HOME

# 33 Countries Are Telling Citizens to Stock Up on Food and Water—What Are Governments Preparing For?

By bestfolkmedicine · 03/11/2026 · 10 min read




From Europe to Asia and North America, governments are encouraging families to keep emergency food, drinking water, and essential supplies at home. But why are so many countries talking about preparedness at the same time? And what should ordinary households actually do?

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Something unusual is happening around the world.

Governments in dozens of countries are reminding citizens to prepare for emergencies by keeping extra food, drinking water, medicines, and other essential supplies at home.

Some recommend enough provisions for three days. Others advise households to prepare for an entire week or even ten days without access to basic services.

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The messages are appearing in Europe, North America, Asia, and beyond.

For many people, the growing attention to emergency preparedness raises an uncomfortable question:

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Do governments know something the public doesn't?

The answer is more complicated than alarming headlines suggest.

While international tensions, extreme weather, cyberattacks, and infrastructure vulnerabilities have increased concerns about potential disruptions, preparedness recommendations do not necessarily indicate that authorities expect an imminent disaster.

Instead, many governments are trying to ensure their populations can manage temporary emergencies without immediately relying on outside assistance.

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Here is what is happening, why these warnings are receiving renewed attention, and how to prepare your household without unnecessary fear.

## Why Are 33 Countries Advising People to Stock Up?

In late October 2026, international media reports highlighted emergency preparedness recommendations from 33 countries across six continents.

The number came from a media compilation of national and regional preparedness guidance rather than a coordinated announcement by 33 governments.

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Importantly, not all these recommendations are new. Some countries have maintained emergency preparedness programs for many years, while others have recently updated their public guidance.

The countries identified in the international reporting include:

- Europe: United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, and Croatia.
- North America: United States, Canada, and Mexico.
- South America: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina.
- Asia: Japan, Taiwan, Israel, India, Philippines, and Singapore.
- Africa: South Africa.
- Oceania: Australia and New Zealand.

Although the recommendations differ, the basic message is remarkably consistent.

Households should be prepared to manage independently for a limited period if electricity, clean water, transportation, communications, or food distribution systems are disrupted.

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The emphasis is on practical resilience, not panic buying.

## Europe's 72-Hour Emergency Preparedness Strategy

One of the most significant developments occurred on March 26, 2025, when the European Commission introduced its Preparedness Union Strategy.

The initiative seeks to strengthen Europe's ability to respond to emergencies ranging from natural disasters to cybersecurity threats and geopolitical crises.

A central element is encouraging households to achieve at least 72 hours of self-sufficiency.

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That means having enough essentials to get through the first three days of a serious disruption.

Why three days?

During major emergencies, rescue services, hospitals, local authorities, and infrastructure operators may be overwhelmed.

Some communities may temporarily lose access to electricity, water, banking systems, communication networks, or transportation.

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Families who can manage their basic needs for several days allow emergency personnel to prioritize people facing immediate danger.

The strategy reflects a broader shift toward preparing before a crisis rather than responding only after one begins.

## Some Countries Are Recommending Longer Emergency Supplies

Not every government believes three days is sufficient.

Several European countries have adopted longer preparedness targets.

### Norway: Prepare to Manage for One Week

Norwegian authorities recommend that households able to do so prepare to manage independently for approximately seven days.

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The guidance covers drinking water, food, heating, lighting, medicines, hygiene, and access to reliable information.

Norway expanded its recommendation from three days to one week in 2024.

The objective is to help people cope with interruptions to essential services while giving emergency responders more flexibility.

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### Sweden: Emergency Planning Includes the Possibility of War

Sweden has a longstanding tradition of civil preparedness.

Its updated public guidance addresses situations ranging from power failures and extreme weather to military conflict.

Residents are encouraged to prepare for at least one week of disruptions.

The advice reflects Sweden's broader approach to civil defense and national resilience.

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### Germany: Up to Ten Days of Supplies

Germany's Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance advises households to maintain food and drinking water reserves sufficient for up to ten days.

The guidance also emphasizes that emergency supplies should consist primarily of familiar foods that can be stored safely and used regularly.

This reduces waste and makes preparedness more practical.

## Why Are Governments Increasing Their Focus on Preparedness?

Several developments help explain why emergency planning has become a more visible public priority.

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### 1. Growing Geopolitical Tensions

Armed conflicts and international security concerns have prompted governments to reassess how well civilian populations could cope during major disruptions.

Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine has been particularly influential in European security planning.

Countries are increasingly considering scenarios involving damaged energy infrastructure, interrupted transportation, disrupted supply chains, and temporary communication failures.

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However, including military conflict in emergency planning does not mean authorities have confirmed that an attack is imminent.

Preparedness programs are designed to address multiple possible risks.

## 2. Increasingly Severe Weather Events

Floods, wildfires, hurricanes, winter storms, and extreme heat can disrupt normal life with little warning.

Floodwaters may make roads impassable.

Severe storms can damage power lines.

Wildfires can force communities to evacuate.

And prolonged weather emergencies may interrupt deliveries of food, fuel, and other essential goods.

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Households with basic emergency supplies are generally better positioned to manage these temporary challenges.

## 3. Cyberattacks and Infrastructure Disruptions

Modern societies depend heavily on interconnected digital systems.

Electricity networks, banking services, telecommunications, hospitals, and transportation infrastructure all rely on technology.

A serious cyberattack or technical failure can disrupt multiple essential services.

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Imagine an extended electricity outage in which mobile networks become unreliable, ATMs stop working, and grocery stores cannot process electronic payments.

Even without a natural disaster or military conflict, such a situation could create significant difficulties for households.

That is why emergency preparedness guidance increasingly includes cash, battery-powered radios, flashlights, and backup charging devices.

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### 4. Lessons From the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains and emergency response systems.

During the early stages, some regions experienced shortages of medical equipment, medications, and everyday household essentials.

Although modern preparedness campaigns address much broader risks, the pandemic reinforced an important lesson.

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Having modest reserves of essential items can reduce dependence on uninterrupted supply chains.

## How Much Food and Water Should You Actually Store?

One of the most common questions is how much is enough.

The answer depends on national guidance, household size, climate, medical needs, and the types of emergencies most likely to affect your area.

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Examples of official preparedness targets

# 3 days

EU minimum preparedness target

# 7 days

Norway and Sweden

# 10 days

Germany

A commonly used emergency water planning guideline is approximately one U.S. gallon, or 3.8 liters, per person per day, covering drinking and basic sanitation.

Water needs can increase during hot weather, illness, or physically demanding conditions.

Food reserves should prioritize products that are safe to store, easy to prepare, and familiar to your household.

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There is no need to purchase expensive survival meals if ordinary pantry foods can meet your needs.

## What Should Every Household Have in an Emergency Kit?

Emergency preparedness does not require transforming your home into a bunker.

A practical emergency kit can be assembled gradually using ordinary household products.

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Consider keeping:

- Drinking water stored in suitable, sealed containers
- Shelf-stable foods such as canned beans, vegetables, fish, soups, rice cakes, and nut butters
- Essential prescription medicines and a first-aid kit
- Flashlights, spare batteries, and charged power banks
- A battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Hygiene supplies, toilet paper, and disinfectant
- Copies of important documents in a waterproof container
- Some cash in small denominations
- Warm blankets, suitable clothing, and emergency heating provisions where appropriate
- Baby supplies, pet food, or specialized dietary foods when needed

Choose products that match your family's actual requirements.

For example, someone with food allergies or celiac disease should ensure their emergency food supplies are compatible with their dietary needs.

Families with young children should also consider appropriate snacks, medicines, hygiene products, and comfort items.

Remember that emergency equipment should be checked periodically, including batteries, expiration dates, and water storage conditions.

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## Could Food and Water Shortages Really Happen?

Temporary shortages can occur for reasons that have nothing to do with war.

A major storm may prevent delivery trucks from reaching supermarkets.

Flooding can contaminate drinking water supplies.

A prolonged power outage may interrupt refrigeration and food distribution.

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An earthquake can damage roads, pipelines, and other infrastructure.

In these situations, the problem may not be that food or water no longer exists.

Instead, it may become temporarily difficult or impossible to access supplies safely.

That distinction matters.

Keeping a reasonable amount of emergency food and water is a precaution against temporary disruption, not evidence that a permanent shortage is expected.

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## Why Panic Buying Is Not the Answer

When people encounter alarming headlines about emergency supplies, some immediately imagine empty supermarket shelves and a global crisis.

But panic buying can create the very shortages people fear.

If large numbers of households suddenly purchase excessive quantities of food, drinking water, or medicines, local supplies may become temporarily strained.

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A more responsible approach is gradual preparation.

Buy a few extra shelf-stable items during normal grocery shopping.

Use older products before their expiration dates.

Replace what you consume.

Store supplies in a cool, dry place and follow appropriate food-safety recommendations.

Preparedness should make everyday life more secure, not more stressful.

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## Does This Mean Governments Expect a Major War or Global Emergency?

This is perhaps the question generating the most online speculation.

The fact that multiple governments are promoting emergency preparedness does not, by itself, demonstrate knowledge of a specific upcoming catastrophe.

Governments regularly conduct risk assessments and develop contingency plans for events that may never occur.

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Hospitals prepare for mass-casualty emergencies.

Schools conduct evacuation drills.

Airlines establish procedures for rare technical failures.

Similarly, national civil protection agencies encourage people to prepare for possible interruptions to essential services.

Preparedness planning is a normal part of public safety.

What has changed is the growing visibility of these recommendations and the broader range of risks governments are discussing.

The central message is not necessarily that something terrible is about to happen.

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It is that modern infrastructure can be vulnerable, and households benefit from having a basic level of independence during emergencies.

## How to Prepare Your Home Without Spending a Fortune

The most effective emergency plan is one your household can realistically maintain.

Start small.

Check what you already have in your pantry.

Identify foods that can be eaten without electricity or refrigeration.

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Store a manageable quantity of drinking water.

Keep essential medicines organized.

Make sure family members know where emergency supplies are located.

Discuss what to do if mobile communications fail or household members become separated.

Consider the needs of elderly relatives, neighbors with disabilities, or anyone who may require additional assistance.

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Emergency preparedness is not just about storing products.

It is also about knowing how to respond calmly and practically when normal routines are interrupted.

## Final Thoughts: Why 33 Countries Are Talking About Emergency Supplies

The renewed discussion about emergency food and water reserves highlights a growing international focus on preparedness.

Governments are responding to a combination of security concerns, extreme weather, technological vulnerabilities, and lessons learned from previous crises.

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But the headline figure of 33 countries should be understood in context.

These recommendations come from different countries, different periods, and different national risk assessments. They do not represent a single coordinated emergency announcement.

For households, the practical takeaway is straightforward.

You do not need to panic, but having enough essential supplies to manage several days without normal services is a sensible precaution.

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A few extra bottles of water, shelf-stable foods, basic medicines, and a family emergency plan can make a meaningful difference during an unexpected disruption.

And perhaps the most important message is this:

Preparedness is not about expecting the worst. It is about being better equipped to handle the unexpected.

Have you already prepared an emergency food and water supply at home, or is this the first time you are considering it? Share your thoughts in the comments.

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