

## Emergency Preparedness Pointers

### Preparedness In A Can

There are a variety of ways to stock a 72 hour kit with food. Shelf -stable boxed goods, Meals Ready To Eat (MREs) and nutrition bars are all possible food types to include in a kit. Another alternative is canned goods. Canned foods have a relatively long shelf life, provide a wide variety of choices and are well sealed from outside environmental factors (flood waters, dirt, etc.).

#### How Long Will Canned Food Last?

According to the US Department of Agriculture's Food Inspection Service the shelf life for canned foods are as follows:



High Acid Foods (tomatoes and other fruits) ...  
Low Acid Foods (meat and vegetables) ...

up to 18 months  
2 to 5 years



These timeframes are based on proper storage. Canned foods and other shelf-stable products should be stored in a cool, dry place. Do not keep them above the stove, under the sink, in a damp garage or basement, or any place exposed to high or low temperature extremes. If any cans are leaking, bulging, rusting, badly dented, or have a foul odor when opened, dispose of them immediately. These cans may contain the rare and potentially lethal *botulinum* toxin. The best way to avoid this is to rotate the food at least annually.

#### What Foods Should You Include?

First, you should store foods that you enjoy. In an emergency situation tensions are high. There is no reason to compound the issue by changing your diet. Food can help provide comfort to family members, so choose foods that the family will enjoy.

Second, choose foods that could be eaten cold. During an evacuation or even a shelter in place incident you may not have the ability to cook the food. It is also important to consider whether or not the food requires added water for preparation. Clean water is precious during an emergency so the food you choose should not require water to prepare.

Third, make sure that the cans are the correct portion size for your household. You may not have the ability to refrigerate leftovers, so make sure that the opened can will be consumed in a single meal by the members of your household.

Lastly, have a can opener in your 72 hour kit. Many canned foods now come with a pull tab top, but there are still many that don't. It is much better to have a can opener you don't need than to need a can opener you don't have.

#### Have A Green Thumb?

February is "Plant the Seeds of Greatness" month. It is a time to contemplate changes you would like to make to achieve personal goals. It can also be a time to start thinking about what great vegetables you would like to plant in your garden. Properly prepared home grown foods can be an excellent addition to a 72 hour kit. Home canning is a skill that was once common in the United States and is now a rare art. Safe canning practices require specific training and the use of proper equipment. For information on home canning go to: <http://foodsafety.cas.psu.edu/canningguide.html>