Step	Action
1. Identify	Use the cleanest available source; reject chemical, fuel, saltwater, sewage, and "do not use" sources.
2. Clarify	If muddy, let sediment settle and pour the clearer water through a clean cloth or prefilter. This removes grit, not germs.
3. Filter	Use a device whose exact label covers the likely germs and volume. Keep dirty-water fittings away from clean containers.
4. Disinfect if needed	If the filter does not cover viruses or local guidance calls for it, use a compatible disinfectant or boil as directed. Do not add extra chemicals casually.
5. Store safely	Use a clean covered container labeled "treated," with date/time. Avoid touching the inside or dipping cups into it.

For a household: Compare a personal straw with a gravity or pump system by daily output, virus coverage, replacement parts, ability to process a whole container, and ease of cleaning. Include a backup method such as boiling or label-directed disinfection, while recognizing that neither fixes chemical contamination.

Make a local water recovery plan

Before an outage, turn “we’ll find water” into a tested plan: source, route, permission, container, treatment, quantity, and backup.

Water source worksheet

Question	Plan / answer
First source: sealed water or official point?	_____
Second source: neighbor, well, cistern, rain system, public station?	_____
Is the source tested / officially designated? Who confirms?	_____
Likely hazard: microbes / chemicals / salt / sediment / unknown	_____
Treatment device and exact claims	_____
How many gallons per hour/day can it produce?	_____
How will we carry it and keep clean/dirty sides separate?	_____
Backup source and evacuation destination	_____

Before the emergency

- ☐ Ask your water utility about outage and boil-water alert procedures; learn whether your home has a well, cistern, or water-heater tank.
- ☐ If you own a private well or rainwater system, test it routinely through a certified lab and know how to reach your local health department. [11, 12]
- ☐ Practice the full collection and treatment sequence using the exact containers and filter you intend to use. Measure output and note time and fuel/battery needs.
- ☐ Keep a small reserve of sealed water while preparing a replenishment plan; redundancy protects you if the source or device fails.

Source and filter tracking

Source checked on: _____ Filter/model: _____ Manuals stored at: _____

Tested output: _____ gallons/hour Replacement part/date: _____ Next practice: _____

Local water utility / health department: _____

Food value: no single item wins

“Best value” changes with the outage. A low-cost dry staple may be excellent for a stocked kitchen and a poor first choice when there is no water, fuel, or power.

Use a mixed basket: choose a few foods that provide ready-to-eat energy and protein now, then add low-cost staples for meals later. Foods for an emergency supply should store well, meet household needs, and require little or no cooking, water, or refrigeration. [14]

Compare each food on five tests

Test	What to measure	Why it matters
Cost	Unit price; cost per 1,000 calories; cost per 25 g protein	Prices vary by store, package size, and sale. Compare your shelf labels and receipts.
Nutrition	Calories, protein, fiber, fat, and useful micronutrients per serving	Energy matters, but a 90-day food plan needs more than a single nutrient.
Space and weight	Package volume and weight; how much is edible versus liquid or packaging	Compact dry foods save space; canned foods carry more package weight and liquid.
Readiness	Can it be eaten now without a stove, electricity, or added water?	The first days may not allow normal cooking or cleanup.
Shelf and household fit	Storage directions, best-quality date, allergies, taste, chewing needs, sodium	A food no one can eat or store safely is not a good value.

Use the label and the unit-price tag

- ☐ Calories per package = calories per serving x servings per package.
- ☐ Cost per 1,000 calories = package price ÷ package calories x 1,000.
- ☐ Cost per 25 grams of protein = package price ÷ total grams of protein in the package x 25.
- ☐ For a pantry basket, add the water, fuel, cookware, and time needed to prepare it.
- ☐ Compare similar foods and serving sizes. USDA MyPlate recommends meal planning, using unit prices, buying foods that store well, and avoiding overbuying. [15]

These are comparison tools, not a personalized diet prescription. For household-specific medical diets, ask a qualified clinician or dietitian.

High-value foods and their tradeoffs

The foods below cover different jobs. The strongest pantry uses a mix of them, with ready-to-eat items for the first days and cookable staples for later meals.

Food	Strengths	Limits / best role
Peanut or seed butter	Compact, energy dense, contributes fat and protein, ready to eat.	Allergy risk; compare added sugar/salt; package may be bulky. Pair with grains or fruit.
Canned fish	Ready-to-eat protein; some choices provide omega-3 fats; sardines or salmon with bones can add calcium.	Price and sodium vary; cans are heavy. Rotate varieties and follow household medical/diet needs.
Canned chicken/meat	Ready-to-eat protein with no cooking; useful in meals or eaten as-is.	Often more expensive per serving than dry legumes; sodium and texture vary. Choose products household accepts.
Canned beans/lentils	Ready to eat, fiber and plant protein; no soaking or long cooking.	Heavy because of liquid; compare sodium and unit price. Keep some cans for fuel-free meals.
Dry beans / split peas / lentils	Usually low-cost, compact, long-lasting when stored dry; provide plant protein and fiber.	Require safe water, heat, time, and fuel. Keep canned or ready-to-eat protein for outages when cooking is unavailable.
Oats / rice / pasta / other grains	Versatile energy staples; dry packages are compact and can form the base of many meals.	Need water and often cooking; nutrition varies by grain and fortification. Pair with protein and produce.
Cooking oil	Very calorie dense in a small amount; useful to cook and enrich meals.	Calories but little protein or fiber; not a balanced food alone. Store modestly, tightly closed, and rotate to protect quality.
Powdered or shelf-stable milk / fortified alternative	Can add protein and nutrients such as calcium; unopened shelf-stable packages may be convenient.	Powder needs safe water; opened products have different storage needs. Check labels and household tolerance.
Canned/dried fruit and vegetables	Variety, fiber, and micronutrients; shelf-stable and ready to serve.	Usually less energy dense than fats and grains; canned options can be heavy or high in syrup/sodium.

Budget baseline: USDA MyPlate lists beans, eggs, canned fish, peanut butter, oats, rice, pasta, canned or dried produce, and dairy/fortified alternatives among practical lower-cost or pantry-friendly choices. Compare current local prices rather than assuming one food is always cheapest. [15, 16]

If you can buy only a few things

Use this order as a flexible starter basket. Pick familiar foods, adapt for allergies and medical needs, and make sure at least some can be eaten without cooking.

First trip: cover ready-to-eat meals

- ☐ Nut or seed butter, plus crackers, tortillas, or another household staple that needs no cooking.
- ☐ Canned fish, chicken, beans, or ready-to-eat meals; choose packages you can open and finish safely.
- ☐ Canned fruit and vegetables, dried fruit, or applesauce your household will eat.
- ☐ Shelf-stable milk or a suitable fortified alternative; include a way to drink/use it and account for safe water if powder is used.
- ☐ A manual can opener, basic utensils, and foods for children, allergies, medical diets, and pets.

Then add low-cost cooking staples

- ☐ Oats and rice/pasta or other familiar grains.
- ☐ Dry beans, lentils, or split peas if you have water, cooking fuel, and enough time; lentils generally cook faster than many whole beans, but still require cooking.
- ☐ A modest bottle of cooking oil, salt, and seasonings that make staples easier to eat.
- ☐ Additional canned beans, fish, meats, vegetables, and fruit to create quick meals when fuel is scarce.

How to decide between canned and dry

Choose canned when…	Choose dry when…
You need no-cook food; water or fuel may be limited; fast preparation matters; or the household will use it before opening leftovers spoil.	You have reliable water, safe cooking fuel, storage space, and time; you want lower package weight and cost per meal; and you already cook these foods.

Three simple meal patterns

- ☐ Oats + shelf-stable milk/water + peanut or seed butter + dried fruit.
- ☐ Crackers/tortillas + canned fish or meat + canned vegetables/fruit.
- ☐ Rice/pasta + beans/lentils + canned tomatoes or vegetables + a little oil/spice.

Treat these as mix-and-match patterns, not a prescribed menu. Check package instructions and household dietary needs. MyPlate budget materials encourage planning meals, comparing unit prices, and combining pantry staples with proteins and produce. [15, 16]

Food cost and nutrition worksheet

Use this page in the store. Record actual package labels and local prices; the best deal can change between stores and package sizes.

Food / brand / package size	Price	Package calories	Package protein	Ready to eat?
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N
_____	$____	_____	____ g	Y / N

Calculate two comparisons

Cost per 1,000 calories = package price ÷ package calories x 1,000

Example worksheet: $_____ ÷ _____ calories x 1,000 = $_____ per 1,000 calories.

Cost per 25 g protein = package price ÷ total package protein grams x 25

Example worksheet: $_____ ÷ _____ g protein x 25 = $_____ per 25 g protein.

Then check the hidden costs

- ☐ Does it require fuel or electricity? How much water does the recipe absorb or need?
- ☐ Will it be safe to store at home temperature? Once opened, can it be used before it needs refrigeration?
- ☐ How much is edible food versus water, brine, bones, or packaging? Is the can size practical for your household?
- ☐ Does the label fit allergies, sodium limits, swallowing needs, or other medical instructions?
- ☐ Will the household actually eat it, and can the supply be rotated into normal meals?

Storage and rotation

FoodSafety.gov recommends storing emergency foods in a cool, dry, dark place and protecting them from pests, moisture, heat, and floodwater. Use and replace supplies as dates and package conditions require. Never use leaking, bulging, or badly damaged cans. [14, 17]

Best short answer: For compact ready-to-eat nutrition, start with nut/seed butter and canned fish or meat, then add canned beans, fruit/vegetables, and shelf-stable milk. For the lowest-cost longer pantry, compare dry beans/lentils, oats, rice/pasta, and oil - but only if your water and cooking plan can support them.

Food: plan meals before quantities

The most reliable long-term pantry is made from foods your household already eats. Count meals and ingredients rather than buying a random pile of calories.

Create a seven-day baseline

- [ ] Write a normal week of breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks. Note each person's portions and any food they will not eat.
- [ ] Mark each ingredient: shelf-stable / refrigerated / frozen / requires cooking / requires added water.
- [ ] Choose meals that use overlapping ingredients and can be made with few dishes and modest fuel.
- [ ] Add food for infants, allergies, diabetes or other medical needs, texture needs, religious practice, and pets.

Scale from one week to 90 days

For each shelf-stable food your household uses, calculate: weekly quantity x 2 = approximate 14-day amount; weekly quantity x 13 = approximate 90-day amount. Subtract food already on hand. Adjust for meals that would not be eaten during an outage, spoilage, guests, medical diets, or reduced appetite. Do not treat a calorie estimate as a personal medical prescription.

Food category	Your weekly use	14-day target	90-day target
Breakfast staples	_____	_____	_____
Grains / bread / starch	_____	_____	_____
Protein foods	_____	_____	_____
Fruit / vegetables	_____	_____	_____
Cooking oil / flavor	_____	_____	_____
Snacks / drinks / comfort	_____	_____	_____

Plan two types of meals

- [ ] No-cook meals for the first days and for periods when fuel is unavailable.
- [ ] Low-water, one-pot meals for later days; calculate the drinking/cooking water and cleanup they need.
- [ ] A small number of familiar shelf-stable meals that need only opening and serving.

Use FoodSafety.gov and package directions for food storage. Avoid assuming that "best by" dates, odors, or appearance alone determine safety after a power outage or flood. [4]

Food: shop, store, and rotate

Buy familiar, versatile food with known preparation needs. A rapid shopping plan should spread purchases across categories and avoid wasting money on specialized food that will not be used.

A practical pantry mix

- [ ] Grains and starches your household uses: oats, rice, pasta, cereal, crackers, tortillas, or shelf-stable bread.
- [ ] Protein: canned fish/meat, beans, lentils, nut/seed butter, and other suitable options.
- [ ] Fruit and vegetables: canned, dried, or shelf-stable choices; include fiber and foods household members accept.
- [ ] Milk or alternatives, cooking oil, sauces, salt, spices, and familiar drinks.
- [ ] Ready-to-eat meals and snacks for days when cooking is unsafe or inconvenient.
- [ ] Manual can opener, utensils, bowls, and a low-water dishwashing plan.

Use a three-stage shopping sequence

Stage	Buy first	Reason
First trip	Three days of ready-to-eat food; water; can opener; medicine and hygiene gaps	Covers immediate disruption with minimal preparation.
Second trip	Ingredients for the 14-day meal plan; pet and special-diet items	Adds coverage without guessing at household quantities.
Weekly extension	One normal week of shelf-stable food and consumables at a time	Builds toward 90 days while allowing rotation and budget control.

Store it so you can find and use it

- [ ] Use cool, dry, pest-resistant storage, protected from flood risk and household chemicals.
- [ ] Keep original labels and preparation instructions. Use sealed food-safe containers when repackaging dry goods.
- [ ] Write purchase dates on storage bins; place older items in front and plan regular meals around them.
- [ ] Inspect cans for swelling, leaks, deep dents, or severe rust. Do not use compromised containers.
- [ ] Do not rely on a freezer as the only reserve. Keep appliance thermometers and a plan for an outage.

Rotation rule: Store what you eat, eat what you store, and replace the amount used. A pantry that is never inspected can quietly become an expired or unusable pantry.

Energy for 90 days: define the jobs

A household does not need to reproduce normal utility service to stay safer. It needs a plan for specific tasks: medical equipment, communication, light, food, cooking, heat, cooling, and water systems.

Core principle: Reduce demand first, then match each essential job to a source. A small battery is useful for phones and lights; it is not a whole-home heating or cooking system. Stored fuel is finite. Solar and firewood depend on weather, equipment, site, and preparation.

Separate the energy needs

Need	What it requires	First planning question
Electricity	Devices, communications, medical equipment, refrigeration, well pump	Which loads are essential and how many watt-hours do they use?
Cooking	Heat for food and water, safe outdoor cooking space, utensils	Which meals need no cooking, and what can be cooked by sun or approved appliance?
Space heat / cooling	Safe heat source or a way to reduce exposure and relocate	Can one room be made safer, and where is the backup shelter?
Hot water	Fuel/electricity or direct solar heat	Which uses are essential; how will water be heated safely?
Lighting	Low-power lights and charged batteries	Can you use daylight and battery LED lights instead of flames?
Water movement	Well pump, pressure pump, or manual method	Can water be collected and moved without the electric pump?

Set tiers before buying

- ☐ Tier 1: life-sustaining medical devices, critical communications, safe water access, and emergency alerts.
- ☐ Tier 2: a small amount of lighting, essential refrigeration if needed, and charging for household devices.
- ☐ Tier 3: cooking, hot water, and one safe sleeping-area temperature plan.
- ☐ Tier 4: convenience loads such as entertainment, laundry, multiple appliances, and whole-home comfort.

The correct priorities depend on household health, climate, housing, and available help. Contact medical providers early about powered equipment and backup plans. [5]

Reduce demand before adding supply

A 90-day plan becomes more achievable when the household uses less energy. Simple choices can reduce how often fuel or stored electricity is needed.

Lower electricity use

- [ ] Choose a small “critical-load” list. Unplug nonessential devices and avoid electric resistance heating, hot plates, ovens, and clothes dryers on small backup systems.
- [ ] Use daylight, LED flashlights/lanterns, and device power-saving settings. Turn off lights and screens when not needed.
- [ ] For refrigeration, consolidate food, keep doors closed, and use thermometers. Plan to use perishable foods first while safe.
- [ ] Charge phones and power banks in planned batches instead of leaving many chargers connected.

Lower heat and cooling demand

- [ ] Use one safe, occupied room rather than trying to heat/cool the whole home. Close interior doors and block drafts with safe, removable materials. Keep required ventilation and exits clear.
- [ ] During heat, use shade, light clothing, cool cloths, ventilation when outdoor air is cooler, and an identified cooling center.
- [ ] During cold, layer clothing, use hats and blankets, close curtains at night, and keep people together in a safe room.
- [ ] Do not seal a room so tightly that a combustion appliance loses required ventilation. Follow the appliance manual and local safety guidance.

Make cooking use less fuel

- [ ] Choose no-cook foods for the first days and days with poor weather or unavailable fuel.
- [ ] Cook once and use the heat efficiently: prepare multiple portions, use lids, and select meals that need less water/time.
- [ ] Use a solar oven when the sun and conditions support it; keep a fallback stove/meal for clouds, night, rain, wind, and cold.
- [ ] Do not use grills, camp stoves, or outdoor heaters indoors.

Energy baseline worksheet

Daily electricity used now (kWh from bill ÷ days): _____ Critical loads to keep: _____

Meals requiring cooking each day: _____ Safe sleeping-room plan: _____ Cooling location: _____

Local outage center / shelter / charging location: _____

Electricity: combine batteries, solar, and fuel

No single backup source is dependable in every weather condition. A household can use stored electricity for small critical loads, solar to replenish it when available, and a generator only for needs the other options cannot cover.

Source	Good for	Limits and planning notes
Battery power station / power banks	Phones, lights, radio, small medical/communications loads within rating	Finite stored energy; check usable watt-hours, continuous watts, surge limit, ports, recharge time, and battery-care directions.
Portable solar panels	Recharging compatible batteries and devices in daylight	Output changes with season, shade, weather, angle, and temperature; confirm compatibility and realistic daily output.
Home solar PV plus battery	Critical circuits and selected appliances when designed for backup	Many grid-tied systems shut off during grid failure unless configured with a backup-capable inverter and storage. Have a qualified installer explain islanding and critical-load circuits. [18]
Portable generator	Intermittent power for selected loads or charging batteries	Needs fuel, maintenance, safe outdoor placement, correctly rated cords, and a load plan. Never backfeed a home outlet. [5, 6]
Vehicle 12V power / inverter	Small device charging with the correct rated equipment	Limited output and can drain the starting battery. Never idle a vehicle in a garage or enclosed/partly enclosed space.
Community charging / resilience site	Phones, medical devices, refrigeration/medical support in some locations	Availability varies. Write down official locations and do not depend on an unconfirmed site.

Calculate a critical electrical load

Watts x hours used per day = watt-hours per day. Add the watt-hours for each essential device. For variable loads such as refrigerators or pumps, use the appliance label/manual or measure actual use if possible. Starting surge can be higher than running power; check the device and inverter ratings. [22]

Device	Running watts	Hours/day	Wh/day
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Total critical-load estimate: _____ Wh/day. Add a reserve for conversion losses and cloudy days using the equipment maker’s guidance. For location-based rooftop PV estimates, NREL PVWatts can help show seasonal production; it is not a guarantee for a portable panel or outage system. [23]

Grid-tied solar warning: Rooftop panels alone may shut off when the grid fails. Ask whether the system has backup capability, battery storage, islanding, and a clearly identified critical-load panel. [18]

Generators and fuel: plan the safe limits

A generator can stretch stored fuel when used for priority loads, but it is not a safe indoor power plant and is not automatically a 90-day solution.

Generator safety checklist

- [ ] Run portable generators outdoors and at least 20 feet from doors, windows, and vents; point exhaust away from occupied buildings. Never run in a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, or shed, even with doors open.
- [ ] Install and test battery-operated CO alarms or alarms with battery backup on every level and outside sleeping areas.
- [ ] Connect appliances using intact, outdoor-rated cords sized for the total load. Never plug a generator into a wall outlet to power home wiring; use a qualified electrician and approved transfer equipment.
- [ ] Keep the unit dry as its manual directs and do not operate in standing water. Turn it off and allow it to cool before refueling.
- [ ] Store fuel only in approved containers, outside living areas, away from ignition sources, and within local fire-code limits. Follow the generator and fuel-container manuals. [5, 6]

Budget generator use

- [ ] List which devices need generator power, how often, and whether a battery can be charged during a short generator run.
- [ ] Check the generator’s fuel consumption at the actual load, not only the advertised maximum runtime. Keep a written fuel inventory and rotate fuel as directed.
- [ ] Use generator hours for medical needs, essential pumping, or battery charging; avoid running it for low-priority loads.
- [ ] Do not store gasoline, propane, kerosene, or other fuel in a living area. Do not refuel a hot generator. [6]

Energy and fuel worksheet

Generator make/model: _____ Starting watts: _____ Running watts: _____ Fuel type: _____

Critical loads to connect: _____ Expected hours/week: _____ Fuel used/week: _____

Fuel stored legally/safely: _____ Storage location: _____ Inspection/rotation date: _____

Fuel is not interchangeable. Use only the type and grade specified for the appliance. Never put gasoline in a kerosene heater. Use only indoor-rated heating equipment indoors, exactly as labeled; camp stoves and outdoor heaters stay outdoors. [24]

Cooking for 90 days without grid power

Build a cooking plan around meal type, weather, water availability, and fuel. Solar cooking and wood can help, but each depends on equipment and conditions.

Method	Useful when	Limits / safety
No-cook food	First days, bad weather, low fuel, or when cooking is unsafe	Choose balanced familiar foods and include safe drinking water. Some no-cook foods need can openers or utensils.
Solar oven / solar cooker	Sunny daylight and recipes that tolerate slow, steady cooking	Not dependable at night, in cloud, rain, heavy wind, or poor winter sun. Set it up outdoors, monitor cooking, and use a food thermometer. DOE explains solar cookers use direct sunlight as heat. [19]
Rocket stove (small-stick / sometimes called “jet” stove)	Quick outdoor cooking when dry, small wood is available and fires are permitted	Uses small sticks but still needs a steady supply of dry fuel. Use outdoors only on a stable, noncombustible surface, attended and clear of structures and combustibles. Never use indoors, in a tent, garage, or vehicle because of fire and carbon-monoxide risk. Follow the model instructions. [24]
Outdoor camp stove / propane cooker	Quick meal preparation outdoors in suitable weather	Use outdoors only, away from doors/windows and combustibles. Never use in a home, tent, garage, or vehicle. Follow manufacturer’s fuel and ventilation directions. [1, 2]
Vented wood cookstove / fireplace insert	If already installed, inspected, and intended for cooking	Needs dry wood, maintenance, safe chimney/flue, and local permission; smoke and fire hazards remain.
Charcoal / grill	Outdoor cooking only, when allowed	Never indoors, in a garage, or in an enclosed area. Carbon monoxide can be fatal. [2]

Make a fuel-aware meal plan

- ☐ Keep at least several days of meals that require no cooking or only safe, short cooking.
- ☐ Use foods that need less added water when water is scarce; dry beans and grains need both fuel and water.
- ☐ Cook perishables early while refrigerator temperatures remain safe. Then shift to shelf-stable meals.
- ☐ Use a solar cooker as a fuel-saving option on suitable days, not as the sole cooking source.
- ☐ Use a rocket stove only as a supplemental outdoor cooking option; estimate a dry-stick supply rather than assuming fuel will be available.
- ☐ Keep outdoor cooking equipment away from children, pets, dry vegetation, and fuel storage.

Solar ovens can cook food with direct sunlight, but weather and cooking time affect practical output. A solar cooker is not automatically a tested water-disinfection device. [19] Try any solar cooker or rocket stove before an emergency so you know its capacity, cookware needs, setup, and fuel use.

Heat, cooling, and light safely

The most reliable 90-day heat plan is often a combination of reducing heat loss, using an existing safe appliance, and knowing where to relocate. Candles are not a practical heat source and are a fire risk.

Heat and firewood

- [ ] If using an existing wood stove or fireplace, have the appliance, chimney, and vents professionally inspected and serviced. Burn only dry, seasoned wood and follow the appliance instructions. [21]
- [ ] Count wood supply realistically: what is already dry and on site, what can be legally obtained, and what remains reachable during poor weather?
- [ ] Pellet stoves may depend on electric feeders and controls; check the model manual and plan for outage operation before relying on one. [21]
- [ ] Keep combustibles and children away from the stove. Keep smoke and CO alarms working; follow local burn bans and air-quality advisories.

Cold and hot weather

- [ ] Cold: layer clothing, use blankets/sleeping bags, block drafts safely, and sleep in one occupied room. Never heat with a gas oven or outdoor combustion device.
- [ ] Heat: shade windows, reduce exertion, drink safe water, use fans only if power is available, and identify cooling centers or a safer place to stay.
- [ ] Use only heaters designed and approved for indoor use, following all labeling, ventilation, clearance, and fuel instructions. Never bring an outdoor heater inside. [2, 24]
- [ ] If the home becomes unsafe due to temperature, smoke, CO alarm, or fire risk, leave and seek help or shelter.

Lighting and fire safety

- [ ] Use flashlights, headlamps, or battery lanterns as the primary outage lighting. Keep spare batteries and test them.
- [ ] USFA recommends flashlights rather than candles during power outages. If a candle is used, keep it attended, away from anything that can burn, and extinguish it before leaving or sleeping. [20]
- [ ] Do not use fuel-burning lanterns or camping lights indoors unless the product is specifically designed and approved for indoor use.

Carbon monoxide warning: CO is invisible and odorless. Headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, or confusion during fuel-burning appliance use may signal poisoning. Move to fresh air immediately and call emergency services. [2, 24]

Build a 90-day energy plan

Assign each essential job a primary method and a backup. Record what will be stored, what will be generated, what can be reduced, and when the household will relocate or ask for help.

Four-part energy plan

Job	Primary method	Backup / low-energy option	Who checks it
Medical / communications	_____	_____	_____
Lighting	_____	_____	_____
Cooking	_____	_____	_____
Heat / cooling	_____	_____	_____
Water pump / hot water	_____	_____	_____

Few-day actions

- ☐ Inventory lights, batteries, fuel, firewood, power banks, solar panels, generator, and essential appliances.
- ☐ Charge devices and test the power station, generator, solar charger, and cords safely before an outage.
- ☐ Write the critical-load list and shut down optional loads. Contact medical-device providers about backup power.
- ☐ Check the manual for every fuel-burning appliance and confirm it is approved for the location where it will be used.
- ☐ Find official cooling/heating centers, charging sites, and emergency shelters; record the route and transport plan.

90-day cadence

- ☐ Use stored battery power for essential devices first; recharge in daylight where the system and weather allow.
- ☐ Run generators only on a scheduled, load-prioritized basis and track fuel consumption.
- ☐ Use no-cook meals, solar cooking on suitable days, and an approved outdoor stove as conditions allow.
- ☐ Inspect wood, fuel containers, alarms, appliances, cords, and solar equipment on a written schedule.
- ☐ Reassess weekly: remaining fuel, battery capacity, food that needs cooking, local forecasts, medical needs, and whether to relocate.

Energy plan reviewed on: _____ Next review date: _____ Local emergency contact: _____

Reality check: “Last 90 days” is not one equipment purchase. It is a lower-demand routine, several compatible sources, fuel/equipment safety, maintenance, and a clear threshold for using community services or leaving.

Medicine and health needs

Medical needs are individual. Prepare with your clinician, pharmacist, equipment supplier, and local emergency services rather than guessing about doses or storage.

Build a medical continuity sheet

- [ ] For each person: medication name, dose, prescribing clinician, pharmacy, refill date, and storage instructions.
- [ ] Record allergies, conditions, medical devices, communication needs, and emergency contacts.
- [ ] Ask a pharmacist or clinician how early a refill can be requested and what to do if a medicine becomes too warm, cold, or unavailable.
- [ ] Plan backup power and charging for CPAP, oxygen equipment, mobility devices, refrigerated medicine, and other essential equipment.
- [ ] Keep device manuals, batteries, adapters, spare parts, and contact details for the supplier.
- [ ] Include glasses, hearing-aid batteries, contact lens supplies, mobility supports, and accessible copies of instructions.

Assemble a useful health kit

- [ ] First-aid supplies appropriate to household skill and likely needs; include instructions and gloves.
- [ ] Thermometer, oral rehydration supplies if appropriate, and common nonprescription items used by the household.
- [ ] Do not stockpile prescription drugs outside the law or change doses without a clinician.
- [ ] Keep medicines in labeled containers when possible; take the current medication list during evacuation.

Make a care interruption plan

Write what the household will do if the pharmacy, clinic, dialysis center, home-care provider, or medical-device vendor is inaccessible. Identify an alternate provider and transport plan. For time-sensitive or life-sustaining care, contact the treating team early and use emergency services when needed.

> Priority: If a person depends on electricity or regular treatment to stay safe, planning for backup power, transport, and medical support takes priority over extending the general food pantry.

Hygiene, sanitation, and waste

When water service is limited, everyday sanitation can become a health and comfort problem quickly. Plan how to wash hands, manage toilet use, contain waste, and keep food surfaces clean.

Stock the basics

- [ ] Soap, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, tissues, moist wipes, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and household cleaning products.
- [ ] Heavy trash bags, ties, disposable gloves, paper towels, and a lidded waste container.
- [ ] Menstrual products, incontinence items, diapers, wipes, infant formula/feeding supplies, and personal-care needs.
- [ ] Dishwashing supplies and a plan to use safe water on food-contact surfaces.

Reduce water demand safely

- [ ] Prioritize drinking, food preparation, medication, and handwashing. Reduce laundry, long showers, and other high-water uses.
- [ ] Use disposable dishes only if helpful and available; do not burn trash or create unsafe waste piles.
- [ ] Follow local water, sewer, septic, and waste-service notices. Do not assume toilets or septic systems work during a flood or utility outage.
- [ ] Keep hands clean after handling trash, pet waste, or contaminated objects.

Toilet and wastewater contingency

Find out whether your home is served by municipal sewer or a private septic system and what the local utility or health department recommends during failure. Ask ahead how to handle a prolonged outage. Do not improvise a waste pit or discharge sewage where it can contaminate wells, waterways, or neighbors' property.

Floods and sewage: Floodwater can contaminate water, food, and surfaces. Follow local public-health instructions; discard food that contacted floodwater and use safe water for drinking, food preparation, and hygiene. [2, 4]

Power, light, and communication

Plan which devices matter most and how you will receive local instructions. Keep the simplest tools ready: charged phones, flashlights, batteries, and a radio.

Set a priority list for electricity

- [ ] List life-sustaining medical equipment first. Ask the medical provider about outage actions and backup power.
- [ ] Next: communications, safe refrigeration if needed, well pump, and devices needed for accessibility or care.
- [ ] Estimate wattage and runtime from equipment labels or manuals before buying a power source.
- [ ] Use power banks for small electronics; test compatibility and charging cables before storing them.

Prepare a communications kit

- [ ] Flashlights or headlamps for each person; spare batteries in common sizes.
- [ ] Battery or hand-crank radio that receives local weather and emergency information; test it.
- [ ] Printed contacts, addresses, meeting places, local maps, and out-of-area contact instructions.
- [ ] Keep phones charged; use brief texts when networks are congested. Agree on an out-of-area contact.
- [ ] Know local alert systems and how to receive warnings if internet service fails.

Generator rules

- [ ] Operate a generator outdoors at least 20 feet from windows, doors, and other openings; never in a home, garage, basement, or partly enclosed area.
- [ ] Install and test carbon-monoxide alarms with battery backup near sleeping areas and on each level.
- [ ] Use equipment and cords as directed; never connect a generator by plugging it into a wall outlet. Have a qualified electrician install a transfer switch.
- [ ] Turn off and cool the generator before refueling. Store fuel only in approved containers and follow local rules.

CDC and FEMA emphasize outdoor generator placement, safe extension cords, CO alarms, and a power plan for medical devices. [5, 6]

Cooking, temperature, and food safety

A food supply is only useful if you can prepare it safely. Plan around the fuel, water, ventilation, and temperature your chosen meals require.

Choose a cooking method before buying fuel

- [ ] Use appliances only in the locations and conditions approved by the manufacturer.
- [ ] Use camp stoves, grills, and charcoal outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents. Never use them to heat the home.
- [ ] Keep no-cook foods for the first days and for times when cooking is unsafe.
- [ ] Store fuel only in approved containers in a legal, safe location; follow fire-code and manufacturer instructions.

Protect against heat and cold

- [ ] Cold plan: warm layers, hats, blankets, sleeping bags, safe fireplace/wood-stove operation, and a place to relocate.
- [ ] Heat plan: identify a cooling location, shade, ventilation, drinking water, and people who need frequent check-ins.
- [ ] Use flashlights rather than candles where possible; keep smoke and CO alarms working.
- [ ] Never run a vehicle in a garage for warmth or electricity.

Power-outage food rules

Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. FoodSafety.gov says an unopened refrigerator keeps food cold for about 4 hours; a full freezer about 48 hours, or 24 hours if half full. Use appliance thermometers. Discard food that has been above safe temperatures too long or contacted floodwater; never taste food to test it. [4]

Temperature-sensitive medicine: Ask the pharmacist or clinician for medicine-specific instructions. Do not apply food-safety rules to medication; contact the prescriber or pharmacist if its storage conditions are uncertain.

Shelter in place or evacuate

Staying home is one option, not a rule. Some hazards make sheltering dangerous. Prepare to leave quickly and follow official evacuation instructions.

Make a home shelter plan

- [ ] Choose a room or area appropriate to the local hazard and know the safest place for each type of warning.
- [ ] Keep shoes, light, weather-appropriate clothing, essential medications, and phone near sleeping areas.
- [ ] Know how to shut off utilities if officials advise it and it is safe to do so. Never enter standing water near electrical equipment.
- [ ] Keep supplies organized without blocking doors, hallways, stairs, or exits.

Prepare to evacuate

- [ ] Choose two routes and two destinations; include an out-of-area contact and a meeting point.
- [ ] Keep the vehicle maintained and fuelled when possible; arrange a ride if the household has no vehicle.
- [ ] Make a go-bag for each person and a pet kit. Pack critical medications, IDs, water, food, charger, and clothing.
- [ ] Know which shelters, hotels, or relatives accept pets and what paperwork they require.
- [ ] Follow designated routes and local instructions; do not attempt to drive through floodwater.

Go-bag list

Person bag	Household / vehicle
Medication list and needed medicines; water bottle; food; change of clothes; sturdy shoes; flashlight; charger; hygiene items; copies of contacts and ID.	First aid kit; radio; maps; basic tools; blankets; cash; documents; infant and pet supplies; reflective warning device; seasonal clothing.

CDC advises making plans, following local evacuation directions, and including pets and go-kits. [7]

Documents, money, and household roles

A disruption may affect payments, identification, or access to records. Keep key information available when power and internet are down.

Protect important information

- [ ] Copies of identification, insurance cards, prescriptions, medical records, vehicle and home records, leases/deeds, and emergency contacts.
- [ ] Keep a waterproof paper set in the go-bag and a secure digital copy accessible away from home. Protect personal data.
- [ ] Photograph major belongings and save the record somewhere outside the home for insurance purposes.
- [ ] Keep a written list of account and insurer phone numbers; avoid putting passwords in an exposed kit.

Cash and essential services

- [ ] Keep a modest amount of cash in small bills if feasible; ATMs and card readers may be unavailable.
- [ ] List recurring bills and critical service contacts. Ask providers how to report outages or hardship.
- [ ] Set aside fuel and transport resources for medical trips or evacuation before optional purchases.

Assign household roles

Role	Person / backup
Water and food	_____ / _____
Medicines and medical devices	_____ / _____
Pets and children	_____ / _____
Alerts, contact, and documents	_____ / _____
Vehicle, go-bags, and neighbors	_____ / _____

Make the plan understandable to every capable household member. Children should know which trusted adults can pick them up and how to contact the out-of-area person.

Children, older adults, disability needs, and pets

A household plan must work for the people and animals who will use it. Build supplies around the actual needs of the household, including transportation, communication, and care routines.

Infants and children

- [ ] Formula, feeding supplies, diapers, wipes, age-appropriate medicines, comfort items, and a current photo.
- [ ] Explain the plan in age-appropriate language. Include familiar food, activities, and contact details.
- [ ] For separated children, identify the adults authorized to pick them up and a meeting plan.

Older adults and disability needs

- [ ] Prepare mobility aids, hearing/vision supports, batteries, accessible instructions, and backup charging.
- [ ] Arrange a check-in and transportation plan with a trusted person; include service providers when appropriate.
- [ ] Keep medical equipment manuals and emergency care plans with documents. Ask clinicians what should happen during a long outage.

Pets and service animals

- [ ] CDC recommends a two-week food, water, and medication kit for each pet; include dishes, leash/carrier, waste supplies, records, and contact information. [8]
- [ ] Keep collars/tags current; store a recent photo and vaccination record.
- [ ] Identify pet-friendly evacuation destinations and a backup caregiver.
- [ ] Pack food in waterproof containers and keep the kit where it can leave with the household.

Do not leave animals behind if there is a safer option. Plan before the emergency; some shelters have restrictions, and local officials can direct you to available pet accommodations.

Operating the household for 14 days

Supplies are easier to manage when the household follows a simple daily routine. Use this operating plan during a disruption and revise it for local conditions.

Morning check

- ☐ Listen for official updates and check weather, road, water, and power information.
- ☐ Review water, food, medication, infant, and pet needs for the day.
- ☐ Charge essential devices when power is available; keep one phone and radio reserve.
- ☐ Check household members and neighbors who may need help, if it is safe.

Daily resource routine

- ☐ Use first the foods that spoil soonest, while keeping food safety limits in mind.
- ☐ Keep drinking and cooking water separate from cleaning water if practical; track what is used.
- ☐ Cook meals that use ingredients efficiently and require little fuel and cleanup.
- ☐ Keep doors closed and avoid repeatedly opening the refrigerator/freezer during an outage.
- ☐ Manage trash and toilet needs using public-health and utility instructions.

Evening check

- ☐ Charge devices; top off safe lighting batteries/power banks if power is available.
- ☐ Set aside next-day water and meals; check medicine schedules and refrigerator/freezer temperatures.
- ☐ Secure supplies and fuel safely; extinguish cooking flames and check CO/smoke alarms.
- ☐ Review alerts and plan the next day’s medical, food, water, or transport needs.

If supplies fall short

Contact local emergency management, public health, community organizations, neighbors, and service providers. Ask early about safe water, food distribution, medical transport, charging sites, and shelter. If conditions become dangerous, relocate or seek emergency help rather than waiting for the household reserve to run out.

Build toward 90 days without waste

The long reserve is built by repeating a household routine, not by buying everything at once. This 13-week sequence can be compressed only when availability, budget, storage, and safety permit.

A 13-week build schedule

Time	Main action	Done
Days 1-3	Complete immediate essentials, alerts, medicine plan, safe water, ready-to-eat food, and go-bags.	☐
Week 1-2	Reach a two-week base of food, water where feasible, medicine continuity, hygiene, lights, pet needs, and documents.	☐
Weeks 3-6	Add one weekly meal plan and one week of household consumables each week; rotate older supplies into use.	☐
Weeks 7-10	Add four more weeks; revisit fuel, water source, medical devices, pests, storage, and evacuation options.	☐
Weeks 11-13	Complete the 13-week food plan, inspect dates/packaging, refresh training, and close priority gaps.	☐

Choose priorities when money or space is tight

- ☐ First: medication, safe water, food that can be eaten without power, sanitation, and special needs.
- ☐ Then: light, communication, charging, cooking safety, warm/cool layers, and transport.
- ☐ After that: comfort foods, extra convenience items, backup equipment, and longer-term storage upgrades.
- ☐ Avoid buying gear that is untested, unsafe for indoor use, or dependent on unavailable fuel or parts.

Be honest about the limits

A 90-day food pantry does not provide 90 days of water, electricity, medical treatment, heat, or sanitation. For each need, write one of four plans: store, produce, obtain locally, or evacuate/seek assistance.

Need	Plan: store / produce / obtain / evacuate	Next action
Water	_____	_____
Medicine / care	_____	_____
Power / heat	_____	_____
Sanitation	_____	_____

Inventory and rotation worksheet

Use the worksheet to turn a broad goal into actual quantities. Review it monthly and whenever the household changes.

Food and household supplies

Item / meal ingredient	On hand	Target days	Buy / rotate by
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Water and medical continuity

Need	Current reserve	Target / plan	Review date
Drinking water	_____	_____	_____
Water source/treatment	_____	_____	_____
Prescription continuity	_____	_____	_____
Power-dependent device	_____	_____	_____
Pet supplies	_____	_____	_____

Monthly review

- ☐ Inspect food packaging, water containers, medications, batteries, fuel safety, and pet supplies.
- ☐ Use and replace older food; update household counts, sizes, dietary needs, and medicine lists.
- ☐ Test lights, radio, power banks, alarms, and any backup equipment according to the maker's instructions.
- ☐ Update alert sources, contacts, routes, local shelter/charging locations, and transport plan.

Review log

Date: _____ Supplies rotated: _____ Gaps to fix: _____

Next review date: _____ Person responsible: _____

Quick reference for water and emergencies

Keep this page accessible. During an actual event, local instructions take priority over general guidance.

Quick decisions

If this happens	Do this first
Water advisory	Read the exact local notice. Boiling, bleach, and filters are not appropriate for every contaminant. Use bottled water if directed.
Power outage	Keep refrigerator/freezer closed, use flashlights, listen for local updates, protect medical devices, and use generators outdoors only.
Evacuation warning/order	Follow local direction. Take people, medicines, documents, water, food, pets, and go-bags. Do not wait to use every stored supply.
Medical device or medicine at risk	Contact the treating provider, pharmacist, or emergency services early; follow medicine-specific instructions.
Household resources running low	Contact local emergency management, public health, utilities, community organizations, and trusted neighbors.

Before you close this guide: Choose a first action you can complete today, identify who owns it, and schedule the next review. Preparedness improves when supplies are maintained and the household knows how to use them.

Official sources

These government and manufacturer references support the guide. Check current instructions during an actual event.

[1] CDC, How to Create and Store an Emergency Water Supply
https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/how-to-create-and-store-an-emergency-water-supply.html

[2] CDC, How to Make Water Safe in an Emergency
https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/

[3] CDC, How to Find Clean Water in an Emergency
https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/how-to-find-clean-water-in-an-emergency.html

[4] FoodSafety.gov, Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency
https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/food-safety-in-disaster-or-emergency

[5] CDC, Power Sources
https://www.cdc.gov/prepare-your-health/take-action/power-sources.html

[6] FEMA, Be Safe During a Power Outage
https://www.fema.gov/print/pdf/node/548808

[7] CDC, Evacuating in a Chemical Emergency (general evacuation planning and go-kits)
https://www.cdc.gov/chemical-emergencies/response/evacuation.html

[8] CDC, Build a Pet Disaster Preparedness Kit
https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/emergency-preparedness/preparedness-kit.html

[9] CDC, Water Treatment Options When Hiking, Camping, or Traveling
https://www.cdc.gov/drinking-water/prevention/water-treatment-hiking-camping-traveling.html

[10] LifeStraw product help, How Does LifeStraw Work?
https://help.lifestraw.com/en-US/how-does-lifestraw-work-4012791

[11] CDC, Collecting Rainwater and Your Health
https://www.cdc.gov/drinking-water/about/collecting-rainwater-and-your-health-an-overview.html

[12] CDC, How to Disinfect Wells After an Emergency
https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/how-to-disinfect-wells-after-an-emergency.html

[13] CDC, Winter Storm Safety
https://www.cdc.gov/winter-weather/safety/stay-safe-during-after-a-winter-storm-safety.html

[14] FoodSafety.gov, Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency
https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/food-safety-in-disaster-or-emergency

[15] USDA MyPlate, Eat Healthy on a Budget
https://www.myplate.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/TipSheet-23-Eat-Healthy-On-A-Budget.pdf

[16] USDA MyPlate, Planning for Savings - Leftovers Edition
https://www.myplate.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/MyPlate-Planning-For-Savings-Leftover-Edition.pdf

[17] USDA FSIS, What Does Shelf Stable Mean?
https://ask.fsis.usda.gov/article/What-does-shelf-stable-mean

[18] U.S. DOE, Solar and Resilience Basics
https://www.energy.gov/cmei/systems/solar-and-resilience-basics

[19] U.S. DOE, Solar Oven Lesson
https://www.energy.gov/articles/solar-classroom-lesson-plan

[20] U.S. Fire Administration, Candle Fire Safety
https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/home-fires/prevent-fires/candle/

[21] U.S. EPA, Wood-Burning Appliances and Burn Wise
https://www.epa.gov/burnwise/frequent-questions-about-wood-burning-appliances

[22] U.S. DOE, Photovoltaic Battery Sizing Guide
https://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/pdfs/FTA_pv.pdf

[23] NREL, PVWatts Calculator
https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/

[24] CPSC, Portable Heaters and Camping Equipment
https://www.cpsc.gov/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/Carbon-Monoxide-Information-Center/Portable-Heaters--Camping-Equipment

Also follow current instructions from local emergency management, your water utility, health department, and medical providers; directions vary by hazard and location.