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NEWS RELEASE - August  
Alternate Water Supplies in Emergencies

We can't live without water, so what would happen if there were an emergency and no clean drinking water was available? Today's emergency plans recommend that everyone keep supplies of bottled water on hand and know where to look for alternative water sources if the bottled water is gone and tap water and other water sources are exhausted or contaminated.

"We need clean water to drink and use. An emergency may knock out or contaminate water sources. You may run out of your supply of bottled water. Learn today where to find alternate water sources for drinking in and around your house," said the Otsego County Department of Health.

At home, you can treat and use water from the water heater, pipes and toilet reserve tank. Outside, there is rainwater, rivers, streams, ponds, snow and pools. The water should be treated prior to use by bringing it to a rolling boil for at least one minute, chemically disinfecting it with chlorine or iodine, or through filtration treatments, to rid the water of microbes. These filtration systems are found in camping and emergency supply equipment.

Chemical pollutants, such as oil and gasoline, cannot be safely removed from water so don't use them for drinking or preparing foods. Also, do not use any alternate water sources that contain solid materials, has an odor or dark color.

Some alternate drinking water sources can be used without treatment if you know the water in your household plumbing has not become contaminated. (e.g., the pump was turned off by a power failure). However, if any doubt exists as to the water's purity, then it should be treated.

Sources of clean water within the house may include:

- From the faucet: Open a faucet on the top floor of your home. Next, go to the faucet at the lowest point in your home. Open the faucet and drain the water you need into a clean storage container.
- From ice cube makers and trays.
- From the hot water tank: Water may be drained from the bottom drain spout of your hot water tank or water heater after the electricity and/or gas is turned off. This source should not be confused with heating system boilers, plumbing and radiators. Do not turn the water heater on again until it is refilled. Drain the water into a clean storage container.

The Otsego County Department of Health warns you to be careful since some alternative water sources, such as rainwater, snow, rivers and streams, ponds and lakes, natural spring and pool water, may contain chemical or bacterial pollutants and could be hazardous to your health. If you

must use this water for drinking, it should always be treated. Water chemical disinfection, though, may not kill some microbes, such as cryptosporidium. In this case, boiling and filtration or a combination of treatments may work better

As part of your emergency plan, store the amount of water recommended by the American Red Cross. They recommend storing at least one gallon of water per person per day. Make a list of alternative water sources in and around your house and keep it in a safe place. Store materials for treating water (heat source, chemicals, filters) to have it ready if you deplete your emergency bottled supply and have to use alternative water sources.

For more information on alternative water sources and emergency preparation call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 or visit the New York State Department of Health website at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov).