

October 27, 2019

Sanitation and Hygiene

If the Sewer Lines Break

As I mentioned above, broken water, gas, and sewer lines are possibilities in some disasters. What do you do with these? Gas or water lines should be turned off if you believe they are broken. It is easy to see water leaking. If you smell gas or know that the line is broken you should turn that off, but it may take days to weeks to have it turned back on.

- Learn today how to turn off your water line and gas line if you don't know.

Sewer is harder to turn off because it is designed for outflow only. There isn't usually a shut off. One sanitation course I took advised that you have small foam or rubber balls that will fit into the floor drain, toilet, and any other places sewer may back up into your home that you can't close. That way you can close them off to back-up. If your home is flooded by sewage the health department will make it mandatory for you to leave until things are completely sanitized and even things like shelving and flooring replaced. You will have to throw almost everything involved away. In a disaster this will not happen very fast. If the disaster appeared to be longer term, the specialist I listened to recommended that you have a bag of cement and some rags on hand to block your cleanout valve permanently, just outside of your home. Snakes, rats, toads, and spiders are notorious for coming through broken sewer pipes.

Wash Station Tips

Even if water is scarce it is still important to keep yourself, and especially your hands clean to avoid disease. During war, disaster, and other difficult times when people have not had the best conditions to keep clean, skin infections and diseases are common. It is important to have things available to set up one or more wash stations. You can use inexpensive plastic water dispensers with bowls to catch the runoff water if you can't let water down your sink. I personally like the dispensers with a switch-on tap so that you can wash and rinse both hands at the same time.

While there are emergency showers that consist of a black plastic pouch that heats in the sun, even a plastic bowl and pitcher from a dollar store that works on the principles of the washstand pioneers used would be better than not being able to wash well. There are many easy ways to set up a wash station if you just plan ahead and have the supplies.

Soap

We sometimes take vital things for granted. How many people nowadays would get excited about a common bar of soap? Before a hundred years ago nice soap was a luxury item. In difficult times it was expensive and hard to get. I have attended soap-making classes and watched videos on how to make it with wood ashes. While it isn't a difficult process I also learned that lye necessary for soap making is very caustic and does not store well. Your very best bet if you want to be sure you can stay clean is to store soap in bar form. It is wise to have a year's supply, but some people believe a little more is even better because it can be a good barter item.

Washable vs. Disposable

Many people like the idea of having disposable everything in a crisis. However, few people stop to think about the problems that can cause. If there is a system breakdown there will be no garbage pickup either. Garbage that accumulates invites a serious increase in the rodent population bringing a secondary disaster.

While people believe they will just burn plastics as well as paper in an emergency, this isn't wise either. Air thick with burning and toxic chemicals can cause health problems and further suffering to systems already under stress. I had an experience in which I talked to the air quality people of our state. Did you know that toxins in the air can build up in your system and cause you to become seriously sensitive to many things in our environment from pesticides and petroleum products to fragrances? This kind of chemical sensitivity is on the rise because of things people dump into our air. It is actually a form of poisoning rather than an allergy. Anyone can develop a build-up of these toxins if exposure to them becomes too high. Once they build up, you don't get better by being tough. The more a person is exposed once this happens the worse it gets. Further exposure can become fatal. Because of heavy manufacturing in some areas, China is experiencing more of these kinds of health problems. If large numbers of people are burning to dispose of garbage after a crisis it is very possible that we will see illness and death caused by air pollution. I personally recommend having an industrial mask in case this is a problem, especially for those who are already a little sensitive.

The next problem is that random burning presents a serious threat of fire. Fire would be serious at any time, but especially right in the midst of a crisis when the resources to fight it are not available. It may be highly illegal to have any open fire because of this. There may also be an available fuel shortage to build a fire. If you picture cooking and burning garbage on a campfire in a crisis, you may need to reconsider your plans. With this said do you have adequate dishes, towels, wipes, diapers, and even possibly feminine products that can be washed and reused? This might be something to consider.

Gray Water, etc.

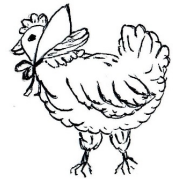
A few years ago I learned that there are different considerations for disposal of water to keep our living environment safe.

Black water—Water with human waste—Disposal of this kind of water requires professional treatment or deep burial where it will not leach into gardens, groundwater, or potential water supply.

Gray water—water you have used for washing yourself, clothes, or dishes—Disposal requires a field in which it can be leached out by the soil safely without contaminating anything you are going to be eating. Gray water should not be disposed of near possible sources of drinking water or left standing.

Standing water—Microbes, larva, and fungi can easily grow in standing water. It is best to keep any water covered and out of sunlight to avoid harboring things like “wigglers” (aka, mosquito larva) or other protozoans. If you must use standing water, be sure to strain and disinfect it before culinary use.

Notes from Red Hen



Dear Speckle,

A lot of things can cause itch, but the most common problem is not keeping your feathers and skin clean. Dust baths keep your skin dry and absorb oils, but they don't clean. Aunt Bitty is right about bathing. However, another thing to check is whether your coop is clean. If your bedding is old or too thick you can get mites and other things that make you itch. Make sure that you keep your environment fresh and clean so these things don't multiply. If your farmer has diatomaceous earth in his shed or barn, get some and put it around the walls on the inside of the coop. It will help rid you of insects and bugs where you sleep.

— Good luck! Red