

SIMPLE STEPS FOR BETTER ADAPTATION

As we experience more of the effects of climate change and political & economic uncertainty, it's becoming more and more clear that we need to adapt the ways we live our lives: even just to stay comfortable and safe.

This document describes some **simple, easy-to-do and low-cost steps** that we can all take to achieve that for ourselves, our families, and our neighbours. These steps will help you manage better in extreme events, such as extreme heat and cold, flooding, power outages and food shocks.

We have particularly picked out “**low-hanging fruit**”, proved to work by practical experience, and **cheap or no-cost**. If you take some or more of these steps you **will** improve your life at home, even in everyday situations that are not extreme. Taking steps like these, and seeing that they work, may also encourage you to think of taking some longer-term ones, which we describe in other documents available alongside this one.

We cover one topic per page, and include some explanations of important things to know as well as description of the steps you can take.

Remember that in times of change or extremes, **the community around you is critical**. If you have a strong community it will be a great source of help, advice, and comfort. One of the best ways of building resilience is to focus on and build community spirit and community resources.

Other resources:

There are many resources you can find that are similar to this. Some are designed to be simpler, some to cover more detail. Here are a few examples:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/office-of-emergency-planning/campaigns/be-emergency-ready/>

<https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/prepare-yourself/>

Some European countries have very good guides in English:

Finland: <https://www.suomi.fi/guides/preparedness>

Germany:

https://www.bbk.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/Mediathek/Publikationen/ratgeber-englisch_download.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=12

Sweden: <https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/30874.pdf>

**Why not print off this guide, so you have it ready
if there is no internet: like in a power cut?**

Keeping warm in cold weather

1. Focus on keeping yourself warm vs the house

Especially if there are only one or two of you. After all, it's you that feels the cold!

* Wear warm clothes indoors, e.g. multiple layers, warm thick socks & sweaters.

Don't expect to dress like you do in the summer.

* Use a blanket, heated throw or mini-electric blanket as a boost in the evening.

2. Heat only the room or rooms that you are using

Use the radiator valve to limit heating only to 18-21C, you'll soon get used to it

* Close doors to keep the heat in the room

* Try to gather people into one space, each body helps heat the room!

3. Keep the heat in

Heat leaving the house is money going out of the window!

* Block off drafts by closing doors and windows properly

* Use draught-excluders on doors or draught-sealing tape on windows

* Close curtains in the evening as the outside temperature drops

* Use thermal blinds if you have them

* Hang a curtain or blanket inside external doors: feel how cold they get

* Tape up reflective material behind radiators on an external wall

* Move sofas and chairs away from cold external walls

* If your floorboards are not insulated underneath, cover them with a carpet or rug

4. Make use of free warm public spaces to warm yourself up

For example libraries, public halls

5. But avoid high humidity which causes damp and mould in unused rooms

Avoid releasing a lot of moisture around the whole house from food cooking, showers, or drying clothes indoors. Close doors to keep moisture in the warm space, use extractor fans, or let moisture out through a window in the warm daytime.

* Heat unused rooms slightly, and look for mould forming low down in the corners (which get the coldest). Clean off mould (use mould-reducing spray)

* Move furniture away from cold corners to let air circulate.

6. Monitor and control how you heat. See how these steps reduce your energy use

* If you have other forms of heating, avoid using electric heaters too much.

They cost more per unit of heat

DON'T do these things:

* Don't keep unused rooms warm overnight to "avoid heating them up tomorrow": a hot room loses heat but a cold one doesn't. Your bill will be lower if you let unused rooms cool when not in use.

* Don't routinely keep a window open for "fresh air": warm air is not necessarily "stale" unless it is getting unpleasantly smelly or making you feel drowsy, and open windows let valuable heat out. If you keep rooms below 22 C, they won't feel stuffy.

Staying cool in hot weather

1. Stop the sun getting to big windows and walls of key rooms

Sunblocking is 3x more effective outside than inside

- * Attach or hang up over window outside: Camo netting, an old sheet, or a tarpaulin
- * Use a roller to paint plain yogurt on the outside of windows (really!)
- * Rig up a temporary awning over a window or a whole sunny wall (e.g. tarp + poles + guy ropes)

Inside measures:

- * Close curtains or blinds
- * Tape emergency foil blanket (reflective) material inside windows

2. Let cool air flow

Air flow only cools down things that are warmer than the air: people, not rooms!

If you leave windows/doors open when it's hot outside for "breeze", the hot breeze just heats the house up, even though it may feel cool to you (because you are hotter)

- * Open doors/windows for airflow in the morning and night **when it's cooler outside than in**
- * Use a desk fan **pointing at you** (pointing it at a room does not help)
- * Buy an inside-and-outside thermometer, so you know more clearly when to open and close windows and doors

3. Move to or sleep in the coolest rooms

Downstairs is often cooler than upstairs, loft rooms are often hottest

4. Use personal cooling with water

- * use a plant mister to spray water on your face and body
- * dampen your shirt with water, it gives great personal cooling for about half an hour

5. Drink more water than usual

Stay hydrated, especially if you are sweating

DON'T do these things:

- * Leave open the fridge door (it will work harder and just heat up the room overall)
- * Cook things that need a lot of heat: roasts, cakes etc
- * Drink excessive alcohol (it dehydrates you)

Resources: <https://www.heatwavetoolkit.com/solutions>.

Using these measures you should be able to keep indoors 6 to 10 degrees C cooler than outside.

Preparing for a Food Shortage

Don't ignore this one! Countless food exports, including the supermarkets themselves, are predicting food shortages in the UK as soon as this autumn or winter. Extreme weather across the globe has made crops fail. Remember about the loo rolls in COVID, once people even THINK there might be a shortage, they panic-overbuy and cause the shortage to get serious!

Short-term food shortages happen when there is not enough supply in the food system to cope with demand. As an individual household, you can help by building up your own home supply: this will protect you, and also take pressure off the system for everybody else. Obviously, it's not practical to try to keep several months of food at home, but **it's possible to keep enough for a few days, or most of what you need for a week**. The best way to do this is **not** to buy this all in one go when it's too late, but to **buy a bit at a time NOW over several weeks**: maybe 4 shopping trips. Set aside an extra £25-£40 each shop if you can, which is just to build up the stock each trip.

Here are recommended things to buy and stock up on:

- Easy to cook **long-storage carbs** like rice, pasta,
- **Flour and sugar** etc if you are a home-baker
- **Tinned foods**: protein sources like meat, fish, beans and chick peas; and vegetables and fruit
- **Long-life milk** (UHT, or powdered), and don't forget some bottled water too.
- Other things that you know are **family favourites or special dietary needs**
- **A few treats** like biscuits, dried fruit, chocolate, crisps
- Some **fresh foods keep for a long time**: potatoes, squashes, apples

Remember what you might not have access to: like bread. So, if you have jam, buy some long-storage crackers too.

Remember also **that food shortage might be caused by a bigger crisis like a bad storm, flood, or power outage**: so make sure you have foods that can be eaten using whatever means you have, or don't have, to heat things. So you might need a "meal" worth of non-cook high energy foods like crackers, oatcakes, peanut butter, nuts, dried fruits, and high-energy granola or flapjack bars.

If you can make a space, store all of these things separately from your "normal" food supply, so you don't accidentally use it up in normal cooking, and store it away from flood or mouse risk. Use it and swap it out when it approaches the "expiry" date, but understand also that many foods don't really "expire" and are useful in an emergency.

Finally, **discuss this with your neighbours**: you may be able to store things for each other, or you may want to do this for vulnerable people around you.

Resources: <https://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/shopping-storing/emergency-foods>

Reducing your water use, and being prepared for water outages

Water outage

Have a store of bottled water ready, in case mains water is cut off for hours or days. You will need 3-10 litres per person per day. 5-litre bottles from supermarkets are a good way to store this: it's a good idea to just buy 3 or 4 now and tuck them away somewhere.

If you have a hot water tank, it may keep going: but use it sparingly.

Follow the water-saving tips below too.

Saving water and reducing water use

With climate change we will almost certainly need to reduce our water consumption to get through long, dry summers. You can save a lot of water by just putting a little bit more thought into some simple daily activities: LOTS of water is wasted through habits we learned while water is plentiful. Do the simple steps below and soon they'll become new habits!.

Big water-users are: showers, toilets, leaks or dripping taps and leaky loos, leaving taps running while you do things (like shaving, brushing teeth), and using hosepipes

1. **Shorten your showers.** It's lovely to stand and relax in the shower but you are sending water down the drain...and using a lot of energy because it takes a lot to make water hot. Try to keep showers to less than 4 minutes. Or even turn them off while you lather up. Teenagers can be big culprits, so talk to them about this! If the shower water takes a while to heat up, catch it in a bucket and use that to flush the loo. And have showers not baths: this uses less water and energy.
2. **Flush toilets thoughtfully:** use the long flush only when needed, and consider flushing wee only every 3 or 4 times
3. **Avoid running taps** without a plug or bowl. Turn it off when you are not putting something under it (like a toothbrush, or plate to rinse). Avoid water going straight from tap to plughole: that water in June could be what's not there to drink in August!
4. **Fix leaks.** A dripping tap can increase your daily water use by 25% or more. A leaky loo can double or treble your daily water use. If your loo keeps making a hissing/dripping sound, it's constantly filling because it's leaking. To check carefully for a loo leak: after a flush let it dry for 30 minutes...then dry fully with 2 sheets of loo paper...then put one dry sheet in the basin at the back (above the water). Come back in 30 minutes: if the sheet is wet you have a leak. Fix leaks as soon as you notice, but otherwise fix them as part of Spring DIY-ing, so they don't leak all through the dry summer.
5. **Use hosepipes sparingly:** just like a running tap, if a hose shoots water all over things you are wasting water. Use a bucket to water plants or wash your car, or even just clean the windscreen when water is short

If you don't have them already, fit a dual flush loo and a water-saving shower head.

Resources: <https://letssavewater.com/#what-you-can-do>

Preparing for and coping in a power cut

*Power cuts typically don't happen much: which means that many people don't bother to prepare. But with more extreme weather and fuel shortages because of international conflicts, **they may become much more common**. There may even need to be planned cuts by a rota by region if we get short nationally one winter.*

Unplanned power cuts may last minutes, hours, or in worst case days. Planned power cuts by rota will last 3 hours at a time: some people are predicting these in the winter of 2026/27.

Power cuts of a **few minutes** may just mean you need to reset some clocks or timers. Power cuts longer than about **4 hours** will need you to take particular steps to cope. If power is out **for days** it will have a lot of impact and you will probably need help for food, water, or heat from e.g. emergency services/Council. **You can also help yourself:**

Preparation

- Have a modern battery **LED torch** (flashlight) or a rechargeable one easy to hand. You will need to save power on your phone and a “proper” torch is much brighter. Rechargeable head-torches cost under £10, and can also be used for night walks. Check it's charged up regularly: an old battery one may have gone flat.
- Have a charged-up **power-bank** ready for topping up your phone. Though in a widespread blackout, phone signal may be available for only a few minutes up to about 3 hours, **after that the phone towers can run out of back-up power**. Remember your car's USB socket can also be used to charge phones.
- Have some **food that doesn't need cooking and some bottled water** (buy a few 5l bottles if you can), the water pumps may fail and even a gas or oil cooker may need power to start or run. (Try overriding with a match). Have you got a **camping stove**?
- **Keep some cash in a home stash:** card machines in shops and ATMs won't work. Also, have a simple **battery or wind-up radio** in case phone signal goes down.

Coping

- First check it's not just your fuse box: e.g. are neighbours and streetlights out?
- Fridges and freezers can keep food cold for 4-6 hours, but don't open them “to check”. Use sparingly! Of course, there will be no wifi: your router is unpowered.
- In winter, your heating may go off. Get warm clothes and blankets immediately: **stay warm from the start:** you don't know how long the blackout may last.
- **Check neighbours are coping**, and also find out how much of the area is out. To report or check progress on a power cut, call National Grid on **0800 6783 105**

Resources: <https://powercuts.nationalgrid.co.uk/> has a power cut finder and advice page. <https://www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/power-cut/help-and-advice> is useful too.

Bad weather: floods, storms, snow, heat, wildfires

*Obviously, realise that these types of events **put a lot of pressure on emergency services and transport networks**. If you can avoid it, don't make the problems worse by travelling (even to work: call to check). **You too could get into difficulty**. Be realistic, be sensible.*

Pay attention to national and local **weather warnings**: think what you might need to do or change, or prepare. If you do it often it will become easier to plan and act. The pages above can all help: some cover things caused by bad weather.

Think about **vulnerable people** in your family, neighbours or community: is there anything special they might need, like medication or transport, or shopping? Are they coping OK?

Here are some things you can prepare, or do in an emergency:

- Use the Shropshire Flood & Drainage site to check on or report a flood or drainage problem: <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/drainage-and-flooding/>. In a really serious flood, move yourself and valuables upstairs, turn off electricity, gas/oil, and water.
- If you have to travel, prepare for getting stuck: a phone, warm clothes, food, a torch, a change of clothes, toilet paper, printed road atlas or download an offline map...
- Keep a list of important numbers to call for help: doctors, pharmacy, power network, County Council services. **We will put some local ones at the end of this guide.**
- Be a good citizen! Avoid problems:
 - clear snowy pavements, in frosts and snowfalls sprinkle salt/grit from the roadside stores on tricky spots like corners or hills
 - If you see leaves, sticks or litter blocking roadside drains, scrape it out e.g. with a stick, or report it to the Council
 - If you see smoke: check the fire it is under control, don't assume it's OK
 - Report fallen trees, get local help to move or cut them up
 - Use your car's warning triangle to warn drivers of problems ahead.

Some things worth knowing

Floods and droughts can be related. If water can't get into the ground, it will flood away elsewhere...and it also won't get into the soil and aquifer to help prevent drought. Too much hardstanding (large paved-over areas) near your home makes this problem worse, AND it makes heat reflection worse in heatwaves. Think green: grass, shrubs, trees.

During heavy rainfall, sewers become overloaded. If possible, hold off having baths, showers, and excessive loo flushes that make things worse during peak sewer load. During power cuts some drainage pumps may not work: so the same can apply then.

The Swedish manual linked on the first page has tips on how to use a toilet when it won't flush (e.g. drains are blocked) or there is no water to flush it.

Resources: <https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/be-informed-about-hazards/>

Emergency numbers, websites, and contact details

Write your own: others coming soon!