TACDA Water Storage Guide

Water Storage Containers — Be Ready for Any Emergency

Safe, clean water is the most important resource in any disaster. Whether facing a short-term power outage or a long-term disruption, having dependable water storage ensures your family can drink, cook, clean, and stay healthy when the unexpected happens.

Below is a practical guide to help you choose the right containers and build a reliable water storage plan.

Why Store Water for Emergencies?

During disasters, water systems can fail without warning. Pipes break, contamination enters the system, or electrical outages stop municipal pumps. The CDC recommends **at least one gallon of water per person per day**, but during a crisis, needs can quickly exceed that.

Storing water provides:

- ✓ Clean drinking water during boil notices or contamination
- ✓ Water for cooking and washing
- ✓ Stability during supply chain or power outages
- ✓ Peace of mind knowing your home has a reliable reserve

Having your own stored water means you are **not dependent on stores, deliveries, or working utilities** during an emergency.

How Much Water Should You Store?

A general guideline:

- **Minimum:** 1 gallon per person per day
- **Better:** 2 gallons per person per day
- **Ideal:** 14-day supply for your household

Also consider additional needs for:

- Pets
- Medical devices
- Gardening or sanitation

- Hot climates (higher consumption)

The Best Containers for Water Storage

Choose containers that are:

- **Food-grade**
- **BPA-free**
- Designed specifically for **water storage**
- Easy to transport, lift, and seal
- Resistant to algae growth and contamination

Common options include:

- **55-gallon drums** — long-term bulk storage
- **5–7 gallon jugs** — portable and manageable
- **Stackable water bricks** — modular, space-efficient
- **Emergency water storage totes** — ideal for shelter-in-place
- **Collapsible containers** — backup, lightweight options

Always avoid containers that previously stored chemicals, juice, or milk.

Where Should You Store Emergency Water?

Water should be stored in:

- Cool, dark areas
- Indoors if possible
- Away from direct sunlight
- Off the garage floor (use pallets or shelving)
- Somewhere accessible during an emergency

Good locations include:

- Basement
- Utility room

- Interior closet
- Under beds
- Pantry
- Temperature-stable garage (not extreme heat)

Avoid storing water in areas where summer heat exceeds **90+ degrees** for long periods.

How Often Should You Rotate Stored Water?

Properly stored water can remain drinkable for long periods, but rotation keeps everything fresh:

- **Municipal tap water:** rotate every 6–12 months
- **Commercially bottled water:** follow the manufacturer date
- **Treated water in drums:** typically 1–5 years depending on treatment

Label containers with **date stored** and **date to replace**.

Water Treatment Basics

Before storing tap water long-term, you may:

- Add water treatment drops
- Use household unscented chlorine bleach (correct measurements only)
- Use water purification tablets
- Use a filter first if water is cloudy

Never use scented, splash-less, or gel bleach.

⭐ **Bleach-to-Water Ratios for Emergency Water Storage**

When storing tap water for long-term use, or when disinfecting questionable water during an emergency, you can safely treat it with **unscented, regular household bleach**. This helps prevent microbial growth and keeps stored water safe for drinking.

Only use bleach that lists **6% sodium hypochlorite** or **8.25% sodium hypochlorite** on the label.
Do not use splash-less, scented, thickened, or color-safe bleach.

How Much Bleach to Add to Stored Water

Tap Water (Municipal)

If your tap water is already safe to drink, the following amounts are recommended for long-term storage:

✓ **For 1 gallon of water**

- Add **1/8 teaspoon** (8 drops) of 6% bleach
- OR **6 drops** of 8.25% bleach

✓ **For 5 gallons of water**

- Add **1/2 teaspoon** of 6% bleach
- OR **3/8 teaspoon** of 8.25% bleach

✓ **For 55 gallons of water (standard water drum)**

- Add **4 teaspoons** (⅔ tablespoon) of 6% bleach
- OR **3 ½ teaspoons** of 8.25% bleach

Mix well and let stand **at least 30 minutes** before sealing the container.

Treating Questionable or Cloudy Water

If water is **cloudy, murky, or unknown**, use a stronger concentration:

✓ **1 gallon of cloudy water**

- Add **1/4 teaspoon** (16 drops) of 6% bleach
- OR **12 drops** of 8.25% bleach

After adding bleach:

- Mix thoroughly
- Let sit for **30 minutes**
- If the water is still cloudy with no chlorine smell, repeat the dose once

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Safety Tips for Using Bleach for Water Storage

- Only use **plain, unscented bleach**
- Never mix bleach with other chemicals
- Do not “taste test” water; rely on proper measurement
- Label containers with date, treatment method, and bleach strength
- Replace bleach annually — bleach loses potency over time
- Store water in food-grade, BPA-free containers only

Quick Reference Chart

Water Amount	6% Bleach	8.25% Bleach
1 gallon	8 drops (⅛ tsp)	6 drops
5 gallons	½ tsp	⅜ tsp
55 gallons	4 tsp	3 ½ tsp
1 gallon (cloudy)	16 drops (¼ tsp)	12 drops