

FREE GUIDE • FIELD MEDICINE

Grid-Down Sanitation and Hygiene

An emergency toilet, clean hands with little water, and trash, with one tote that holds it all.

Hey, I'm Randall. I'm a former Marine Combat Engineer, and my wife, Robbie, is a registered nurse. Nobody likes this topic, which is why it is easy to skip. Tape this inside the lid of your sanitation tote.

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Step 1: When the Toilet Will Not Work

Washington State Department of Health options if the toilet won't flush, you have no water to flush with, or the sewage system isn't working: [S1]

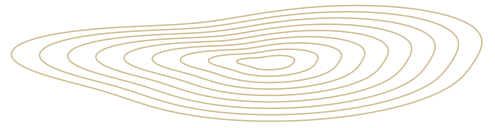
- **Option 1:** use someone else's working toilet: a neighbor, friend, relative or local business.
- **Option 2:** turn off the water valve to the toilet. Flush out the water left in the bowl. Line the bowl, under the seat, with a kitchen garbage bag inside another. Put kitty litter, peat moss, lime or similar in the inner bag.
- **Option 3:** a five-gallon bucket, with a toilet seat if you have one, set up the same way.
- When the inner bag is full, tie it up, put in a new one with fresh absorbent, and store used bags away from kids, pets and wildlife until trash pickup is back.

Where Our Toilet Water Valves Are:

Where Used Bags Will Be Stored:

Nearest Working Toilet We Could Use (who, Where):





STEP 2

Clean Hands and Trash

- CDC: wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially at the key times germs spread. [S2]
- CDC: if clean tap water is not available, set up a temporary handwashing station using a large water jug. [S2]
- CDC: if you do not have soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. [S2]

Our station: a jug with a spout, soap, paper towels and a catch bucket, next to the toilet and away from where we cook and eat.

Where Our Handwashing Station Goes:

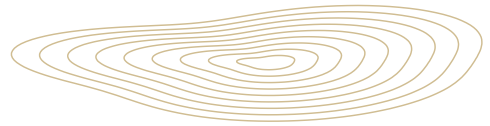
Jug Size And Where The Water Comes From:

Trash

Keep it bagged, tied and outside the living space, away from food and water and out of reach of pets and animals. Keep toilet bags separate from kitchen trash.

Where Trash Goes Until Pickup Is Back:





STEP 3

The Sanitation Tote

Ready.gov's basic kit list includes moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation, and suggests soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, feminine supplies and personal hygiene items. [S3]

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Five-gallon bucket with lid, and a toilet seat | ☐ Heavy kitchen garbage bags and ties |
| ☐ Kitty litter, peat moss or similar | ☐ Toilet paper |
| ☐ Soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes | ☐ Moist towelettes |
| ☐ Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items | ☐ Water jug with a spout, paper towels |
| ☐ Disposable gloves | |

Date Checked:

By:

What We Restocked:

Gear for This Plan: Our Pick

- **Cleanup dust:** 3M Aura 9205+ N95 respirator. It only protects with a good seal, and it filters particles, not gases or vapors.

Read more on our site • The pick, with the tradeoffs:

Grid-Down Sanitation and Hygiene Plan: Gear

Sources

[S1] Washington State Department of Health: Toilet Use During an Emergency. Read 10/11/2026.

[S2] CDC: Guidelines for Personal Hygiene During an Emergency. Read 10/11/2026.

[S3] Ready.gov (FEMA): Build a Kit. Updated 07/01/2026. Read 10/11/2026.

