

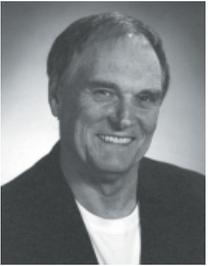
the Flow

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Emergency Drinking Water

by Commissioner Don Ellis



Regardless of one's political persuasion, the disasters of the last few months make one fact very clear - in the event of a catastrophe, the first line of help and resources must come from the individuals and families. In short, we must be prepared to care for ourselves until help arrives. Cataclysmic events can, and have, reduced large numbers of the American population to a survival mode in a matter of hours. We are the ones who must be prepared to sustain lives during a disaster and in the early stages of the recovery.

Besides air, the most critical element to basic survival is potable water. If the water system sustains major damages during a disaster such as an earthquake, the normal supply of drinking water may not be available until the system is back in service. Depending on the severity, repair can take days or weeks. An adequate supply of safe drinking water makes the difference between life and death. While it is possible to survive on as little as eight ounces of water per day, a normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more. The American Red Cross recommends storing two quarts or 64 ounces of drinking water per person per day for a minimum three-day supply.

The problem with home storage is shelf life. Store-bought water in clear or translucent plastic bottles has a relatively short shelf life. I recently left an opaque plastic bottle, that is not airtight and with residual water, in the light for three or four months. The residue turned an unappetizing color of green. I was curious as to the transformation, but was unable to find an individual

willing to perform a taste test. The ideal situation would be to have the water stored in a cool, dark place, with complete replacement every few months, or at least once a year on a first-in, first-out basis.

The District is planning to acquire one-liter (33.81 ounce) boxes of pre-packaged emergency water with a 5-year shelf life (and if properly stored, even longer). Once we have secured an adequate supply, the District intends to make them available to our ratepayers. Six of these liter-size boxes will provide one person with over two quarts of water per day for three days. The District will provide the first six boxes for each single-family account free of charge. Additional boxes are available at our cost of 75 cents each. A single box of the same product retails at \$2.49 on the Internet. A three-day supply of emergency drinking water for each additional member of your household will cost \$4.50 if purchased from the District. When the program is ready for implementation, you will be notified by mail.

We hope this program will plant the seed of emergency planning in our community. Besides emergency water, the American Red Cross urges families to stock food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items for medical conditions. Its website at http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_91_,00.html, has a list of the necessary emergency preparedness supplies for the home.

Like you, the District will also prepare its own family for emergency. We will do everything possible to make it easy for our employees to report for duty during an emergency because that's when they are needed the most. The District has already spent millions for the seismic retrofit of our water system. We will continue to look for ways to increase the reliability of our system in preparation for disasters. ■

The Commissioners and Staff of Northshore Utility District Wish You and Your Family a

Safe, Happy, and Healthy Holiday Season and New Year!

Don't Get Left in the Cold - Winterize Now!

Don't let winter weather catch you unprepared. Prevent the expense and inconvenience of frozen pipes by taking a few simple steps now.



Insulate Exposed Pipes and Faucets

Outdoor faucets and pipes, and pipes in unheated garages and crawl spaces are the most vulnerable in freezing weather. Hardware stores have good insulation materials available that will protect pipes from freezing.

Locate Your Main Shut-Off Valve

Don't wait for an emergency. Find your main shut-off valve now and test it! If a pipe breaks, you can stop excessive water loss and flooding by turning off your main shut-off valve. It is commonly located in the basement, garage, or outdoors by the foundation, often near the front faucet. Test the valve by turning the handle to be sure it's working properly and identify it with a tag. If a main shut-off valve does not exist, you might consider having one installed by a plumber.



Disconnect and Drain Outdoor Hoses

Detaching the hose could keep your hose bibs and pipes from freezing. Also, insulators that go over your hose bib will prevent freezing during long cold spells.



They can be purchased at any hardware store.

Winterize Your Vacant House



If you plan on leaving your house for several days, take some extra steps to protect pipes from freezing. Turn off the main shut-off valve and contact your gas or electric utilities to see if you should turn off the electricity or gas to the water heater. If the house is going to be vacant for an extended length of time the water heater should also be drained. It is also a good idea to flush toilets once (to drain the tank but not the bowl), open indoor and outdoor faucets to drain pipes, and to leave your heat on at a minimum temperature setting.

If Your Pipes Do Freeze or Break

Immediately close the main shut-off valve to stop excessive flooding.

Thaw frozen pipes and faucets by wrapping them with rags and pouring hot water over the rags until the water is flowing again.

After thawing, remove the wet rags and wrap the pipes with dry insulation to prevent refreezing.

Never use an open flame or electric device to thaw a frozen pipe - this could cause a fire or electric shock. Any pipe broken during the freeze may start leaking after thawing. ■



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Full Washes Can Save You Loads!

Many People do loads that leave a third of the washer's capacity unused. Try adding a couple more items to your load and see if you're satisfied with how clean they come out. Doing this is an easy way to save water and money! Also, if you do a lot of laundry, try to wash one load less per week by combining small loads into full loads. This can help you save time and up to 2,000 gallons of water per year, depending on the water efficiency of your washer. ■



Rebate Reminder

The Single-family Toilet Replacement Program is not being offered by the Savingwater Partnership at this time. However, there are still rebates for qualified water efficient washing machines and irrigation system upgrades. For a current complete listing of all rebates available, go to: <http://www.savingwater.org/rebates.htm>. ■



District Office
P.O. Box 82489
6830 NE 185th St.
Kenmore, WA 98028

425-398-4400
425-398-4430 fax

www.nud.net

