



# Home Preparedness

Birch Bay Water & Sewer District

Winter Newsletter 2009/2010

## Special points of interest:

- Four Steps to Preparedness



- Create a Disaster Supplies Kit



- Utility Shut-off and Safety



- Water Sterilization



## WHY PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY?

Whatcom County and its residents are subject to many disasters including floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, winter storms, HAZMAT incidences and power outages.

If a disaster occurs, emergency services and government agencies may not be able to respond immediately to your needs. Being prepared can reduce fear, anxiety, and losses that accompany disasters. History has shown repeatedly that people who prepare experience less disruption when emergencies occur and are more likely to resume their lives more quickly than those who do not prepare.

The purpose of this brochure is to inform you, so that you can be prepared for any disaster that can happen at any time. While the District has its own emergency preparedness plans in place there could be a disaster that damages our system such that we are not able to deliver water and sewer service during and immediately after the event.



## FOUR STEPS TO PREPAREDNESS

**W**e cannot stop disasters from occurring, but we can limit their impact. Contrary to common thought, the chances of being killed or injured in a disaster is very low. Your home has a greater chance of getting damaged and as a result you will be unable to live normally in your home. Proper planning and preparation will help you and your family be more comfortable in the event that your home is damaged, or you can't get back into it.

### **STEP 1— Find Out What Disasters Could Happen to You**

- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen in your local area
- Learn about your community's warning signals

### **STEP 2—Create a Disaster Plan**

- Discuss what to do in an evacuation
- Ask an out-of-area friend to be the "family contact" - easier to call long distance during an emergency
- Pick two places to meet

### **STEP 3—Put Your Plan Into Action**

- Teach & prepare your family what to do in an emergency based on your disaster plan

### **STEP 4—Practice and Maintain Your Plan**

- Review your plans every 6 months
- Replace stored water & food every 6 months

## HELPFUL TIP!

When you set your clocks in the fall and the spring, also replace your stored food/water, change smoke detector batteries and do other things necessary to maintain your plan.

## 72 HOUR EMERGENCY KIT



Every household should assemble a disaster supplies kit and keep it up to date. A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items a family would probably need to stay safe and be more comfortable during and after a disaster. There are six basics you should stock in your home:

water, food, first aid, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies and special items. Kit supplies should be stored in a portable container. It is also wise to keep a smaller version of the disaster supplies kit in the trunk of your car.

The following list is the bare minimum that should be included in your kit. You can and should add to this list based on your family's specific needs.

- One gallon of water per person per day. Amount of water per person depends on age and health.
- Sufficient non-perishable food for 3 days that requires no refrigeration, cooking or preparation.
- Prescription and non-prescription medications
- Battery powered portable radio. This maybe your only source of information during a disaster
- First aid kit
- Sanitary & personal hygiene items
- Clothing and bedding
- Special items such as baby needs and important family documents.

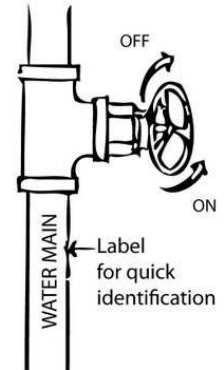


## UTILITY SHUT-OFF AND SAFETY

Water quickly becomes a precious resource that may become unavailable or contaminated following many disasters. It is important that emergency drinking water is kept on hand, and that all household members learn how to shut off and isolate the water supply to their residence.

- Clearly label the water shut-off valve and learn to turn off the water supply.
- Shut-off valves maybe found immediately adjacent to your home, near the hot water heater or at the main water meter, usually near the street.
- Ensure the valve can be fully turned off. If a special tool is needed, make sure one is readily available.
- Shut off the main valve to prevent contamination of the water supply in your water heater and plumbing.

### Water Shut-Off



It is also important to know where the main controls are located for gas and electricity and to know how to turn them off. When disaster strikes it often affects one or more of the utility systems in your home.

### HOW TO STORE WATER!

When water is properly stored it will remain safe to drink indefinitely. Emergency water should be stored in thoroughly washed/sterilized plastic containers that are tightly sealed. The stored water should be kept in a cool, dark place to prevent algal and bacteria growth and to prevent the deterioration of the container. To ensure the safety and freshness of the supply, change emergency water once every 6 months.

## WATER STERILIZATION & DISINFECTION

If your emergency water hasn't been recently replaced or your water supply has a bad odor and taste you should purify it before using it for drinking, food preparation or hygiene. Boiling water and disinfection with household liquid bleach will kill most microbes that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis.

**BOILING** is the safest method of purifying water. Bring water to a rolling boil for 3-5 minutes, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking.

**DISINFECTION** with household liquid bleach will also kill microorganisms. It is important to only use household liquid bleach that contains 5.25% sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color safe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners. Other water treatments such as iodine sold at camping stores do not contain 5.25% sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient and are not recommended for water disinfection.

### DISINFECTING WITH BLEACH

- Add **16 drops** of bleach per gallon of water.
- Stir and let stand for **30 minutes**
- If water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let water stand for another **15 minutes**