



Just the Facts...

Choosing an Alternate Water Supply During an Emergency

Unavailable or Contaminated Water Supply

If a military installation's drinking water supply becomes contaminated, there are several sources of alternate water supplies that can be used. Be sure you are in close communication with installation water utility and environmental personnel.

Adequate quantities of safe drinking water must be provided. Alternate water supplies should be able to provide at least 2.9 – 7.8 gallons per person per day as a sustaining level for essential uses such as drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends providing, as a bare minimum, 1 gallon per person per day.

Municipal Supplies

Local municipal supplies may not be contaminated. Check with local water systems to determine if they can supply the installation. Installation water plant personnel or DPW Environmental personnel will likely have local contact information.

The Bottled Water Option

✓ If possible utilize VETCOM approved bottled water providers. For approved sources of bottled water consult VETCOM Circular 40-1 or the following link:
<http://vets.amedd.army.mil/vetsvcs/approved.nsf>

- ✓ Ensure the manufacturer listed on the bottle is a VETCOM-approved provider.
- ✓ Confirm the bacteriological quality of the water. In an emergency situation, the water may need to be distributed before bacteriological analysis can be conducted. In that case, conduct bacteriological sampling as soon as possible. If bottled water will be consumed for longer than 24 hours, conduct total coliform sampling on one percent of each bottled water lot, with a maximum of 10 samples. If a sample is positive, resample the lot; if resamples are positive, dispose of the entire lot.
- ✓ Installation VETCOM, MWR, or Directorate of Contracting may be able to assist in contacting local bottled water providers.
- ✓ If non-approved bottled water providers are utilized be sure to conduct total coliform testing to ensure bacteriological safety.
- ✓ Establish a central receiving and distribution point for donated and contracted water.
- ✓ Do not store in direct sunlight.
- ✓ Do not store outside under tarps or plastic covering.
- ✓ Do not drink bottled water past its expiration date.
- ✓ Do not drink bottled water if the seal is broken.
- ✓ Do not drink bottled water if water is cloudy or discolored.

Emergency Water Sources in the Home

If the installation water supply becomes contaminated it is recommended that these alternate sources be disinfected using Home/Individual Emergency Disinfection Procedures described in the Emergency Disinfection Procedures Fact Sheet.

- ✓ Hot water tank. Turn off the power that heats it, and let the tank cool. Then place a container underneath and open the drain valve at the bottom of the tank. Don't turn the tank on again until water services are restored.
- ✓ Toilet tank. The water in the tank (not the bowl) is safe to drink unless chemical treatments have been added.
- ✓ Water pipes. Release air pressure into the plumbing system by turning on the highest faucet in the house. Then drain the water from the lowest faucet.
- ✓ Outside the home. Rain water, spring water, and water from streams, river, lakes, and coiled garden hoses can be used after it is disinfected.

Beverage Industries

Many food industries, such as beverage and milk plants have the equipment to provide water. Beverage and milk processors could haul water as an alternate water source. If these trucks are used, ensure they are thoroughly washed and disinfected on the inside. Many beverage processors have automatic tank truck cleaning and disinfection equipment.

ROWPU Treated Water

Some military installations may have reverse osmosis water purification units (ROWPUs) and the associated water buffalos available to treat and store water. Designated water points could be set up to distribute the ROWPU-treated water.

Additional Assistance

Further guidance on choosing an emergency water supply can be obtained by contacting the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM) Water Supply Management Program at the address listed on the bottom of the fact sheet or by using email:
Water.Supply@apg.amedd.army.mil.

References

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Frequently Asked Questions, Locating Safe Drinking Water, February 2003,
<http://www.fema.gov/rrr/waterf.shtm>.

Field Manual (FM) 10-52, Water Supply in Theaters of Operation, Jul 90.

Illinois Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Fact Sheet, Emergency Hauling, Storing and Disinfecting of Water Supplies, April 2000,
<http://idph.state.il.us/envhealth/factsheets/emergencyh20.htm>.