

Household Emergency Preparedness Guide

Prepare for extreme weather and disruptions to electricity, water, heating, food supplies, electronic payments and communications.

Cllrs Wisdom & Carole Da Costa | Independent community preparedness initiative. Not yet reviewed or endorsed by RBWM.

1 | Two situations: shelter at home or evacuate

Shelter at home: Maintain supplies for at least 72 hours; some emergencies last longer. Keep bulky supplies at home, not in your portable bag.

Evacuate: Use the **four-bag system**: Bag 1 secure documents, Bag 2 medication/personal care, Bag 3 portable essentials, Bag 4 optional family holdall. Store separately where appropriate and record locations in your Household Emergency Plan. Never delay escape from a fire or immediate danger to collect bags.

2 | Water and food for 72 hours

- UK Government guidance cites 2.5–3 litres of drinking water per person per day as a minimum for survival; around 10 litres per person per day supports basic cooking and hygiene. Four people need roughly 30–36 litres for drinking over three days. Plan for pets, babies and medical needs.
- Government advice prefers commercially bottled water for longer-lasting storage safety. Rotate stocks and follow the water company's instructions if supply or water quality is affected. Do not assume stirring water makes it safe.
- Keep food that needs no cooking or refrigeration: suitable tins, crackers, dried fruit, snacks and special-diet foods. Add a manual tin opener. Rotate and check expiry dates.
- Keep ready-to-feed infant formula if relevant. Follow NHS advice on feeding and safe preparation.

3 | Power, communications and payments

- Keep a torch, spare batteries, charged power banks and cables, plus a battery/wind-up FM radio. Write down local/national radio frequencies and contacts.
- Reduce phone brightness, enable low-power mode and limit non-essential use during outages. Do not assume mobile networks, internet, card payments or ATMs will work.
- Keep modest cash in small notes and coins, where affordable. Keep essential prescriptions and supplier numbers on paper.
- Never run a generator, camping stove, charcoal barbecue or vehicle engine indoors or in a garage: carbon monoxide can kill. Do not improvise connections between an EV and home electrics.

4 | Heating, cold and severe heat

- For cold: use layers, hats, warm socks, blankets and sleeping bags; close curtains and internal doors; fit draught excluders without blocking ventilation or combustion-air openings.
- Check safe heating arrangements, carbon monoxide alarms and smoke alarms. Know how to obtain help if heating or medical equipment fails.
- For heat: shade sun-facing windows, ventilate when cooler outside, drink regularly and use cool water to cool the body. Identify a cooler place to go.
- Check on people at higher risk; follow UKHSA alerts and seek medical help for signs of heat illness.

Preparing your home and travel

5 | Floods, storms, water and sanitation

- Check flood risk and sign up for official flood warnings. Keep valuables higher up where appropriate. Know safe routes and follow evacuation instructions. Never enter floodwater.
- Secure loose outdoor items ahead of storms. Avoid fallen trees, damaged structures and cables; treat cables as live.
- Know where water, gas and electricity shut-offs are, and how to use them safely if instructed.
- Keep hand sanitiser, wet wipes, toilet paper, rubbish bags and suitable hygiene supplies. If water or sewerage fails, follow your supplier's specific instructions; do not flush if told not to.
- Consider Priority Services Registers for eligible people needing extra support from electricity, gas and water suppliers.

6 | Petrol and diesel vehicles

- Before warnings: check fuel reserve, tyres and pressures, lights, wipers, screenwash, coolant and battery; keep servicing current. Check road conditions and avoid unnecessary journeys.
- **Vehicle emergency kit:** torch/batteries, high-visibility vest, warm clothes, gloves, blanket, waterproof coat, sturdy footwear, drinking water, ready-to-eat snacks, first aid, power bank/charger, written contacts and recovery details.
- For winter add ice scraper/de-icer and, where appropriate, shovel, jump leads or manufacturer-approved tyre repair equipment. A warning triangle is for suitable non-motorway situations only; never put one on a motorway.
- Store items securely; inspect at least every six months. Replace items affected by heat or freezing. Do not keep valuables or original V5C in the car.

7 | Electric vehicles

- Keep a useful battery reserve consistent with manufacturer guidance; identify charging alternatives and routes if local chargers or power are unavailable.
- Expect range and charging performance to vary with temperature, heating/cooling, road conditions and delays. Precondition while plugged in if supported.
- Carry manufacturer-approved charging equipment and know recovery/towing instructions. Never drive through floodwater; seek specialist advice after flood exposure.

8 | Mechanical bicycles

- Maintain brakes, tyres, chain and front/rear lights. Keep a pump, puncture kit/spare tube, tyre levers, small tool, lock and waterproof clothing.
- Cycling may be useful if fuel or transport is disrupted, but not through floodwater, ice, fallen cables or dangerous winds. Plan safe alternative routes.

Your four-bag system

Bag 1 | Secure documents

A clear, durable, waterproof A4 pouch for selected copies, reference details and a list of where irreplaceable originals are stored. Keep securely in a safe or other protected location. Include passport, driving licence, birth/marriage/adoption certificates, educational qualifications, insurance and property records as appropriate. Avoid carrying unnecessary originals, passwords or PINs. Record vehicle registration, insurer, policy and breakdown details; store the original V5C securely, not in the vehicle.

Bag 2 | Medication and personal care

A clearly labelled organiser for medication lists, allergies, medical-device instructions, first-aid items, glasses, hearing-aid batteries, hygiene and individual needs. Store medicines at the temperature required and add them when leaving if they cannot be safely prepacked.

Bag 3 | Portable essentials

A comfortable waterproof or water-resistant rucksack, often 30–45 litres for a mobile adult, packed to a weight that person can safely carry. Include torch, radio, chargers, warm layers, waterproofs, a small amount of water and food, cash, contacts, keys and individual needs.

Bag 4 | Optional family holdall

A larger waterproof or water-resistant holdall, wheeled bag or existing suitcase for Bags 1 and 2 and additional family items. Keep Bag 3 separate if combining everything would make the holdall too heavy. No one needs to purchase four new bags.

9 | People, pets and neighbours

- Plan for children, people with disabilities, carers, older residents, medication, medical devices and pets. Consider assistance animals and accessible evacuation routes.
- Agree a voluntary neighbour check-in or buddy arrangement, with consent and privacy safeguards. Never undertake dangerous rescues.
- Keep household plans updated and practise finding supplies; review at least every six months.

10 | Official resources and RBWM review

UK Government Prepare: prepare.campaign.gov.uk/get-prepared-for-emergencies/ | Water outages: prepare.campaign.gov.uk/be-informed-about-hazards/water-supply-interruptions-or-outages/ | Calgary kit: calgary.ca/emergencies/preparedness/emergency-kit.html | Travel: prepare.campaign.gov.uk/get-prepared-for-emergencies/travel-advice/

We intend to invite RBWM's Joint Emergency Planning Unit to review this independent community draft, check local advice and contacts, and help make resources accessible. **RBWM has not yet endorsed it.**