

DISASTER PREPARATIONS ON A LIMITED BUDGET

Better Times Emergency Notes

The time to build the cellar is before the tornado hits. If your resources are limited, anything you can do to stock more of the basic necessities of life helps you prepare for a disaster or emergency. Disasters happen. People lose their jobs, get sick, evicted. There are potential dangers like economic collapse, war, terrorism, and disease epidemics. Think carefully about the challenges you may face. Make lists of what you need and check them twice. If a disaster doesn't happen, you still benefit because you made these preparations. You increased the safety, health, security, and wellness of your family and community. You fulfill an important citizen duty. Don't procrastinate or wait to the last minute!

Got free information? Look for free info at libraries, schools, on the internet. Libraries often offer free internet access. Talk with older people about how things were in the past. The other **BETTER TIMES Emergency Notes** cover issues that can help you prepare within your resources. Consult them for inexpensive ideas regarding water, emergency heating, and cooking. Enroll in free classes. Ask questions. Use maps and dictionaries. (Often.) Read the instructions. Use time constructively. Remember: A stitch in time saves nine. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Waste not, want not. If you don't know, ask! To avoid fools, take steps! Nurture blessings in your own life and in the life of your community. Keep books in your home. Read them to your children. Learn many things. Practice many skills. Teach others. **Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.**

Got smart shopping? Look at flea markets/garage sales for stuff that would be useful in an emergency: extra pots & pans (such as a Dutch oven), blankets & winter clothing, towels, water & food containers, food processing equipment (grain and meat grinders, mason jars, pressure cookers), candles, matches, blankets, towels, rope, tools, camp stoves, flashlights, lanterns, rolls of plastic, fishing poles and tackle, etc. **Stop throwing useful stuff away:** this includes plastic & glass containers & their lids, newspapers, plastic & paper bags, kitchen scraps, cardboard, lawn trimmings. Start a compost heap with your kitchen leftovers and lawn trimmings. Use it for fertilizer for a gardens. Think of your trash as a resource to be used rather than a problem to be disposed of.

Got contingency plans? Planning involves no out-of-pocket expense. Decide now what your family will do during emergencies. If people aren't at home, or can't get home, where should the family gather? If you have to evacuate, where would you go? Prepare small "evacuation kits" for each family member. Pack them with a 3 day supply of food, water, a blanket, small battery powered radio, addresses, phone numbers, and other items that would be useful if you have to evacuate. Make sure you have paper copies of all your vital documents, including birth and naturalization certificates, bank statements, etc. If civil disorder threatens the area, it is usually best to stay home, avoid crowds and public gatherings, and become as invisible as possible. If the disaster is large and widespread, it may be days or weeks before help arrives. Don't wait for someone to come "help" you. Help yourself and your neighbors.

Got community organizing? Resilience is a word that describes the ability of a community or family to successfully meet challenges. A resilient neighborhood is a better and safer place to live. If a major disaster hits your neighborhood, work together with your neighbors to increase the safety, security, health, and wellness of your family and community. "Neighbors" can include: friends, family, the people next door & on your block, churches, service clubs or other organizations (like Scouting or 4-H), schools, neighborhood associations, government agencies, co-workers. Pool resources. Work on projects together. Plan what you will do during an emergency situation. Past experience in disasters says that trusting relationships that begin before a disaster endure through the event and help people to face grave challenges successfully. That history also teaches us that a disaster is a hard time to establish such relationships, so NOW is the time to get to know your neighbors. Be ready to help others by organizing a community response to a bad situation. Take special care of those who are particularly vulnerable: people with serious medical conditions, the elderly, the very young, those who have emotional or mental problems. Be aware of the tendency to resort to bad habits when you are under stress. **Don't leave anybody behind, there's room for everybody in the boat.**

Got water? It's cheap and so are containers to store it in. Make sure you have plenty. Start collecting empty bottles (soda pop, etc.) Wash with dish soap and rinse with a chlorine bleach disinfecting solution (see BETTER TIMES Emergency Notes #4). Don't rinse the bottle with plain water after rinsing with the disinfecting solution. Fill immediately with clean tap water, put the lid on, and store in a dark and cool place. Store as much as you can. Clean, large plastic trash cans with lids can be used to store water for washing and flushing purposes. Chlorine bleach is cheap, get several gallons in case you have to purify drinking water or need a disinfectant.

Got juice? The essentials of a cheap power system include a source of power (car alternator, portable generator, wind or solar power), batteries, an inverter (to change the battery's 12 volt DC power into AC power), and a way to distribute the power. Small inverters are cheap and will run a couple of lamps or a radio, or even a small TV (look at electronics or auto parts stores, or catalogs). They plug into the cigarette lighter of a car, a good quality extension cord that plugs into the inverter will bring the power into the house. When the battery gets low, the inverter automatically shuts off and the car can be started to recharge the battery. Small solar panels are available that can provide enough sunlight for a couple of hours of lights each sunny day. Emergency lights can be run directly from a battery (such as brake or backup lights removed from a car or bought for this purpose). Flashlights & battery powered lanterns are

useful; for less money than you spend on batteries in a few months, you can get an inexpensive solar small battery charger and some rechargeable batteries (\$2 - \$6 each, depending on the size). (The cheapest source for a good quality but inexpensive solar charge is at www.ccrane.com .) A step down voltage converter (plugs into the cigarette lighter) can be used to run small "C" or "D" powered radios or CD players from a car battery. For all alternative power applications, an inexpensive volt meter will be very useful. This flyer has only a bare minimum of information on this subject, use it as a source of ideas. Do further research in libraries or by talking to electricians. **Got more energy ideas?** Look for cheap candles at dollar stores & churches, buy lots of the tall ones in glasses (they last 3 to 6 days burning continuously and produce light as well as heat, don't leave them burning unattended or while you sleep). Put candles in front of mirrors and you get more light.

Got Food? The tighter the budget, the more you will have to rely on basic foods such as beans, rice, flour & canned goods that supply a lot of nutrition for the dollar. You can increase the health and quality of life of your family right now if you buy less prepared and packaged food and do more cooking from basic ingredients. Bonus points: you save money and people will ask, "How did you learn to cook like grandma?" Store as much food as you can. If a disaster doesn't happen, with extra food on hand, you'll spend less time in the grocery store.

Emergency Food Storage List for People with Limited Incomes

30 cans of meat or fish	8 pounds oatmeal
40 pounds rice	40 pounds flour
15 pounds corn meal	30 pounds pasta
10, 26 oz cans of spaghetti sauce (or 30, 8 ounce cans of tomato sauce & some spices)	30 boxes macaroni and cheese
60, 15 oz. Cans of Vegetables (15 Oz. Cans)	4, 3 pound cans shortening (or equivalent in oil)
10 pounds sugar	3, 32 ounce jars jelly or jam
salt, bouillon, pepper, some hard candy, spices, yeast, baking powder, baking soda, cocoa	10 jars of peanut butter
12 lbs dried milk (60 quarts liquid)	12 lbs dried beans or peas

This list provides 30 days of nourishing meals with 2500 calories per day per person for a family of 4. Additional items that would enhance this diet include cream of mushroom soup, instant potatoes, syrup, sprouting seeds, tea, more canned meats, vegetables, fruit, & dried beans/peas, tomato/spaghetti sauce. From these ingredients you can prepare: donuts, chocolate cake, chili mac casserole, biscuits, macaroni & cheese, tortillas, chili & rice, bread, rice pudding, Spanish rice, pasta and various sauces, hush puppies, gluten steaks/meatless loaf, bean loaf, cookies (among the many possibilities). Measure portions carefully. If you typically don't include these foods in your diet, and this is what you plan to store, start cooking with them now. Don't wait for an emergency to start a new diet. This helps save on your current food bill too, and thus helps you to put aside more food now for an emergency later. If you can't buy it all at once, buy a little at a time until you have 2 or 3 months emergency supplies on hand. Store carefully so roaches and rodents don't get in -- look for food grade plastic containers such as 5 or 6 gallon buckets with lids. You can often get them cheap or even free at bakeries, donut shops, restaurants, or other places that serve a lot of food. Empty 2 liter pop bottles are another cheap storage container for dry goods like beans, rice, and flour. Rotate your supplies, use some of the flour, rice, beans or whatever, and then buy more. "Store what you eat, and eat what you store." Use this list as a guide, customize it to meet the needs and tastes of your family.

Got more food ideas? Start a garden! Growing food in your yard is like growing money. Buy produce directly from farmers or on sale at the stores and preserve it yourself by dehydrating or canning. (You can learn how to do this if you don't know how.) Dehydrators are cheap & the dehydrated foods can be stored double bagged in ziplocks or in mason jars. You could also dry food in the oven. Set it to 140 degrees, spread food in trays, prop the door open a little, check frequently. Consult your local home extension office or library for more information. You can grow tomato plants, peppers, and other such plants in containers inside your house, or on a porch or balcony. If you have pets, don't forget pet food.

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