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<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/disaster/toilet.htm>

Disaster preparedness

How to create an emergency toilet

What are emergency toilets?

In extreme emergencies, sewage systems may not be functioning. During these times it may be necessary to create a temporary, emergency toilet for safely collecting and handling human waste until normal sewage systems can be restored.

When creating an emergency toilet, it is always important to:

- Locate the toilet away from food preparation or eating areas.
- Locate latrines and portable toilets at least 100 feet away from surface water bodies such as lakes, rivers, streams, and at least 100 feet downhill or away from any drinking water source (well or spring), home, apartment, or campsite.
- Provide a place next to the emergency toilet to wash hands that offers soap, running water, and paper towels.
- Keep doors and covers closed when the toilet is not in use to keep out insects and animals and to prevent injury.

Always supervise small children when they are using the emergency toilet.

What are portable toilets?

Portable toilets (sani-cans, port-o-lets, and so on) are self contained structures brought to a site to provide sanitary facilities. They are often used at many events where large numbers of people congregate. At present, there are no specific health regulations on the use of portable toilets; however the following are presented as guidelines for their use:

- Portable toilets must be regularly pumped out by a licensed contractor to avoid health hazards.
- Pumping contractors are licensed by the Environmental Health Division of Public Health - Seattle & King County.

What is a latrine?

A latrine is hole that is dug in the ground to collect human waste. They are usually built with a seat and cover.

Latrines are not appropriate in urban locations.

- The hole for a latrine must be at least 3 feet deep. Keep the bottom of the hole at least 1 foot above hard pan or the water table. Sites which can not be dug deep enough and still provide a 1 foot separation to a water table or hard pan are not appropriate sites for a latrine.
- After each use, throw dirt, lime, mulch, or ash in the latrine to minimize odors and to keep flies, mosquitoes, and rodents away.
- Cover the latrine between use with plywood, or another material.

How do I convert a flush toilet or make an emergency toilet from a pail?

1. Line the inside of a toilet bowl, 5 gallon pail, or another appropriately sized waste container with two heavy-duty plastic garbage bags.
2. Place kitty litter, fireplace ashes, or sawdust into the bottom of the bags.
3. At the end of each day, the bagged waste should be securely tied and removed to a protected location such as a garage, basement, outbuilding, and so on, until a safe disposal option is available.
4. Residents may dispose of the waste in a properly functioning public sewer, or septic system, or they may bury the waste on their own property.

Note: During a declared emergency, these bags may be included with the regular garbage if a public announcement has been made that allows this method of disposal.