During an emergency when the water supply has been disrupted, it is best to assume the source has been contaminated. Take precautions by turning the water line off that enters your house to prevent back siphoning contamination. Once the container has been opened the water should be used and not stored again for emergency use.

Boiled and stored water can have a flat taste. If it has a flat taste, pour it back and forth several times between two clean food grade containers to freshen it.

Note that these methods of treating contaminated water are only effective against microorganisms. NONE of these methods will rid the water of chemical toxins.

If you have a water filter (such as one you take hiking) be sure it is a microfilter not greater than 0.2 - 0.5 microns. Water can also be treated by boiling. It is recommended that the water be boiled at a full rolling boil for 1 full minute. Let the water cool and place in a sealable food grade container. Once the container has been opened the water should be used and not stored again for emergency use.

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Note that these methods of treating contaminated water are only effective against microorganisms. NONE of these methods will rid the water of chemical toxins.

If you are not sure if the water in your pipes is contaminated or not, assume that it is and either chemically treat the water or boil it prior to using it for cooking and drinking. Water should always be stored in food grade containers.

Remember

During an emergency when the water supply has been disrupted, it is best to assume the source has been contaminated. Take precautions by turning the water line off that enters your house to prevent back siphoning contamination.

If you are not sure if the water in your pipes is contaminated or not, assume that it is and either chemically treat the water or boil it prior to using it for cooking and drinking. Water should always be stored in food grade containers.

For information about emergency preparation, see the UAF Cooperative Extension Service publications:

- SAL-0004 What to do Before the Flood
- SAL-0005 What to do After the Flood
- SAL-0007 Emergency Preparedness for Alaskans

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www.uaf.edu/ces/water

What to do when drinking water may be contaminated

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Emergency Water

Water is essential for life. It is the transportation system in our bodies, moving nutrients and other needed materials to and within each cell. In an emergency such as floods and earthquakes we need to make sure that a clean supply is readily available. Often in such emergencies the local supply system is shut down or damaged. In flood conditions, in particular, the ample supplies of surface water may be contaminated.

One Gallon a Day

It is estimated that the average person needs 1 gallon of water per day. There should be at least 3 days worth of water available for every person in case of emergency. Water should be stored in plastic containers manufactured for food use i.e. plastic bottles, juice or soda bottles, water jugs with screw caps, or camping carriers. The containers should be stored away from cleaning supplies, fertilizers or other products with strong odors. Replace stored water every 6 months.

Water Found in the Home for Emergency Use

In an emergency, if you have not stored water ahead of time and the water source is not safe, you can use other sources found inside your home.

First turn off the water supply to the house to prevent contamination from the supply source. Water in the water heater (be sure to turn off the water heater before emptying it); or the toilet tank (not toilet bowl) can be used. Do not use water from the toilet tank if it has a cleaner/deodorizer in it.

Outside the house you can use rainwater; catching it directly from the sky. Be sure to use a clean food grade container. Ponds or rivers should only be used if you are certain that they have not been contaminated. Avoid water with material floating in it, if it has an odor, or is dark in color. Do not drink or attempt to treat floodwater.

Treating Contaminated Water

Your city or your local Cooperative Extension Service (CES) office can provide a list of water testing labs if you would like your water tested.

If you are on city water it is already treated. If your water comes from a well, spring or other surface source, treatment may be needed. Water can be treated with typical household chlorine bleach. Add 1 drop of 5.25%-6% chlorine bleach per quart and let it stand for 30 minutes. “Ultra” contains 6% chlorine bleach. Be sure the bleach you use is fragrance and soap free. The following table provides information for larger quantities of water to be treated.

| Amount of 5.25% to 6% chlorine bleach to use per gallon of water for purification |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Gallons | 5      | 10     | 20     | 30     | 40     | 50     |
| Clear water | 1/4t   | 1/2t   | 3/4t   | 1t     | 1 1/4t | 1 1/2t |
| Cloudy water | 1t     | 1 1/2t | 2t     | 2 1/2t | 3t     |        |

“t” = teaspoon