

BE PREPARED.



IMPORTANT

Keep this handbook somewhere safe and easy to remember, along with any print-outs you may have accessed from our website or other sources. Make sure you have hard copies - the internet won't work in a power cut! If you build a home emergency store, that's the perfect place to keep this, next to a torch so you that can read it if the lights are off.

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction: Be Prepared	3
2. Reasons to prepare	4
3. Reasons to be cheerful	5
4. First steps	6
5. Water	8
6. Light	10
7. Food	11
8. What to do during an emergency	14
9. Central pull-out: household emergency plan	16-17
10. Communication	19
11. Temperature	20
12. Hygiene	22
13. Affordability and storage space	24
14. Anatomy of a household store	25
15. Mental health	26
16. Support for those with additional needs	27
17. Neighbours and community	28
18. Optional extras	29
19. Sources and further reading	30
20. Emergency Kit Checklist	31

DISCLAIMER

This household emergency preparedness guide is for general informational purposes only and does not replace professional advice or official emergency instructions. Situations vary, and you are responsible for how you use this information. While we are confident in our research and the advice we have provided, we accept no responsibility for how it is followed.

BE PREPARED.

The UK is fundamentally a safe and secure country. We live in one of the world's most advanced and digitalised societies with a well-developed and integrated infrastructure, which means we have stable access to basic necessities such as electricity, water, heating, communications and food.

But we are also vulnerable.

Everything that we take for granted - running taps, switching on lights, the ability to text and call each other - is vulnerable to interruption during a crisis. What's more, disruption in one area can have major consequences in others: during a power cut for example, fridges will not work, trains will not run and supermarkets cannot open.

It is recommended advice that every household should be able to manage for at least three days should a crisis strike.

In March 2025, the EU launched a new **Preparedness Union Strategy** which aims to respond to crisis by taking a whole-society approach. It asks all EU citizens to be ready to be self-sufficient for 72 hours (three days). Our UK government is not taking these steps, or at least not at the current moment. While it does have detailed guidance on its own **Prepare** website, which we encourage you to look at, it is not getting this information out there. You have to go looking for it. So if this guide comes as a shock to you, it is no wonder and we do not blame anyone for finding it a bit unnerving or seeming a little ominous!

We'd like to reassure you that the message we have is one of positivity, community, kindness and working together to support each other if we hit hard times, here in Ely or as a country as a whole. Our guiding belief is simply this:

If every household in the UK had one week's store of basic emergency supplies, imagine how resilient we would be as a country.

But the reality is that most UK households are grossly underprepared: only 14% are ready for a water crisis, and over 70% lack a plan to manage during a power cut, flood or another pandemic.

This handbook will give you the information and guidance you need to be prepared for short-term crisis or disruption to services. It covers what you can do beforehand, and what you need to do during a situation, so that you and your family can get through any situation comfortably, and even be in a position to be able to help others do the same.

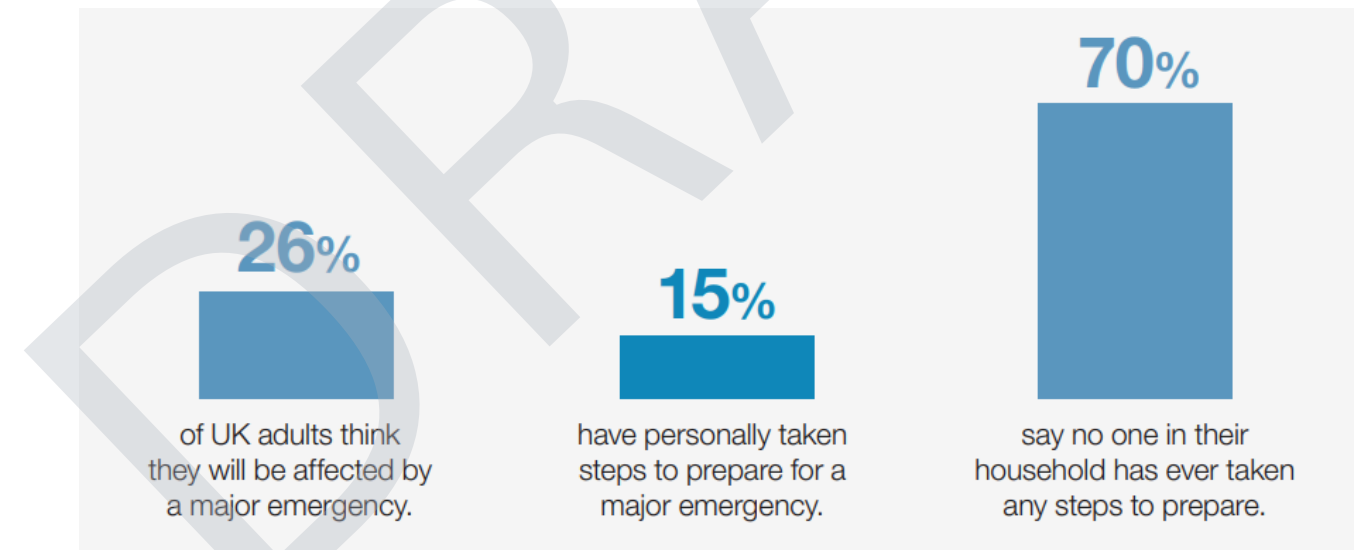
REASONS TO PREPARE

An emergency of any kind is something that we would all rather not think about. None of us wants to imagine the personal impact of disruptions to our daily lives, but the reality is that this is not something that can be totally ignored. We've all seen examples in the news: no running water in parts of Kent and Suffolk for up to two weeks during midwinter 2025. The sudden emptiness of supermarket shelves at the start of Covid. Increasing economic uncertainty due to war and international conflict.

The range of threats, risks and predictable crises facing the UK is growing. According to the UK Government's National Risk Register these may come from, for instance:

- another pandemic
- rising temperatures, flooding and increasing frequency and severity of storms
- food and gas supply shortages
- war or conflict in Europe or NATO
- technological and internet failure

Mercifully, most of us here in the UK will get through life without being badly affected by the worst of it. There is no point dwelling on larger-scale catastrophes: we do not recommend doing this! What we can do is be prepared to handle short-term, mitigatable disasters.



From the British Red Cross *Ready for Anything* report

PREPAREDNESS ISN'T SCARY: IT'S EMPOWERING.

It doesn't need to be doom and gloom. Emergencies are a fact of life: we start preparing for them in childhood when we learn the number '999'. Expanding our mindset to prepare for community-wide emergencies can feel incredibly powerful. In uncertain times it's a reasonable and productive coping strategy.

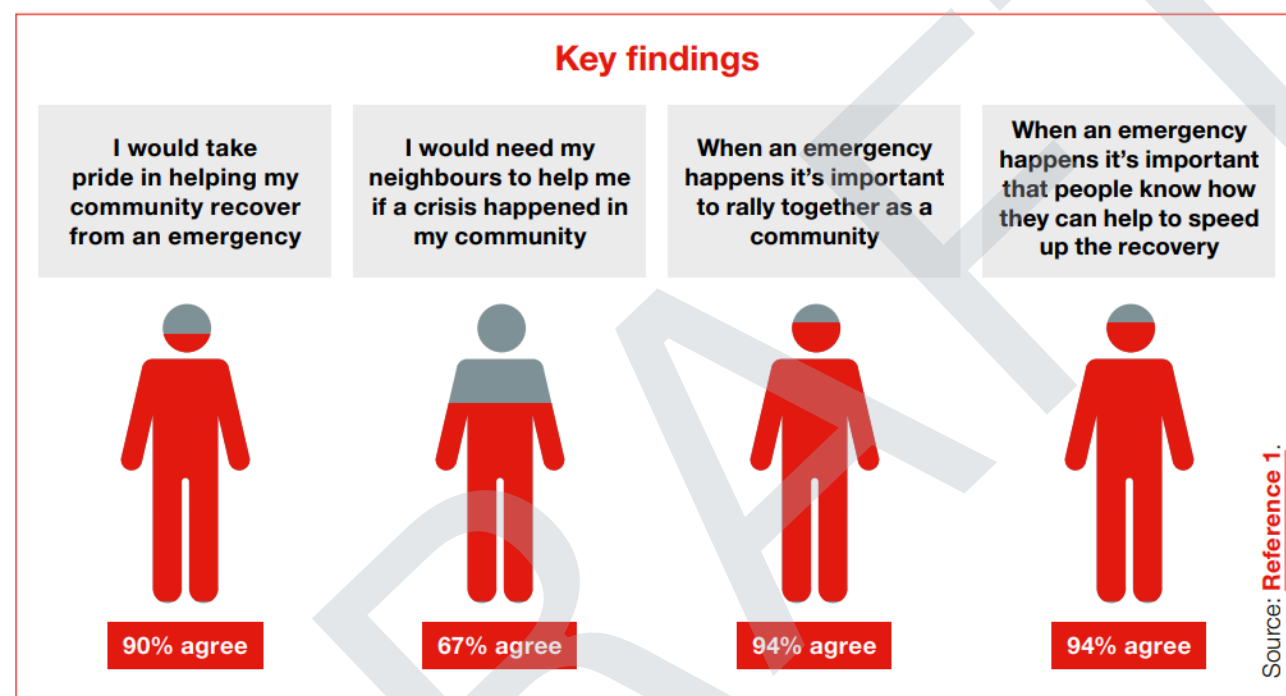
You can prepare in positive ways: storing some treats and things you love, a deck of cards and family boardgame, even extra birthday gifts - so that if crisis hits you aren't queueing up anywhere in the rain, but staying safe and cosy indoors, not wanting for anything urgent - maybe even having a good time with the people you love!

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

Existing evidence shows that when times get tough, local people step up.

Reports in the aftermath of recent disasters such as Covid, Grenfell, water outages, storms and attacks demonstrate that UK communities consistently display high levels of resilience and solidarity during times of crisis.

The British Red Cross has reported that almost nine in ten people (88%) said if an emergency happened in their community they would want to get involved.



From the British Red Cross *When Crisis Hits* report

PREPAREDNESS ISN'T SELFISH: IT'S AN ACT OF KINDNESS.

Groups such as the British Red Cross assume major responsibilities when our security or services are threatened. They emphasise the human kindness that communities show to each other during such times, and see this kindness as key to their effective response.

However, their resources are in high demand during such moments.

One of the kindest things we can do is prepare ourselves to be able to be self-reliant, so that we can free up emergency response teams to lend their aid to others.

Be part of the solution, not part of the problem

The more people that are able to take care of themselves during and immediately after a crisis, the better we can protect those who are most vulnerable.

FIRST STEPS

By opening this guide, you have already begun your journey to being prepared. Well done!

Finding a safe place for it, where it won't be forgotten, is an excellent first step.

Following reading this, you might like to begin by discussing it with your family or whoever you live with. If you live alone, discuss it with your friends or neighbours. Whether you live with others or on your own, begin by creating your **household emergency plan**.

The central pages of this handbook can be filled in and torn out, so that you can pin them up somewhere easily visible to everyone during an emergency. Make sure everyone knows the plan for your household and knows where to find the plan.

The contents of this handbook have been written in order of priority, in particular, you should start by thinking about **water**.

If you do one thing to prepare yourself for a crisis, it should be to create a store of at least three days of safe drinking water.

See the following section on water (pages 9-10) for more detail on this. Storing water can seem daunting, as it takes up a lot of space, but we have advice to help you see how this can be done cheaply and using minimal space.

Following this you can turn your attention to food and other things that will help you feel safe, comfortable and ready to weather any storm.

A common survival rule, the “rule of three,” says a person can survive:

3 minutes without oxygen
3 hours without shelter
3 days without water
3 weeks without food

However, hold your breath for a moment and think about this. You will start feeling pretty desperate for a breath long before three minutes are up. These survival timeframes are based on life-or-death, but discomfort and weakness kicks in long before these ‘threes’ are up.

The advice in this guide is intended to help you get ahead of these timeframes, so that you are feeling strong and capable to fend for yourself and others in case of limited or interrupted access to these basic needs.

Survival experts give us tried-and-tested rules for survival, such as the **core four**.

The core four represents your top four survival priorities:

SHELTER, WATER, FIRE and FOOD

As this guide is intended for household use, not for outdoor survival situations, shelter is an assumed given. Therefore, our next priorities are water, fire and food - **however!** Take ‘fire’ here to mean **light**. The last thing you want to create in your home at any time, let alone a time of emergency, is fire! What you need in your home is a source of light.

Do not use candles during a power cut, they are a fire hazard. Use torches and battery-powered lights instead.



Ensure you have a **torch and batteries** ready in an easy-to-access place in case of power outage. Camping lights are also a good idea (make sure they are battery and/or solar powered).

To summarise, your first three steps are:

- 1. Complete your household emergency plan**
- 2. Get a supply of drinking water** (see water pages for more info)
- 3. Get a torch, batteries and camping lights** - keep them together with this handbook somewhere easy to access in the dark.

WATER

A store of emergency drinking water should be top of everybody’s priority list.

If a treatment plant fails, mains breaks or pipeline becomes contaminated, you will not be able to drink from the tap. Emergency responses are very stretched when this happens and it may be very difficult and take some time and effort for you to access safe drinking water.

Storing water may seem intimidating, as it takes up a lot of space - and that is something that most of us are in short supply of in the UK, especially in urban areas.

By far the cheapest and easiest method of storing water in bulk is to buy some food-grade jerry cans and fill them up with tap water.



Filling food-grade jerry cans with tap water is a cheap and easy water storage method.

Make sure to buy food-grade, BPA free - these are widely available at hardware stores and online retailers.



Here are some other methods to get and store water at home for emergencies:

- Buy bottled water
- Collect rainwater in a water butt with a lid
- Invest in a water filter such as a Sawyer or British Berkefeld
- Keep some water purification tablets stashed away (*note that these are chemically based, unpleasant to taste and should only be used as a last resort*).



Water butts can be used for a home rainwater harvesting system. This may be suitable if you have a garden, and is especially good for collecting greywater, but is not necessary, so don’t worry if you are unable to do this.

A popular survival field guide motto is “big bubbles, no troubles” - meaning water found in the wild that has been boiled is (relatively) safe to drink. However you might want to consider the difference between a mountain stream and your local river or canal!

HOW MUCH WATER DO I NEED?

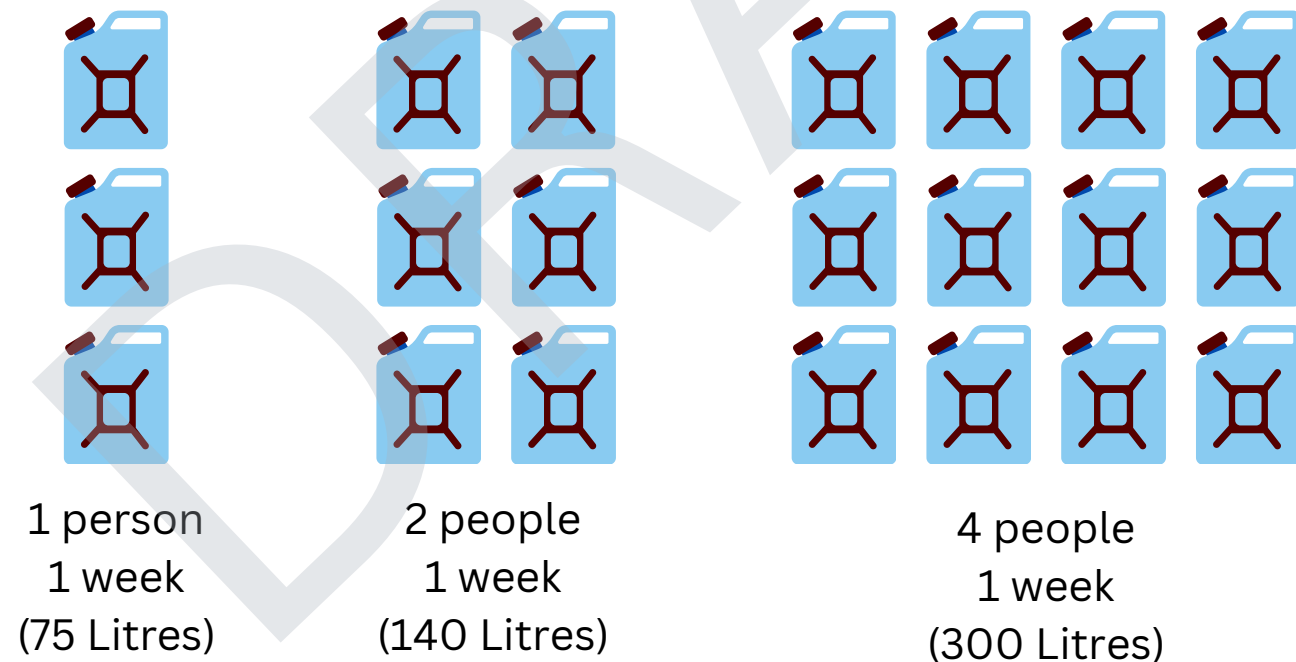
There is no standard figure for how much water is needed, as emergencies can vary in duration and people use different amounts.

The World Health Organisation says that 3 litres per person per day is necessary for survival, but the UK Government recommends 10 litres to feel comfortable and provide for basic hygiene needs.

Additional water might be needed to make up baby formula, for medical devices and for pets. **Don't forget your pets!**

Food-grade jerry cans can be bought at hardware stores or online. One advantage of them is that they are stackable, so they take up minimal space.

Based on a 25 litre jerry can, here is a visual guide to how much you may need to be comfortable with all your drinking and hygiene needs met. Add an extra can if you have pets.



STORING WATER SAFELY



- Store water in a cool dark place. A shed or cupboard is ideal.
- Check if the water tastes or smells unusual before drinking it.
- Change the water every 6 months.
- Bring it indoors during a frost so that the plastic doesn't crack and become contaminated.
- If you are unsure if water is safe to drink, boil it until it comes to a roiling boil.

LIGHT

When the power goes out, the first thing we want to reach for is a light source.

Make sure you have a torch and batteries somewhere easy to remember and easy to access in the dark.

Having a light source is essential to preventing injury from trips, bumps and scratches. This is why it is so high on the priority list, and one could argue putting it ahead of water or at least equivalent in terms of necessity. It is literally a life saver.

One torch is the bare minimum - ideally have a torch per person, and camping lights to keep rooms lit. A headtorch is important to help with tasks that become more dangerous in the dark, such as cooking or using stairs.



You can get a set of collapsible camping lights online for £15-20. Make sure they are battery powered, as these are the most reliable in a power outage.



Don't forget spare batteries! You can get ones with a longer shelf life of up to ten years.



FOOD

WHY SHOULD I KEEP AN EMERGENCY FOOD STORE?

According to the 2024 UK Gov's Food Security Report, around 40% of food in the UK is imported, in particular fruit and vegetables. We are largely self-sufficient as a country for cereals, meat, dairy and eggs. The situations we might want to be prepared for are ones where supermarkets cannot open or have restricted opening hours (such as during a power outage or pandemic), or if international supply lines are disrupted (for instance due to war or conflict in countries that impact on our ability to import food).

HOW MUCH SHOULD I STORE?

How long is a piece of string?


The minimum recommended amount is for three days, or 72 hours, but some would recommend much longer. The guidance in this handbook is to prepare for a minimum of one week.

How much you can store will most likely depend on your available storage space: see the Affordability and Storage section of this guide for more advice about that.

We suggest that you build up your store gradually, adding a little with each shop.

Just buying a few extra cans or boxes in your monthly shop means that pretty soon you will have met the minimum recommended three days. You can then build up to a week or more.

You can use these checkboxes to track your progress:

 ***I'm ready for*** 1 day 1 week 1 month

WHAT FOOD SHOULD I STORE?

What you store will depend on your individual household's tastes and needs, on how much you eat and how much space you have.

Babies, children and pets will also have their own specific needs. For babies, ready made or ready-to-feed formula is best as you may not be able to boil water or sterilise bottles.

You **need food that is filling, energy and nutrient-rich and that can be stored safely at room temperature for long periods.**

The best emergency food requires no added water or cooking - unless you have a water harvesting system or camping stove that you can use in case of outages. However, storing a combination of food that can and cannot be cooked is advisable in case the only problem is access to a supermarket.

You should keep what you actually like to eat and use what you store, cycling out food that is getting older every six months or so. **Use what you store** and it won't go to waste.

A good tip is to label your stored food with the date that you bought it. Just the month and year will do. That way you can easily find what needs to be used up. Have a cook-up or barbecue in the summer to use up food that is getting older and replace what you use afterwards.

Consider also storing a supply of things you love and use daily: tea, coffee, chocolate, salt, spices, sauces and any favourite mood boosters. The good news is that you don't need to diet in an emergency - **calories are your friends!** If you drink alcohol, think about storing a nice bottle of something for a rainy day.

Keep a **thiving, not surviving** mindset and there is no need to suffer through a situation. You might want to have something special stashed away in case of any birthdays or moments you want to celebrate when you can't get to the shops.

EXAMPLE FOOD STORE LIST

Don't try to get all of this at once. You can build up your store gradually, getting a few items at a time with each big monthly shop. You don't need to get anything specialist - a lot of 'emergency food' sold online is unnecessary and overpriced.

These are just ideas, feel free to get creative and adapt this to suit your own tastes and needs. There are plenty of options for vegans and vegetarians.

Fruit and vegetables	Protein	Carbohydrates	Fats, flavours and other
<p>You can get cans of many varieties of fruit and veg. These are your best buys as they are cheap, easy to store, very long-lasting and provide essential nutrients.</p> <p>You can even get canned potatoes! Make sure they are the ready-to-eat kind, in case you are unable to cook.</p>	Canned beans and mixed bean salad	Crackers	Salt and pepper
	Canned lentils and chickpeas	Pasta	Favourite spices, sauces and condiments
	Canned fish - sardines are especially nutrient-dense	Rice	Oil for salads and cooking
	Canned chicken	Barley and Quinoa are especially nutritious grains, with high fibre and protein content	Tea and coffee, Hot chocolate
Dried fruit such as raisins, apricots and banana	Canned sausages and meatballs	Noodles	Chocolate or other favourite treats
Jars of pickled or sundried vegetables and olives	Tinned meals such as tuna salad	Couscous	Canned custard or rice pudding
Canned or packet soup	Canned chili or bolognaise	Tortilla wraps - these last much longer than bread and don't require cooking.	Mayonnaise is a source of fat and can be stored unopened for around six months
Canned tomato, passata or other sauces	Nuts (check shelf life carefully as these can become toxic when they go off)	Oats, oatmeal or porridge	Peanut butter - another good source of fat and protein with good shelf life
Dry soup mix	Seeds	Cereal	Honey
Juice cartons	Seitan	Instant potato mash	Popcorn kernels

WHAT TO DO DURING AN EMERGENCY

Follow the basic UK emergency advice:

If the emergency is inside the home:

- Get out
- Stay out
- Ring 999

If the emergency is outside the home:

- Go in
- Stay in
- Tune in - monitor national and local news and follow official advice for what to do next. BBC radio 2 frequency 88-91 FM, this is the station designated to be used for national emergency information and advice.

You may get a ping or alarm on your phone with a text message from the UK government informing you of the emergency and what to do.

Utilities

If you have time and it is safe to do so, you might need to turn off the mains water, gas or electric to your home during an emergency.

Familiarise yourself with where these are located.

WARNING: You can turn the water and electricity back on yourself but **NOT THE GAS.**

This must be done by a qualified engineer.

Use the following pages to complete your emergency plan with your household and pin it up somewhere visible and easy to remember.

HOUSEHOLD EMERGENCY PLAN

Having a plan written down could help you in situations where you have no electricity, phone, or internet connection.

Fill this plan in, discuss it with your family, then tear it off and pin it up somewhere safe and easy to find in a power cut. Good places include the back of a cupboard, a pin board or on the fridge.

Important contact numbers for services you might need:

- Emergency services 999
- NHS non-emergency number 111
- Police non-urgent 101
- To report a power cut 105

Radio frequencies:

- BBC Radio 1 (97-99 FM)
- BBC Radio 2 (88-91 FM)
- BBC Radio 4 (92-95 FM)

Local news radio frequencies:

Our agreed meeting point is:

Important contact numbers:

(Blank page)

QR code & website link

List of current medications and dosages:

Our nearest defibriliator unit is located:

Utilities:

Utility shut off location:

Water stop cock:

Electricity isolation switch:

Insurance provider details:

(Blank page)

QR code & website link

COMMUNICATION

You must be able to receive news and important information from government authorities.



Disorientation due to lack of reliable information is a common complaint from people who have experienced emergencies.

Radio has been the primary form of emergency communication in the UK for the last century, but the UK government are now also using an emergency alert system to mobile phones. Pay attention if you receive one and follow any advice it contains.

Make sure you know how to tune your radio. Frequencies to know:

BBC Radio 1 (97-99 FM)

BBC Radio 2 (88-91 FM)

BBC Radio 4 (92-95 FM)

Good things to keep at home:

- Radio powered by batteries, solar panels or a handcrank (or all three)
- Extra batteries
- Important phone numbers written down on paper.

An emergency radio like this one is available online for around £25. Practice tuning it ahead of time so that you are ready to use it when you may be feeling less clear-headed.



Be cautious of online sources which may be spreading misinformation with malicious intent, generated by AI or on websites which have not been updated. Also be aware that you may not be able to access the internet. The radio stations listed above are your best source of reliable, up to date information.

If you get poor reception where you live, try going higher up, say upstairs if possible, or local high ground. FM radio reception is better the more elevated you are (but stay safe)!

Naturally, you will want to be able to stay in contact with family and friends, but be aware that in certain situations, mobile phones and the internet may not work. This is why it is a good idea to bring up this topic ahead of time and let the people who care about you know your plans and preparations for an emergency if it hits.

TEMPERATURE

The following advice is in case of extreme weather during a power cut. It comes from the UK Department of Health and Social Care (see sources at the end of this document).

TO STAY WARM

Gather everyone in one room to share warmth. Close the curtains and blinds and drape blankets over the windows. Cover the floor with rugs. Block any draughts under doors with bolsters, cushions or towels.

Layer up your clothing with several thin layers and put on any woolens or thermals if you have them. Move around and stretch every hour to boost your circulation. While you are sitting, keep your feet raised because air near the floor is colder. Use sleeping bags if you have them for extra warmth at night.

Signs of hypothermia: shivering, cold and dry skin, skin and lips that are blue or grey (which may be easier to see on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet of black or brown skin), slurred speech, slow breathing and appearing tired or confused.

If you think someone has hypothermia, take the following steps:

- move them indoors or somewhere sheltered as quickly as possible
- remove any wet clothes and wrap the person in a blanket, covering their head
- if they are awake give them some sugary food and a warm non-alcoholic drink
- stay with them and keep them awake by talking to them
- get medical help if you are able to
- **DO NOT** light a fire indoors or use any fuel equipment which creates carbon monoxide



TO STAY COOL

For most people very hot weather will be inconvenient but not dangerous, however hot weather can cause serious health problems for some groups.

Babies, young children, pregnant women, older people and people who need care are at particular risk from hot weather. If you are in one of these groups or look after someone who is, you should pay particularly close attention to this advice.

You should make sure you keep hydrated and drink at least 2 litres of liquid per day which is approximately 8 cups. When it is extremely hot, you are at increased risk of dehydration so it is even more important to try to drink enough fluid. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, as these are dehydrating.

Close windows, blinds and curtains. Open the windows at night to increase air flow. Cover the windows with foil or a silver blanket. Sleep on the lowest level of your home, or wherever is coolest. Drink extra water and take a cold shower, or place flannels soaked in cold water on your head and neck.

If you need to go outside, do so at the coolest times of day. Take water with you and wear sunscreen, even if it is overcast.



HYGIENE

When 24,000 Tunbridge Wells residents lost access to running water in midwinter 2025-26, people were at their limit. One resident said:

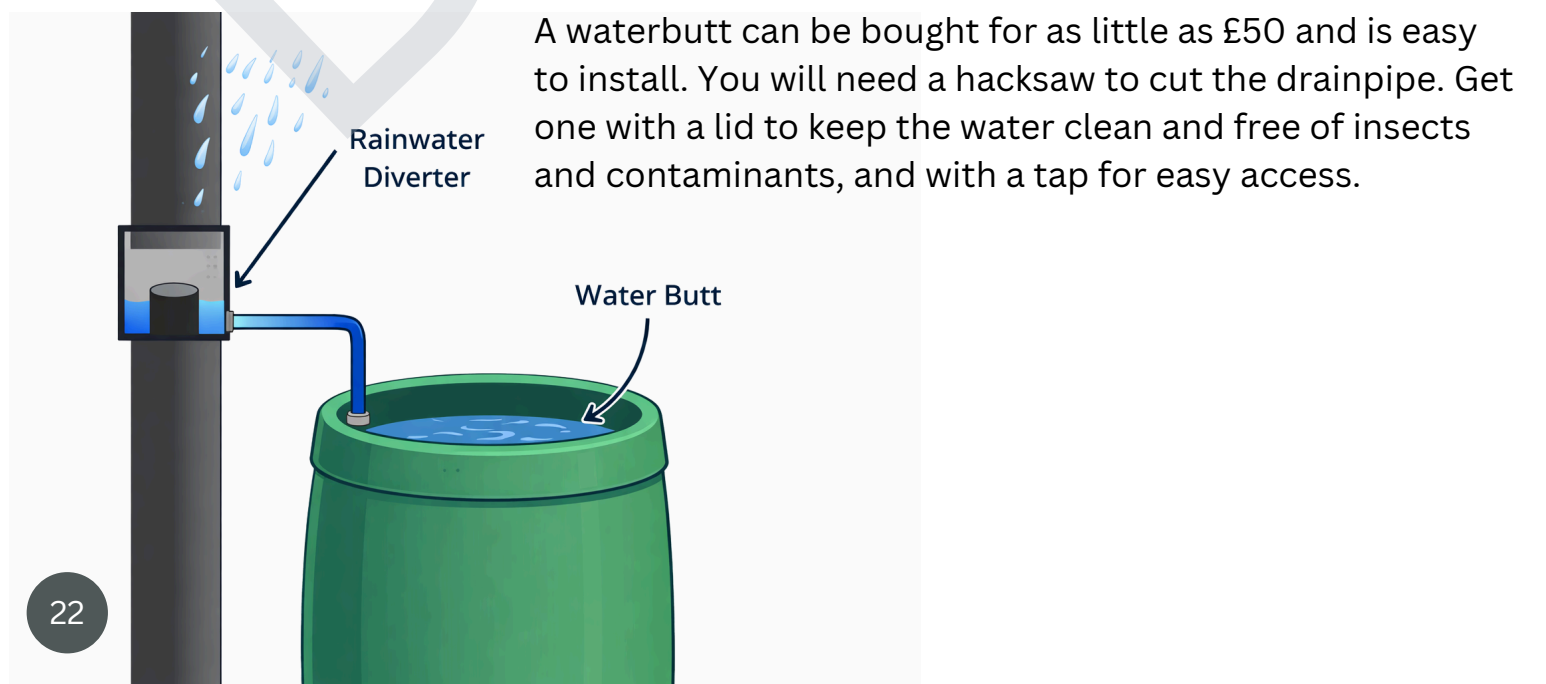
“Sometimes the water comes on for an hour or two in the mornings. Sometimes too late for my wife to shower before she goes to work. And without being too disgusting, our toilet is currently full.”

Another resident said:

“I actually am getting stressed about the amount of plastic water bottles I am having to use – the amount of bottled water you need to cook and to wash up and to keep the children hygienic. It’s horrific.”

The water section of this guide includes recommendations for how much water you should store to meet your basic drinking and hygiene needs, but do not underestimate how much water is needed for washing up, washing hands, bathing, toileting and generally feeling clean. That doesn’t even take laundry into account.

For this reason, if you are able to install a waterbutt to store rainwater, you can make yourself more comfortable by having a renewable supply of greywater. You can drink the water from your waterbutt if it has a lid - follow the guidance in the water section of this guide if you wish to do so - but you may prefer not to (and that’s completely your own prerogative!)



A waterbutt can be bought for as little as £50 and is easy to install. You will need a hacksaw to cut the drainpipe. Get one with a lid to keep the water clean and free of insects and contaminants, and with a tap for easy access.

Not everyone will be able to install a waterbutt, so here are some ways to stay clean and fresh that use minimal water:

BATHING

A **camping shower** can be bought for around £20 and can be hung up for a simple bathing solution. You can get solar-powered ones that will heat the water up on sunny days.

A **bucket bath** is another method used in off-grid situations and in many countries around the world. In colder temperatures this may be more comfortable as you can do it indoors and get warm quickly afterwards.



TOILET

The most simple **emergency toilet** is a bucket with a lid and biodegradable bags. It's not pretty, but in an emergency you will be extremely glad to have these!

Avoid using your toilet if you can't flush it. It will be difficult to clean out. Do not use bottled water to flush it: it's a terrible waste of something that you might find difficult to get access to.

To avoid storing masses of toilet paper, you could consider getting a **travel bidet** instead. These are cheap and actually very hygienic: arguably more hygienic than paper. You can get one per person in your household and write your names on them.



GENERAL

Other good essentials to keep yourself feeling clean and comfortable are:

- hand sanitiser
- dry hand foam (which can be used without water)
- dry shampoo
- travel handwash for laundry without a machine
- spare toothpaste and toothbrushes
- spare supply of sanitary products
- reuseable baby nappies if you have a baby
- spare terrycloth, soap, washing up liquid and household spray.



AFFORDABILITY AND STORAGE SPACE

We're all feeling the pressure from the increasing cost of living. Of course, some are affected more than others. If you are already struggling to manage, this guidance may not be for you. This is not to diminish your own capacity to help: you may be able to give your time, if money is the only obstacle. But please don't take this as pressure to do so.

Ultimately this guide is for those who can, so that those who can't are the first to receive help from emergency response units.

Being prepared does not mean spending lots of cash on things that you will never use. Your household emergency supply will primarily be made of things that you use anyway: water, food, batteries, hygiene products. Picking these up bit by bit, a little at a time, and cycling them through use and replenishing for storage, is a sustainable way to get yourself there gradually.

Sprinkled throughout this guide are approximate price guides. We are not recommending any large, expensive items, such as camping stoves or solar power systems, unless you are enthusiastic about them for other purposes such as camping or sustainability. One way to make these more affordable is to join together with local friends or neighbours and share the burden of the cost and storage space for them.

Storage is in very limited supply in UK homes - we know, we have the same problem ourselves! If you are lucky enough to have a shed, garage, attic or pantry, you have more storage space than most and should be able to find room for all of the essentials recommended in this guide.

For those people who really find they have no spare room at all, here are a few hacks that might help:

- **Under-Bed Areas:** Use rolling bins for heavy items like water or canned goods.
- **Vertical Wall Space:** Install floating shelves, floor-to-ceiling bookcases, or pegboards to keep floor areas clear, particularly for non-perishable food or first aid kits.
- **Back of Doors:** Install over-the-door hanging racks or pocket organizers in closets and bathrooms to store supplies like flashlights, batteries, and sanitation items.
- **Furniture Gaps:** Pull furniture (like sofas or heavy cabinets) a few inches away from the wall to create hidden storage space behind them.
- **Under Stairs:** If applicable, convert the space under stairs into pull-out drawers.
- **Furniture with Built-In Storage:** lift-top or hinged trunks or ottomans are ideal for storing blankets, food, or water.

ANATOMY OF AN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KIT

This is a real example of an emergency store, missing only the water which is stored elsewhere and a couple of lidded buckets kept below the shelves. This fits in one deep cupboard and is approx one month's worth of supplies for two adults and a dog that can be used and replaced once a year or kept indefinitely.



This was built up slowly over a couple of years. The most expensive items were the bottles of alcohol, and these were not upmarket brands! Every item on these shelves was £25 or under.

Keeping as much as possible in one place is a good idea for easy access and the ability to keep an eye on inventory as things are used and replaced.

MENTAL HEALTH

Uncertain times can make people feel worried and anxious. That's a natural human response and nothing to feel ashamed of. Be sure to talk to people you trust about your feelings, and check in with them about theirs.

Here are some tips on how to manage anxiety:

- Talk to family, friends, neighbours or a mental health organisation about your feelings.
- Get involved – for example, by helping others improve their emergency preparedness. This can give you a sense of purpose.
- Take care of your personal health. Good food, sleep and physical exercise relieve stress and improve wellbeing.
- Restrict your news intake. Find a level that works for you and spend more time doing things that make you feel good.
- Seek professional help if you have severe anxiety.
- If your pulse is racing, slow your breathing. Controlled, slow breathing (e.g., 6 breaths per minute) reduces anxiety, lowers blood pressure, and activates the body's relaxation response. Ask someone to count with you for support.
- Look after yourself and one another. This is a time to come together and support each other mentally and emotionally.

Boredom also contributes to stress. Make sure you have a good collection of books, boardgames, playing cards, puzzles, crosswords and any other activities that you can do in a power cut.

You could also keep a device just for downloaded content like movies and music, along with a solar power bank.

ANXIETY FIRST AID



A breathing necklace is a tube-shaped pendant designed to help reduce anxiety by facilitating slow, controlled and deep breaths. It mimics the effects of meditation.



Rescue Remedy is a gentle herbal product made of flowers commonly used to manage shock or anxiety.

SUPPORT FOR THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

If you use medical equipment that requires a power supply, make a plan with your care provider and/or clinical care teams now about what will happen in a power cut.

The plan should set out what action you, or someone you care for, needs to take and who to contact if there's a power outage. Ensure that your care provider, clinical care team and/or equipment supplier has supplied you with enough information so that you understand how the equipment works and what to do if there is a power disruption.

Energy networks can help if you have additional needs because of your medical or personal circumstances.

The Priority Services Register (available to customers in England and Wales, and in Scotland), is a free service to help people who have additional needs. You can sign up by contacting your local network operator and energy supplier.

This guide is available to download in larger print on our website here:

An audio reading is available here:

QR Code
will go here

QR Code
will go here

Our website also has links to videos with more information in text and audio format.

[Website link will go here](#)

NEIGHBOURS AND COMMUNITY

We are fortunate in Ely to live in a city with a great sense of community and a friendly vibe. Hopefully, you have neighbours or people nearby that you find approachable and are willing to help each other out.

There are many ways that we can help each other out in - or ideally ahead of emergencies. Here are some ideas:

- **Set up a text chat** for your street or neighbourhood. Look out for and share posts about missing pets, local information or help needed with shopping if someone is unwell.
- **Have a heart health emergency plan:** someone to run and grab the defibrillator while you wait for the paramedics. This initiative can and has saved lives in our local area.
- **Share the burden of costs and storage** space for items you might only use in an emergency, such as a water store, fuel store, camping stove, or off-grid kit such as radios or solar showers.

I WANT TO DO MORE

If you have some time or resources that you think could be beneficial in an emergency, please get in touch with us or with your Local Resilience Forum if you are not in the Ely area:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-resilience-forums-contact-details>

In particular, these types of resources and capacities are especially helpful to community resilience and preparedness groups:

- **Farmers** with grain stores and storage space
- **Paramedics** willing to be called to a community location or medical hub
- Anyone who owns or manages **storage lock-ups** or **community space** that could be used to store essentials, such as a fridge to store medicine
- **Solar power banks, batteries and panels**
- **Power generators** and fuel
- **Water filters** for larger capacities
- **Churches and schools** that are willing to be involved in supporting the community
- People with knowledge and training of **off-grid communication systems** such as amateur radio, Raynet groups and Mesh-tastic users

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

At the back of this handbook is an emergency kit checklist. Prioritise that list, starting with the top three: remember water, light and food are the essentials for survival indoors.

Here are some other ideas you might want to consider if you can afford them once you have the basics sorted.



A gravity water filter, like a Berkey or a British Berkefeld, is a pricier item that removes up to 99.99% of contaminants like bacteria and particulates without needing electricity or plumbing. A smaller, cheaper option is a Sawyer filter which is often used by campers and outdoor survivalists.

A camping stove will enable you to brew tea or coffee, heat up soups and cook hot food if the power is off. Propane/Butane are the safest fuels to store. They are self-sealing and designed to be stored in a cool, dry place at temperatures below 50°C.



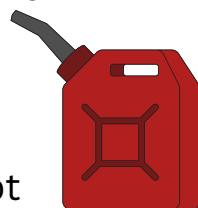
A solar power system is expensive, but can enable you to keep your fridge running, phone charging and reduce your electricity bills. It could also be put to good use in the community to help keep a store of medicine refrigerated.



If you own a car, pack a few essential items in your boot to make sure you're ready in case of getting stuck in traffic or wintry weather. This can include a first aid kit, torch, phone charger, warm clothes and blankets, high-visibility clothing, an A-Z, jump leads, food and drink.

Car owners may also want to store some spare fuel. The Health and Safety Executive says that you can store 30 litres of petrol at home or at non-workplace premises without informing your local Petroleum Enforcement Authority (PEA). You can store it in:

- suitable portable metal or plastic containers
- one demountable fuel tank
- a combination of the above as long as no more than 30 litres is kept



Store it at a safe temperature. At below 20°C it will have a shelf life of about six months.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- 1 UK Gov website: *Prepare*. Launched May 2024. www.prepare.campaign.gov.uk
- 2 British Red Cross report: *Ready for Anything*. 2019. www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-speak-up-for-change/ready-for-anything
- 3 The Young Foundation Report: *Community not Catastrophe*. April 2025. www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/community-not-catastrophe/
- 4 UK National Risk Register 2025. January 2025. www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-2025
- 5 Euro News: *Survival manual to be sent to every French household by this summer*. March 2025. www.euronews.com/culture/2025/03/20/survival-manual-to-be-sent-to-every-french-household-by-this-summer
- 6 European Commission press release: *EU Preparedness Union Strategy*. March 2025. www.ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_856
- 7 British Red Cross report: *When Crisis Hits*. 2018. www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-speak-up-for-change/ready-for-anything
- 8 UK Food Security Report. 2024. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources
- 9 Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm
- 10 Danish Emergency Management Agency. *Be Prepared for a Crisis*. Website and publications. <https://www.brs.dk/en/prepared/>
- 11 The Swedish Civil Defense and Resilience Agency. *In Case of Crisis or War*. November 2024. <https://www.mcf.se/en/advice-for-individuals/the-brochure-in-case-of-crisis-or-war/download-and-order-the-brochure-in-case-of-crisis-or-war/>
- 12 UK Gov Department of Health and Social Care. Independent Report: *Keeping warm or cool in extreme weather - scripts for broadcast media*. December 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-advice-from-uk-cmos-during-a-national-power-outage/keeping-warm-or-cool-in-extreme-weather-scripts-for-broadcast-media>

EMERGENCY KIT CHECKLIST

It can be helpful to keep these items in one place in your home and ideally somewhere easy to find if the lights aren't working.

- This handbook** and your own filled-out household emergency plan
- Bottled water** – 10 litres per person per day to be comfortable
- Battery or wind-up torch and headtorch** – torches are safer than candles
- Camping lights** - battery powered
- Battery or wind-up radio** to get updates during a power cut – a car radio can be used, however in severe weather it might be safer to stay inside
- Spare batteries** for torches and radio and a backup battery for any medical equipment you rely on
- Solar powered battery pack** to charge phones or USB devices
- A watch, clock** or other source of time if digital clocks are not working
- A first aid kit (or some first aid items)** including waterproof plasters, bandages, iodine or alcohol wipes, burn gel, a thermometer, antiseptic, eyewash solution, sterile dressings and gloves, medical tape for dressings, and tweezers
- Hand sanitiser, dry soap and wet wipes** for hygiene purposes
- Travel handwash** for laundry when the machine isn't working
- Buckets with lids and plastic bags** for emergency sanitation
- Non-perishable food** that doesn't need cooking, such as ready-to-eat tinned meat, fruit, vegetables, beans, potatoes, salt, sauces and some treats to boost morale
- Tin opener** - make sure you have a good one, tins are useless without it!
- Baby supplies** such as nappies and baby formula – ready made or 'ready-to-feed' formula is best as you may not be able to boil water or sterilise bottles
- Pet food and supplies** and don't forget additional drinking water for them
- Non-electronic entertainment** such as playing cards, books, board games, jigsaw puzzles, crosswords and puzzle books, colouring books and journals
- Some currency:** you might want to have some cash stashed away, ideally in different denominations.



ELY ARC
Ely Area Resilient Community

QR Code
will go here

web address will go here



Rather than buying all the items at once, just add to your emergency kit when you are able and build it up over time.