

## Town of New Canaan

### Preparing for a pandemic and other emergencies: Water

#### Personal and family water needs

*“Store a two week supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.” (www.pandemicflu.gov)*

Always keep a reserve of drinking water on hand, at all times; and it is advisable to store or have access to an additional water reserve for supplemental drinking, hygiene, and sanitation. *During prolonged power outages, possibly compounded by severe weather, access to drinking water may be limited.* During a pandemic period, expect that purchased-bottled-water will be in very short supply. Always provide for your short-term drinking water needs, first (including pets); then consider your needs for cooking and hygiene; then for sanitation.

#### How Much Do I Need?

*Store a minimum of 3 gallons of drinkable water, per person. This water can be used for drinking, cooking, and hygiene. Therefore, an individual should have 3 gallons of drinkable water in reserve, and a family of 5 should have 15 gallons, minimum, at all times.* If you have access to and/or can store additional water, you may be able to draw upon that additional reserve for both drinking water and non-drinking water needs. You may be able to use supplemental water for cleaning & disinfecting, dishwashing, and filling a toilet tank, repeatedly, allowing flushing. (Newer toilets may flush with as little as one gallon while others, up to 7 gallons. Consider having at least one newer toilet rated at the minimum flushing, i.e. 1.6 gal. standard.) When you anticipate the possibility of power outages, filling a bathtub provides about 40 gallons of reserve water.

#### Storing Emergency Water Supplies

Purchased-bottled-water, by the gallon, is best for drinking purposes, as it is sanitized by the bottler, and it will keep for very long periods, up to 6 months or longer.

Food-grade plastic, glass, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers, are suitable to store drinking water. Five-gallon storage containers (intended for water) are suitable for larger supplies. Before filling, thoroughly wash the container and lid with hot water and detergent, and rinse well with hot water. After filling the container with clean tap water, add 5 drops of chlorine bleach, for each 1 gallon, to prevent the growth of microorganisms. Use only regular liquid household chlorine bleach such as Chlorox (the label will read: 5.25% sodium hypochlorite). Do not use scented bleaches. Such treated-water may be stored for up to 12 months. Water stored for a long time in proper containers may still taste “flat.” Shake or pour between two clean containers to improve flavor.

#### How to Treat water

You may have access to water that has not been in sealed purchased-bottled-water containers or otherwise treated as above. If available, use a coffee filter to strain such water into suitable containers. Add 16 drops of regular chlorine bleach, per gallon of water. Wait 30 minutes. Chlorine, after destroying almost all microbes, within the first several minutes, will neutralize in the water, similar to the process done by many municipal water supplies.

#### Hidden Water Sources in Your Home; and outdoor water sources

Following a natural disaster, water from wells and municipal systems may be contaminated, especially if you hear of broken water or sewage lines in your area. To prevent suspect water from entering your house close the incoming water valve.

Your hot-water-heater tank can supply many gallons of reserve water. First, turn off the tank’s gas and/or electricity. Close the water intake valve; open a hot water faucet upstairs to allow the water to flow; then open the valve at the bottom of the tank to retrieve the water. Discard the first gallon. To use the water in your pipes, turn on the hot/cold faucets at the highest point in your house. Then, drain the water from the pipes through the lowest faucets in the house or basement.

Water may be obtained from lakes, rivers, streams, and springs—such water must be treated as above.

For further information see: <http://www.nationalterroralert.com/readyguide/safewater.htm>

Last updated 6/7/06