

# Emergency Toilets

## What are emergency toilets?

In the event that your toilet stops flushing or sewage systems are not working, you must find a way to dispose of human waste (sewage) yourself. It may be necessary to create a temporary, emergency toilet to safely collect sewage. The following are important things to remember when creating an emergency toilet:

- Be sure that the location of the toilet is away from eating and food preparation areas.
- Make sure the toilet is 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, home, apartment or campsite.
- Provide a place next to the emergency toilet to wash hands. Be sure to have soap, running water and paper towels.
- Keep lid of toilet closed when it is not in use to keep insects and animals out.
- Supervise small children when they are using toilet in order to prevent injury.

## What are portable toilets?

- Portable toilets are self contained structures brought to a site to provide sanitary facilities. These portable toilets are often used at events with large crowds.
- These toilets must be pumped out regularly by a licensed contractor to avoid health hazards.

## What is a latrine?

If the emergency will last more than a week and your toilet or bucket commode no longer will do the job, you need to make a latrine. The following are steps to make a latrine:

- Use a shovel or post hole digger to dig a pit four to six feet deep and about one foot wide.
- Place a bucket, box or barrel or anything with a hole in it that you can sit on over the pit. It must cover the pit tightly so that flies cannot get in while no one is using it.
- The seat box must be cleaned regularly with bleach water and kept tightly covered when not in use.
- After each use, throw dirt, lime, mulch or ash in the latrine to minimize odors and to keep animals away.
- When the pit fills to within eighteen inches of the top, fill the hole in with clean dirt and mound it over. Cover the mound to keep animals from digging it up.

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

If your toilet bowl is not usable, use a five gallon bucket, wooden box or some other container sturdy enough to sit on.

- Sit the seat from your toilet on the bucket or make one from layers of heavy cardboard glued together, two boards laid across the top with a gap between them or cut a seat from plywood.
- Line with bags.
- Place kitty litter, fireplace ashes or sawdust into the bottom of the bags.
- At the end of each day, the bagged waste should be securely tied and removed to a protected location such as a garage, basement etc.

### **What is a cat hole?**

If the emergency will last only a day or two, you can use cat holes. These are small, one-time personal use holes you dig in the ground and squat over.

- The hole should be deep enough to cover your waste at least six inches deep when filled.
- Do not do this any closer than 100 feet from open water or water wells or the germs in the sewage will get into the water.

*Source: Boone County Public Health Emergency Response Plan*