

Storing Emergency Supplies

During an emergency, you need to be able to get to your emergency supplies easily. But where is the best place to store them?



Consider the risks. In an emergency, you'll need to get to your supplies quickly. You don't want them in a place that's hard to access or likely to be damaged in a disaster (like your basement). But if you store supplies outside in a garage or shed, they may be more likely to get stolen or damaged by extreme temperatures.

What's best for you? We all have different circumstances - different types of homes, different financial resources, different exposure to hazards, and different ways of measuring risk. So we all have to approach supply storage with our own circumstances in mind.

- Maybe you think it's too risky to store your supplies indoors. Find ways to secure your items outside. Use high-quality locks and camouflage containers so they look less enticing. Check on food, water, and batteries often to make sure they're still good.
- Maybe you think it's too risky to store your supplies outdoors. Try to keep them near your front or back door so you can get to them easily.

Diversify. One way to deal with risk is to keep supplies in a few different areas. For example, store your more expensive and fragile items inside your home in an easy-to-access location. Keep everything else outside your home in a secure garage, shed, container, or vehicle.

This is an especially good approach for water. If your entire water supply is damaged, you'll have a big problem. Keep some indoors and some outdoors. Hide some in various places throughout your home (see more tips on the next page). For extensive info about water storage and treatment, visit regionalh2o.org/personal-preparedness.

Brace it. During an earthquake, things will fall if they aren't secured. Make sure your supplies are as safe as possible. Secure furniture and shelving to the wall so your supplies won't fall. Bracing supplies are inexpensive and can be purchased at your local hardware store or online.

Get Creative with Small Spaces

Live in an apartment or small home? Get creative. Every empty space can be used for supply storage.

Look up, look down, look all around. Look for space on the floor of your closet, under your bed, behind your couch, under end tables, on closet shelves, and inside your entertainment center. With your landlord's permission, build shelves above your washing machine, inside your closet, above your toilet, and inside the broom closet. Use hooks to hang lightweight items. Store items on top of your kitchen cabinets and refrigerator. (During an earthquake, those things will fall. If you can, put your supplies in a crate or bin that's secured with screws, straps, rope, or removable adhesive hooks.)

Use space savers and dual-purpose furniture. Use a shoe bag to store smaller items on the inside of your closet door. Some furniture has built-in storage, such as footrests, coffee tables, and entertainment centers. Use a decorative trunk as an end table or coffee table. Depending on the size of your bookcases, you may be able to put cube boxes in them to store smaller items.

Make or find hiding spots. Put your supplies in empty containers that don't get used often - like suitcases, purses, and other bags. You could also put small items in empty pots, pans, or bowls that are not used frequently. Use a longer tablecloth over your dining room table to create hidden storage underneath.

Use vacuum storage bags. If you can afford it, a vacuum storage system is a great way to shrink the size of soft items such as clothing, sleeping bags, etc. It removes air from bags using the hose of a vacuum cleaner. Never put anything damp or dirty in a storage bag.

Use your freezer. Fill sanitized 2-liter bottles mostly full with water, and freeze them. Be sure to leave extra space in the bottles since the water will expand when frozen. Use these to fill any extra space in your freezer. A full freezer actually saves energy. The extra ice helps during power grid failures, as your freezer will stay cold longer. After you use up your other stored water, you can begin using the ice water from the freezer.

Next... Make a list! If you have supplies throughout the house, it is easy to lose track of all your hiding spots. Make a list of where you're storing everything.