



Emergency Preparation – Tips from Westside Water

Westside Water has provided a steady supply to its customers for most of its history--our only interruptions have been from power outages in winter storms, which have been short and infrequent. In fact, our last big quake, the Nisqually quake in 2002, slightly increased the flow of water from our springs.

However, we in the Pacific Northwest need to be prepared for a large earthquake that could interrupt services of all kinds, potentially for a long period of time. The risk we face from a quake on the Seattle Fault is shown in this map from [King County](#). You can view the [PDF version](#) to zoom in even closer (file size 1.1 MB).

Quake Risk



[Click to enlarge](#)

Here are some things you can do to be prepared:

- **Keep a supply of water stored on your property.** One gallon per person per day is thought to be the minimum water requirement. For a family of four, this would be 28 gallons for one week. When you consider that normal usage for one person is something more like 140 gallons per day, you might want to store more than the minimum. Having at least one 55-gallon drum ends up being a good choice for a household, and a [list of rain barrel suppliers](#) from Seattle Public Utilities gives local sources for inexpensive containers. If you don't have a drum, 2-liter pop containers will do. Stay away from milk containers, as those break down over time.

To make sure that your stored water is palatable and safe, keep these things in mind:

- Most rain barrels have been previously used; make sure that yours was used for food or beverage.
 - Containers need to be supported so they won't tip over in an earthquake, and should be in a spot that's easily accessed even if there's damage to your house.
 - Stored water can accumulate bacteria and other organisms. One way to prevent this is to make sure that your storage containers are opaque and well-sealed. Also, taste-test your water at least once a year and treat it if needed with household chlorine bleach. This is a way of chlorinating your water much the same way that public utilities do. After bleaching, let the water sit tightly sealed for a day to give the bleach time to work, and when you drink the water you can get rid of the chlorine taste as you would with any other chlorinated water, by letting it sit uncovered for an hour. Don't use bleach that has soap or other additives. Use 1/8 teaspoon of bleach (equal to about 5-8 drops) per gallon of water, or about 1/8 cup per 55-gallon drum.
- **Be ready to purify your own water.** This may mean having a bottle of bleach set aside, or tincture of iodine, or a filtration system that doesn't require WWA water pressure.