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Stocking an emergency food "survival pantry"

Whether it's an ice storm, a blizzard, a power outage or some other disaster, Karma Metzgar's advice is to be prepared with emergency food — a "survival pantry."

"We shouldn't take for granted that the tap will flow and the lights will glow," says the University of Missouri Extension nutrition specialist. "Store plenty of nonperishable food that will feed the family for a week or two."

Metzgar says to store the emergency supplies in a cool, dark, dry place — preferably on shelves. The items in the pantry should be things that require little or no preparation, no electricity, no added water and can be eaten without heating. They should be packaged in one-meal sizes, require a minimum of storage space and have a long shelf life.

"It's sort of like planning a camping trip to a remote area and never leaving home," she says. Metzgar's pantry list includes items like peanuts; crackers; dry cereal; canned, bottled or boxed juices; canned vegetables; canned entrees; dried fruits; shelf-stable cheeses; dried meat; powdered milk; canned meats; peanut butter; and cheese and meat spreads.

Also, collect plenty of paper products such as plates, cups, napkins, bowls, towels, plastic tableware and trash bags. Store pint-, quart- and gallon-sized bags, too. They can be used as mixing, serving and storing bowls.

Non-food items should include a non-electric can opener, unscented chlorine bleach (to sterilize reusable utensils and containers, and to purify water), a battery-operated radio, batteries, medicine, first-aid supplies, personal products, toiletries and a flashlight or two. Also keep a household fire-extinguisher handy.

Finally, store water. "Allow six gallons of water per week per person. Store in airtight, food-grade plastic or glass containers. Water also can be stored in a freezer. If the electricity goes off, the ice will help to keep the freezer cold longer. Thaw if drinking water is needed," Metzgar says.

"The emergency pantry supplies should be rotated to ensure freshness. Mark a time on the calendar to replace certain items and keep the pantry stocked."

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