



# Y2K What2Do

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

## Y2K Individual and Family Preparedness

### Background

As the year 2000 arrives at midnight December 31, 1999, thousands of computers and countless computer chips have the potential to malfunction. The problem, known as "Y2K" or the "millennium bug", arises from the fact that computer programs recognize only the last two digits in years, such as 99 for 1999. That shortcut has the potential to confuse computers and software that cannot distinguish between 1900 and 2000, causing output of incorrect data or computer system disruptions. Among the services which may suffer potential disruptions are the delivery of utilities such as electricity, water and gas; electronic financial transactions; transportation; and health care. These potential disruptions may create emergency situations that can be mitigated with some advance individual and family preparedness planning. Because it is impossible to determine at this time exactly what the impact might be, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is encouraging California residents to prepare now for Y2K using similar steps as those used for other emergencies such as earthquakes and severe winter weather.

### Begin Preparations

While some problems may become evident immediately, others may take a little longer to have an impact. OES suggests that all households be prepared to be self-sufficient (able to live without running water, electricity and/or gas, telephone and assistance from safety devices) for three to seven days. The best place to start is by examining your needs and those of your family. Try to imagine how Y2K may impact your family's safety and well-being. How would you cook if gas and electrical service was disrupted? What appliances can your household function without for several days at a time? Do you keep enough money at home to cover immediate expenses in case ATM machines do not work? How often do you shop

for groceries and other supplies? Does your car have enough gas in the tank to allow you to function for days at a time without stopping to refill?

### Suggested Preparations

#### Water

Store one gallon of water per person per day (at least two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation and sanitation). Store water in sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk gallons or glass bottles. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Boiling water before use is the safest method of purifying water, but also have a water purification kit on hand. For the boiling method, bring water to a rolling boil for at least one (1) minute. Increase boiling time to at least three (3) minutes if you live at high elevations above 6,500 feet. *Hint:* When used for drinking, after cooling, pouring the water back and forth between two containers will help improve the taste as oxygen is added during this process. Other water sources in your home can be found in ice cubes, the toilet tank at the back of the toilet (if no chemical disinfectant is used), swimming pool, and spa. Water used from these sources must be purified before drinking, or use the water only for toilet flushing and other non-ingested purposes.

#### Food

Have plenty of nonperishable food on hand for your family to survive on for three days to a week. Keep in mind the needs of all members of your family, including your pets, as you stock up. Store nonperishable basics such as dry and canned goods (soups, juices, milk, vegetables, boxed food, beans, and

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pasta.) If you experience a power failure, use perishable and refrigerated foods first and then foods from the freezer. Be sure to have a non-electric can opener and utility knife available.

## Cooking/Heating

You may need to use alternative sources for cooking and heating should Y2K cause a disruption in delivery of gas and electricity.

**Cooking:** You may already have several alternative cooking means on hand. Barbecues and camp stoves are just two ideas for alternative cooking (**for outdoor use only**). If you use propane, be sure the tank is full and consider having a second full tank on hand. Another idea for an alternative cooking device might be a “canned heat” stove. Remember, **safety first** when using fire as an alternative cooking source.

**Heating:** Have sleeping bags available as well as plenty of blankets and warm clothing. Make sure you have plenty of wood for wood-burning stoves and fireplaces. If you use a non-electrical alternative heating device, make sure it is approved for indoor use and always follow manufacturer’s operating instructions. Ensure there is adequate ventilation to prevent build up of carbon monoxide, other gases, or smoke inside the home. **Never use barbecues or any similar outdoor cooking appliance in your home since the fumes these create can kill you.**

## Refuse

Make sure you have enough sturdy covered garbage containers to hold two weeks’ worth of refuse should Y2K disrupt garbage collection. Tight sealing lids on garbage cans will help keep rodents and other pests away. Never burn waste in your fireplace.

## Health/Medical/Dental

It is always a good idea to maintain an up-to-date copy of health, medical, and dental records for yourself and your family. It is also wise for each member of the family to be current on all necessary immunizations. Keep an extra supply of prescriptions and medications or other medical supplies used by your family. (A list of basic health and medical supplies is listed in the “Basic Supplies” section of this document.) If you or anyone you know is dependent on medical devices, it is important to contact the manufacturer to ensure these devices are Y2K compliant. People with special needs, such as the elderly and those with disabilities, may wish to ask two friends or

## Basic Supplies

You may want to store a three to seven day supply of the following:

- ✓ Paper plates, cups, plastic utensils
- ✓ Flashlights, battery operated radio and/or TV
- ✓ Extra batteries
- ✓ Matches (keep out of reach of children)
- ✓ Battery operated lamps, lanterns and fuel (keep out of reach of children)
- ✓ Battery operated smoke alarm
- ✓ Battery operated carbon monoxide detector
- ✓ Toilet paper, towelettes
- ✓ Personal hygiene items
- ✓ Plastic garbage bags, zip-locking bags
- ✓ Waterless antibacterial hand soap
- ✓ Disinfectant / bleach
- ✓ Fire extinguisher
- ✓ Freshly stocked first-aid kit
- ✓ Cleansing agent/soap
- ✓ Antiseptic
- ✓ Non-prescription drugs you use regularly
- ✓ Full supply of prescription medication (when purchasing prescriptions after 12/31/99, check your prescription information carefully)
- ✓ Also, learn basic first aid and CPR

relatives they trust to check on them in case Y2K causes disruptions or other problems. Show them how to operate any special equipment you use and where you keep your emergency supplies, as well as giving them a spare key.

## Banking

**Cash:** Prepare for possible disruption of electrical power. Have some extra cash on hand in case computer-controlled electronic transactions involving ATM cards, credit cards, and the like cannot be processed. You should have already purchased your emergency supplies before the arrival of Y2K. The amount of cash you keep on hand should be based on

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your family's needs. Keep in mind that keeping large amounts of cash in the home could make you vulnerable to theft. Please use discretion and common sense when deciding this. Keep cash in a safe place and withdraw money from your bank in small amounts.

**Credit and Debit Cards:** Be prepared to pay in cash or by check while retailers who are not Y2K compliant work out problems. Be sure to save receipts.

**Finance:** Keep a paper record of all holdings, loan balances, and transactions.

## Communications

Telephone lines may still work if power is off or sporadic during short periods. There is a possibility portable telephones will not work without electricity. Make sure you have at least one non-portable telephone in the house for emergency situations. Cellular telephone systems may be operational without electricity. Make the inability to use a telephone part of your family's emergency preparedness plan.

## Transportation

Try maintaining your car's gas tank at least half full during the weeks prior to Y2K. This will keep you from possible long lines at the gas stations on December 31, 1999. Consider alternate transportation such as public transportation or a bicycle in case Y2K causes disruptions in the delivery of gasoline. Storing gasoline at home is not recommended since it can be extremely hazardous.

## Portable Generators

Connect electrical devices directly to a portable generator if you decide to use one. Connecting the generator to your home's electrical system is against the law unless a fail-safe switching mechanism, installed by a licensed electrician, is used. Always keep the portable generator in a well-ventilated area outside the home or in a completely open garage. Do not put a portable generator in your basement.

## Legal

Keep copies of all important documents such as wills, trusts, loans, house deeds, insurance/life policies, tax, health, education, and military service records, birth certificates, passports, credit card and bank account statements on hand in a safe place.

## Entertainment

Plan activities and have supplies on hand for your family to engage in if there are Y2K-related power

disruptions. Playing cards, books and board games are but a few items that you might want to have available. Stock up on plenty of extra batteries if you use portable radios, CD players, and televisions.

## Preparing Your Home

Check with manufacturers of any essential computer-controlled electric and computerized equipment in your home to ensure they are Y2K compliant. This includes fire and security alarm systems, programmable thermostats, appliances, garage door openers, and electronic/computerized equipment such as locks in which an "embedded chip" may control its operation. Winterize your home and any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock, or equipment. In the event of heat loss, make sure your water pipes are protected from freezing.

## Pets/Livestock

Do not leave your pets and/or livestock out of your contingency plans. Be sure to store extra food, water, and other supplies for them also. If they take regular medication, have a full supply on hand. Determine where you will take your pets and/or livestock if it is necessary to move them. Be sure to have leashes and pet carriers for each of your pets on hand.

## Summary

- Prepare a bit at a time each month between now and December 1999.
- Do not overlook the value of working with your community, neighborhood, or religious organizations. All these can be your partners in preparedness planning.
- Learn more about the Y2K problem and its potential impact on you and your community. Referring to the Internet is an excellent way to stay current of Y2K and its implications.
- **Above all, don't panic.** Get involved in your preparedness planning now!

Everyone should be prepared for the potential impact of Y2K. Encourage your friends, relatives, neighbors and community to prepare accordingly. Provide assistance with Y2K preparedness planning to elderly persons and those with disabilities. Your local Office of Emergency Services can help by providing additional information.

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## Conclusion

It is not clear at this time exactly what the impact of Y2K may be. It is prudent to prepare just as you would for any other potential emergency. Government and private industry are working diligently to minimize Y2K problems and their effects. As the year 2000 approaches, federal, state and local governments, working with private industry, will be better able to determine how much of an impact to expect. Currently preparedness information can be accessed on the OES homepage at [http:// www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov).



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## Suggested Y2K Preparedness Web Sites

California Governor's Office of Emergency  
Services

[www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov)

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
(FEMA)

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

The American Red Cross

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

United States Senate Special Committee on  
the Year 2000 Technology Problem

[www.senate.gov/~y2k](http://www.senate.gov/~y2k)

The President's Council on Year 2000  
Conversions

[www.Y2K.gov](http://www.Y2K.gov)