OFFLINE RESILIENCE GUIDE // UK EDITION

How Much Water Should a UK Household Store?

Work out a realistic household water reserve, understand what stored water is for, and know where filtration fits without treating it as a substitute for storage.

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LAYER 1 // ACT

FIRST ACTIONS

Start here. Then read the conditions and exceptions below.

1. Use 2.5 to 3 litres per person per day as a minimum drinking-water reference.
2. Around 10 litres per person per day gives more scope for basic cooking and hygiene.
3. Government guidance recommends commercially bottled water for longer-lasting stored drinking water.
4. Collected rainwater should not be assumed safe to drink.
5. If someone relies on water for medical equipment, make a specific plan with their care team.

> **IMPORTANT**
> This is practical preparedness information, not emergency instruction. During an incident, follow current advice from emergency services, your utility provider and relevant public authorities.

Do the simple calculation first

Take the number of people in the household, multiply by the number of days you want to cover, then multiply by 2.5 to 3 litres. That gives a minimum drinking-water range. Four people for three days is 30 to 36 litres. Two people for seven days is 35 to 42 litres.

That figure is drinking water only. The Government Prepare guidance notes that around 10 litres per person per day is more comfortable because it allows some water for cooking and basic hygiene. You do not have to store the comfortable figure on day one. It is a useful long-term target if space allows.

Use stored water before you reach for a filter

A sealed bottle is predictable. You know where it came from and it is ready to drink. That is why storage should be the first line of defence. Current Prepare guidance recommends keeping some bottled water at home. Factory-sealed water is therefore a simple first-line reserve for most households.

Filters and purification tablets are still useful, but only as backup tools. Different products remove different contaminants, and no compact filter makes every possible water source safe. During a real incident, follow your water company and public-health advice.

Separate drinking water from utility water

If you have room, keep drinking water separate from water intended for toilet flushing or cleaning. A rain butt can help with non-drinking uses, but Government guidance warns that collected rainwater can contain bacteria or disease and should not be treated as drinking water by default.

Label containers clearly. In a stressful outage, a simple label avoids somebody using your clean drinking reserve to flush a toilet.

Plan for the people who need more

Babies, pets, people with some medical conditions and people using water-dependent medical equipment may need more than the basic calculation. Ready-to-feed baby formula can also reduce dependence on boiling water when normal services are disrupted.

People eligible for a water company Priority Services Register should consider joining before an outage happens. Your water provider is the main source of local information during an interruption.

Storage is boring, which is why it works

Water preparedness does not need to be complicated. Put a modest sealed reserve somewhere cool and out of direct sunlight, know how much you actually have, and review it periodically. Add portable containers, filtration and treatment only after the basic stored supply is covered.

Useful kit for this plan

Equipment should support the plan, not replace it. The commercial catalogue is kept on a separate page.

KIT IS KEPT SEPARATE
Named products and Amazon UK affiliate links are kept on the dedicated KIT page so this guide remains editorial. Use the kit only after the plan identifies a genuine equipment gap.

OPEN KIT →

Sources checked for this guide

We use public sources for the factual backbone and write the guide in our own words. Source pages can change, so the links below are the place to check current official advice.

PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE

UK Government Prepare: Water supply interruptions

Preparing for a water outage, stored drinking water and support from water companies.

https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/be-informed-about-hazards/water-supply-interruptions-or-outages/

PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE

UK Government Prepare: Get prepared for emergencies

Household planning, emergency supplies, paper contacts, water, food, torches, power banks and radios.

https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/get-prepared-for-emergencies/

Editorial review date: 25 September 2026. If an official source conflicts with this page, follow the official source.

INFORMATION CHECK✓ CURRENT REVIEW

REVIEWED	NEXT REVIEW DUE	OFFICIAL REFERENCES
25 Sep 2026	23 Jan 2027	2 primary sources

If an official source conflicts with this guide, follow the current official source.

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