

In-House Toilets - Precautions

During times of emergencies, such as power outages, for those people that plan to empty the water out of their toilet bowls and then place a garbage bag in the bottom to catch the refuse, this is not a good idea. The water in the toilet bowl (and the traps for sinks, showers, tubs, floor drains, etc.) keeps the sewer gases from coming into your living space. Sewer gases are methane gas, and therefore, are very deadly and explosive. News stories report that utility workers have died from exposure to methane gas. It is also important to add water to your floor drains or other unused drains about once a month in case the water has evaporated.

It would also be a good idea to check out a "Plumbing Plug", a device that seals off the drains. If the sewer systems don't work, sewage can start to come up through the shower, tub, toilets, and even sink drains. This can also happen because of flooding, frozen drain pipes, blockages, etc.

Bucket Style Porta-Potty - Precautions

The Bucket Style Porta-Potty will tip over very easily (people are used to a toilet bolted to the floor). If one of these tips over and spills, you will have a major mess and most likely won't have enough spare water to clean it up. So, think about using these in a shed or garage. Perhaps you could build a frame to sit it on where the bucket can be placed underneath.

Camper-RV Style Porta-Potties - Precautions

Camper-RV Style Porta-Potties (with chemicals) have a bad odor from the chemicals so if you have one you will want to place it a good distance from your living space. The chemicals can freeze and damage the unit. A lot of these are designed to be emptied at waste disposal sites for camper trailers. Most homes don't come equipped with RV dump stations. It is better to have a permanent outhouse style commode so that you don't have to store, handle, clean buckets, and dispose of the waste.

Outhouses

I believe this to be the best way for human waste disposal in long term emergencies. Outhouses are easy to build. The average outhouse should be about 4ft. square by 7ft. tall. They are just a wooden box with a roof, a shelf, a floor and a door. The wall with the door in it should be 7ft. tall, the opposite wall in the rear should be 6ft. tall. Of course the side walls will have an angle across the top. When you frame the floor, don't sheet it until last. After you get the walls built just cap the roof with 6 inch eaves around the top, the roof should be about 5ft. square. Inside before you sheet the floor, across the entire length of the back wall, you need to construct a 2ft. wide shelf about 2ft. above the floor and box-in the front of the shelf. Cut an oblong hole in the center of the shelf about 10 x 12 inches and cover it with a regular toilet seat and lid. You can now finish the floor.

The outhouse should be set over a hole that has been dug, usually about 3-5ft. down into the ground. You should construct the outhouse about 50ft. to 150ft. from your house for sanitary and odor reasons. If the hole ever fills up you will need to dig another and drag the outhouse over top of it. This will be unlikely, however.

Caution: If you have a water well, make sure you place this a minimum of 50 feet away so you don't contaminate your drinking water.

In the old days people bought powdered lime or lye and sprinkled it down into the hole to help with the smell. You may want to add wood chips or sawdust each time you use it so that the material will compost.

I believe it is always better to place the waste where it will stay instead of moving and handling it. Less accidents and less problems. You may never need to use your outhouse, but if you ever need it, it will be handy. If you ever need this in the winter (when the ground is frozen) you will be glad you set it up ahead of time.

