**Food and Water Supplies to Have on Hand During an Emergency**

While many are still feeling the impact of food and supply chain backlogs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual hurricane season is also ramping up. Now is the time to make sure that you and your family, including pets, have enough food and water on hand in case a disaster strikes. North Eastern Texas may not experience the landfall of a hurricane or tropical storm, but severe weather including tornados, flooding rains and the resulting power outages are a real possibility.

“A general rule of thumb is to plan for at least 3 days of food and water,” says Jenna Anding, food and nutrition specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. In areas prone to heavy flooding that time may need to be extended to 7 or 10 days.

For water needs, plan on at least 1 gallon of water per person (fluid needs and personal hygiene) and pet per day, says Anding. If there are pregnant women, family members with illness or during the hot summer months, plan for a minimum of 2 gallons per person and pet.

The easiest and most reliable way to take care of emergency water needs is to buy commercially bottled water. Store the bottles at room temperature (or cooler), out of direct sunlight, off the floor, and away from harmful chemicals. Although some bottles may contain a “best-by” date, the International Bottled Water Association ([www.bottledwater.org](http://www.bottledwater.org)) notes that you can safely drink the water after that date as long as the water has been stored properly.

Another option is to store water in a food grade water storage container. These types of containers can be purchased at surplus or camping/outdoor stores. Before storing water in the container, wash with dishwashing soap and water and rinse thoroughly. Then sanitize the container by mixing 1 teaspoon of unscented household bleach with 1 quart (4 cups) of water. Pour the sanitizing solution in the container and shake well to make sure that the solution comes into contact with all surfaces inside the container. Depending on the size of the container you use, you may need as much as a gallon of sanitizing solution (4 teaspoons of bleach + 1 gallon of water). After shaking, wait 30 seconds, pour out the solution, rinse with water and let air dry. After filled, store the container at room temperature (or cooler), away from direct sunlight, off the floor, and away from where harmful chemicals are stored. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that water stored in containers be replaced every 6 months.

As far as food supplies go, choose those that do not require refrigeration or cooking, as power loss is common during disasters. “Talk with family members when making your emergency food supply to make sure you are including foods that will be eaten,” says Anding. Smart choices for an emergency food supply include ready-to-eat canned meats (tuna and chicken), canned pasta, protein and energy bars, dried fruit, peanut butter and jelly, crackers, canned juices and milk, nuts and seeds, dry cereal and granola, and crackers. If there are infants in the family

don’t forget about their needs which may include formula and baby food. Be sure to have a manual can opener, paper towels and plates, re-sealable bags, scissors and hand sanitizer available. Store emergency food supplies in a covered container away from daily pantry items and rotate every 4 to 6 months to assure quality.

Being prepared now can help individuals stay resilient if a disaster strikes. For more information on emergency preparedness, contact Mandy Patrick, Gregg County Extension Agent for Family and Community Health at 903-236-8429 or visit the Texas Extension Disaster Education Network at <https://texashelp.tamu.edu/>.