

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 51 (2024)
Heft: 2: Better to be safe than sorry : Switzerland increases its emergency stockpiles

Artikel: What to store in your own cellar
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1077609>

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Bunker mentality during the Cold War

Civil defence shelters arose in many places during the 1970s to offer refuge to the Swiss in a state of emergency – pictured here is the now-decommissioned shelter in the Sonnenberg Tunnel, designed to accommodate 20,000 people. Besides the threat of nuclear conflict, the Cold War between the major powers also raised concerns over possible supply shortages. The mandatory reserves were kept well stocked – with adequate provisions for 12 months. Photo: Keystone



Precarious supply chains

Switzerland depends on imports for its needs. Besides pandemics and wars, climate change also impacts supply chains and logistics. During the 2018 summer drought, water levels in the Rhine (pictured here near Düsseldorf) were so low that ships

were only able to transport part of their normal load. Switzerland responded by releasing some of its mineral oil reserves to ensure there was enough petrol and heating oil. Photo: Keystone



What to store in your own cellar

“We advise – emergency supplies”: this over-50-year-old slogan has received a new lease of life since the coronavirus pandemic.

Empty pasta shelves, and a run on toilet paper in the supermarket: the coronavirus-induced lockdown in 2020 triggered supply fears and panic buying. The shelves emptied more quickly than retailers could fill them, which only stoked anxieties further.

The authorities recommend that people keep personal supplies at home to last for about a week. “That way, people can respond more calmly to difficult situations and avoid becoming nervous or panicking,” states an official brochure available in French, German and Italian, the title of which translates into English as “We advise – emergency supplies”. The slogan is over 50 years old – and it has been revived by the global crises.



Photo: Keystone

Your personal supplies should contain enough food for a week – it's even more important to have drinking water for at least three days.

The first thing to stockpile is non-perishable foodstuffs, for example rice, pasta products, oil, ready-made meals, salt, sugar, coffee, tea, dried fruit, muesli, rusks, chocolate, UHT milk, hard cheese, dried meat and preserves. Drinks are equally if not more important: every household should store nine litres of water per person. That is enough to provide three days of drinking and cooking water in the event of an emergency. Although Switzerland has an almost unlimited supply of drinking water, supply interruptions could still happen due to broken pipes or contamination. In such a case, water companies are obliged to provide people with a minimum amount of drinking water from the fourth day.

Spare batteries and cash

You should also keep items at home that can be of use in the event of an

electricity outage: battery-operated radios, torches, spare batteries, candles, matches and a gas cooker. Medicine, toiletries, pet food and small cash sums should also be kept at hand.

It is advisable to use your food reserves for everyday cooking, i.e. keep using them and replacing any used items. The contents of the freezer also count as emergency supplies: you can still consume frozen foods after an electricity outage. Once thawed, however, food should not be refrozen.

Offers from private companies for “complete solutions” with canned food for one month or longer far exceed the government recommendations. Their customers include preppers, who want to be well prepared with everything they need to keep going in the event of a crisis – tents, radio devices, tools etc. There are detailed checklists for crisis survival online.

(TP)

Link to the brochure (in German): revue.link/notvorrat