

SANITATION IN A DISASTER

The average person produces about 2-3 pints of urine and 1 pound of excrement a day. Multiply that by the number of people living in your home and in a short time you can only imagine the amount of excrement that would pile up if a sewer system becomes nonfunctional.

What is the very best way to dispose of human waste.

Use the City Sewer System

Or

Use a Septic System

How to dispose of human waste in a grid-down situation

Septic System – What do you do?

As long as you have the availability of water (from storage or any gray water source), you will still be able to flush by simply pouring water into the toilet tank or bowl.

City Sewer System – What do you do?

The absolute first and most important thing is: **Make sure the sewer main is operational!**

If the sewer main is non-functional for any reason, do not flush the toilet!! Flushing will allow the air in the sewer line leading into your house to be released, which will allow neighborhood sewage to back up into the sewer line into your household plumbing (not just the toilets but the sinks, floor drains, and bathtub too). This is only a problem if your house sits at a lower elevation than other neighbors, i.e., your house is downhill from your neighbors. If your house sits on top of a hill this problem is avoided.

If you are absolutely certain there is no issues with the sewer lines, then you can follow the same method as described for a septic system by simply pouring water into the toilet tank or bowl.

How to flush without running water

To flush, you can fill up the back tank until the water reaches the float and then hit the flush lever,
or...

If you have a big enough bucket (at least 2 gallons), *quickly* pour the bucket of water directly into the bowl which will trigger the siphoning action and cause it to flush on its own.

Human Waste Disposal

Use the existing toilet

Even if the sewer lines are non-functional or if you are short on water, it is possible to use your existing toilet:

1. Scoop out as much water as possible from the bowl.
2. Tape a doubled-up trash bag to the underside of the toilet seat and let the bag fill the cavity of the bowl.
3. Have a pail of wood ash, quicklime, kitty litter or sawdust available so that after each personal use, the user can sprinkle a liberal amount over it. This will keep the stench and flies down.
4. When the bag fills up to slightly over $\frac{1}{2}$ of the volume of the bowl, add a good amount of quicklime, wood ash or other disinfectant. If you do not have any of these things, you can use dirt with a little bit of a chlorine solution sprayed in it.
5. After the addition of the disinfectant, securely tie up the bag and place it in a temporary, sealable container (like a 5-gallon bucket or trash container). Keep it in there until you can find a good time and place to dispose of it.

Use a 5-Gallon Bucket

Like the toilet-method, line the bucket with a double-bagged layer of heavy-duty trash bags.

For a seat, you can either:

1. Sit directly on the bucket (It is not comfortable, but tolerable)
2. Remove your existing toilet seat and use it on your 5-gallon bucket.
3. Cut a water noddle to fit the ring of the bucket.
4. Place a couple of 2 x 4's or other similar objects on the rim to fabricate a makeshift seat.
5. Buy a toilet seat made for a 5-gallon bucket.

Human Waste Disposal in a Rural Area (or Your Backyard)

Cat Hole

With a garden trowel, small shovel, or other digging device make a hole 6-8 inches deep and 4-6 inches in wide.

It is not easy to keep your balance to do your business over the hole. It is suggested that something be used to sit on. A 5-gallon bucket without lid and with the bottom cut out of the bucket is one idea.

Do your business in the hole. Cover your excrement with a layer of the dirt you took out to make the hole or cover with some other available material.

Trench Latrine

Build a trench latrine, which is basically an oversized cat hole that can be used multiple times.

The minimal recommended dimensions are about 1.5 feet wide x 1 foot deep and 2 feet long.

It's also recommended that you build some type of privacy partition. (An emergency situation is stressful enough without any unneeded pressure.)

A simple partition can be built with a few stakes, some rope, a couple of poles, and a plastic sheet, or tarp(s).

Since it is a multi-use station, you will also want to prevent any flies and pests from coming into contact with the exposed excrement. To do this, after each use cover the excrement with some wood ash, quick lime, or a few inches of the dirt that came out of the ground when making the pit.

Tip: *Once buried, human waste starts to decompose rather quickly, toilet paper does not. It is recommended that toilet paper be burned immediately after use, right in the hole. All of it will not burn, but most will.*

Tip: *A good homemade disinfectant solution is: 1-part liquid bleach to 10 parts water. Dry bleach is caustic and not safe for this type of use.*

Keep in mind the following when preparing to dig a Cat Hole or Trench Latrine:

1. Locate your cat-hole or trench site at least 200 feet from any source of water.
2. Do not dig in an area where water visibly flows (rainwater run-off etc.)
3. Disperse cat holes over as wide an area as possible.
4. If possible, setup your cat hole or trench in a sunlit area (this will aid decomposition).
5. Again, remember water runoff. Your every thought should be on preventing feces or urine from reaching any water source — underground well water, water table, rivers, lakes, springs, and creeks.

In a Grid-Down Situation Be Aware of the Increased Potential for Fecal-Borne Pathogens

The following will bug you: fly's, pests, pets, and rodents.

Fly's have a nasty habit of visiting a nearby fecal deposit and then promptly landing on your food, sometime unseen. **Keep excrement covered.**