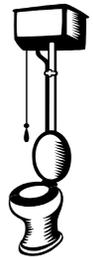


**Taking it one step at a time.**

# DISASTER SANITATION

*What would you do without the convenience of your sink and toilet? Disposing of human waste can pose serious public health problems when sewer or water systems are not working. With some preplanning, you can assemble supplies to get your family through a disaster without risking contamination.*

**Emergency Toilets:** One easy solution is a portable chemical toilet, found at recreational vehicle supply or camping stores. Alternatively, a simple emergency toilet can be provided using:



- Medium-sized plastic bucket with tight-fitting lid (to store the supplies and to serve as the emergency toilet)
- Container of unscented household liquid bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite), to be mixed in a 1:10 solution with water
- Plastic/vinyl garbage bags with twist ties (sized to line the bucket)
- Toilet paper
- Liquid antibacterial soap and/or towelettes
- Sand, sawdust, or “kitty litter” (optional)

Line the bucket with a garbage bag. If you choose, you may put sand, sawdust, or kitty litter in the bottom of the garbage bag to absorb liquids. After each use, pour a disinfecting solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water into the garbage bag. This will help avoid infection and stop the spread of disease. Use twist ties to close the bags between uses, and close lid tightly. *Wash your hands!*



At the end of each day, the bagged waste should be securely tied and removed to a protected location, such as a designated garbage can in the garage, basement, or an outbuilding, until safe disposal is available.

If the sewer is not working and your toilet bowl is empty, you can line your toilet with garbage bags and use it in the same manner. This has the added comfort advantage of using a regular toilet seat.

### Another emergency toilet option...

If your water is cut off, but the sewer system is still working, and if you have an auxiliary supply of water, you can flush your toilet by pouring 2-3 gallons of water into the bowl. If you are given prior notice of the water system shutoff, you could fill your bathtub or child’s wading pool with water for this purpose. You could also use water from your swimming pool.

*Note: Water brought into the area for drinking purposes must not be used for this.*



**Note:** This waste **cannot** be disposed of with your regular garbage. Once the disaster is over, dispose of the waste according to directions from your local Health Department or Emergency Manager.

**General Guidelines:** When creating an emergency toilet, it is always important to:

- Locate the toilet away from food preparation or eating areas.
- Provide a place next to the emergency toilet to wash hands that offers soap, water, and paper towels.
- Keep toilet closed when not in use to keep out insects/animals and to prevent the spread of disease.
- Supervise small children when they are using the emergency toilet.

## Precautionary Hygiene Practices

*It is your personal responsibility to follow these guidelines whenever there is potential for exposure.*

**General Hygiene:** Whenever there is reasonable likelihood of exposure, **you must never:**

- ⇒ **Eat**
- ⇒ **Drink**
- ⇒ **Smoke**
- ⇒ **Apply cosmetics or lip balm**
- ⇒ **Handle contact lenses**

No food or drink should be kept in refrigerators, freezers, shelves, cabinets, or on counter tops where blood or potentially infectious materials are present.



**Handwashing** is one of the most important (and easiest!) practices used to prevent transmission of disease. Hands or other exposed skin should be thoroughly washed as soon as possible following an exposure incident. Use soft, antibacterial soap, if possible. Avoid harsh, abrasive soaps, as these may open fragile scabs or other sores. Hands should also be washed immediately (or as soon as feasible) after removal of gloves or other personal protective equipment.



**Do not use contaminated water to wash your hands!** If proper handwashing facilities are not available, you may use bottled water, water that has been boiled for 3 - 5 minutes, or antibacterial soap/towelettes designed for use without water. You may also purify water for hand washing using unscented household liquid bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite). Add 16 drops of bleach to a gallon of water, stir, and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand for another 15 minutes.

**Decontamination and Sterilization:** All surfaces that come in contact with blood or potentially infectious materials must be decontaminated as soon as possible. Decontamination should be accomplished by using a solution of unscented household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite) diluted about 1:10 with water.

*Handy Tip: When gathering decontamination supplies, measure and mark the fill lines on your bucket ahead of time, one fill line for the bleach, and another fill line for the water. You might also want to pre-mark a spray bottle, which may be easier to use than a bucket for smaller spills. Pre-marking your containers gives you easy, measuring-free mixing of your bleach cleaning solution when you need to use it.*

If you are cleaning up a spill of blood, carefully cover the spill with paper towels or rags, then gently pour your 10% solution of bleach over the towels or rags. This will help decrease the chances of causing a splash when you pour the bleach on it. **Leave it in place for at least 10 minutes.** This will help ensure that the bloodborne pathogens are killed before you actually begin cleaning or wiping the material up.



The same is true when decontaminating equipment or other objects (knives, tweezers, mechanical equipment upon which someone has been cut, first aid boxes, or whatever): you must leave your disinfectant in place for *at least 10 minutes* before continuing the cleaning process. Any materials used to clean up a spill must also be decontaminated immediately, including mops, sponges, re-usable gloves, buckets, etc.



**Accidental Exposure:** Even with all these precautions, you may still be exposed to contaminated water or human waste. Flush the exposed area immediately with plenty of clean water. If the exposure occurred by splashing onto mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth, or onto non-intact skin (abrasion, eczema, or other damaged skin), seek advice from a medical professional within two hours! Timely intervention is necessary for the initiation of preventive medication or vaccination.)

