

REPLACING YOUR WATER HEATER WITH A TANKLESS MODEL COULD DEPRIVE YOU OF A VALUABLE WATER SOURCE DURING A DISASTER

A major disaster could cut off your source of clean drinking water. If you don't have a supply of emergency drinking water, you might have to get creative in order to find clean water. Most water heaters hold 30 to 60 gallons of water that can be used in an emergency.

HOW TO GET EMERGENCY DRINKING WATER FROM A WATER HEATER

Instructions

Step 1: Shut off the valve that leads to the hot water heater immediately after the emergency to prevent the water from becoming contaminated.

Step 2: Cut off the water heater's electrical supply (or gas) for your own safety and to prevent the water heater from running without water.

Step 3: Allow the water inside the heater to cool before you attempt to drain any water from it.

Step 4: Disconnect the hot water line at the top of the tank. If you can't get the line off, turn on a hot water faucet in the house to ventilate the water heater's tank.

Step 5: Open the drain valve at the bottom of the tank and collect the water in a clean storage container. Check the first few gallons for rust and sediment. If the water contains rust and sediment, throw it out until clean water starts to drain.

Step 6: Treat the water by adding six drops of liquid household bleach for every gallon of water. The bleach should contain 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Stir in the bleach and let the water stand for 30 minutes. If, after 30 minutes, the water doesn't smell like chlorine, add another 6 drops of bleach and let it stand for 15 minutes. The water can now be stored.

Tips

- Do you need a short length of hose to make the dispensing of the water easy? Use a garden hose.
- Before disaster hits, mark which valve is for the water supply. Run some hot water from any sink. Go back to the hot water tank and feel the two pipes attached to it. The supply line will be the colder one. Somehow mark the valve as "supply". This will be the one to close in an emergency so that contaminated water will not go into the tank as you drain the clean drinking water that is stored in it.

- It is a good idea to flush some water from the bottom of the tank once or twice a year. Sediment can collect on the bottom of the tank. Draining some water under pressure will clean out the sediment.
- Regular flushing will keep your heater free of debris, but there is a warning from most plumbers: If the valve hasn't been opened in more than five years, it may be best not to attempt turning the handle as the valve may fail.

Warnings

- Turn off the power supply to the tank first. Even if there is a power failure you must unplug, turn off the circuit breaker, or close the gas valve first. If the tank is empty of water when service is restored damage to the tank will occur.
- Allow the tank to fill before restoring power to the water heater. Open the supply valve and wait for the water to run out of the open hot water faucet.

Things You'll Need

- A flashlight to find the circuit breaker, plug, and valves in the dark.
- Pliers to remove your garden hose.