



# Before the Crisis

The household baseline audit. Six measurements, one afternoon, a pencil — and you stop guessing how prepared you are, because you will know the numbers.

## By the last page you will know

- your **water horizon** — days the household runs if the tap stops
- your **food horizon** — shelf-stable days, fridge excluded
- your **medication horizon** — for everyone who depends on one
- your **power runtime** — hours of light and phone, counted
- who does what, where you meet, which neighbours you can rely on
- your **top three gaps** — each with a first action and a price

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**12 PAGES · 6 AUDITS · ONE CALM AFTERNOON**

**How to use this.** Print it (US Letter). Use a pencil. Walk the home with it — count what is actually on the shelves, not what you think is there. Budget one afternoon. Re-audit every 6 months and after any move, birth or new diagnosis. Emergency number in your region: **911**.

## Is something happening right now?

Then this is the wrong document — an audit is for calm days. Use the companion playbook **The First 72 Hours** (free at [systemsfaillab.com](https://systemsfaillab.com)) and come back to this one later.

## The starter kit — four pieces, all free

1 · This audit	2 · The First 72 Hours — the crisis playbook	3 · Resilience Score, online	4 · The Thursday Briefing
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A free starter from Systems Fail Lab — calm, source-cited household resilience for US households. The full domain-by-domain system lives at [systemsfaillab.com](https://systemsfaillab.com). Drawn from public guidance: FEMA/Ready.gov, CDC, American Red Cross, NWS, WHO. Educational reference, not professional advice. v2.1 · June 2026.

## PART 1 · THE DASHBOARD

# The baseline dashboard

A baseline is numbers, not vibes. Each audit in this workbook produces one number — a **horizon**: how long the household runs with no shops, no pharmacy, no grid. Fill each row as you finish its audit; the whole picture lives on this page.

Domain	Minimum	Goal	My number	OK?
Water (audit 2)	3 days	14 days		
Food (audit 3)	3 days	14 days		
Medication (audit 4)	7 days	30 days		
Light (audit 5)	12 hours	72 hours		
Phone / comms (audit 5)	24 hours	72 hours		
People & roles (audit 6)	written	talked through		
Cash at home (page 10)	3 days	2 weeks		

### 7 rows OK

Solid baseline. Re-audit in 6 months — put the date in your calendar now.

### 5 – 6 rows OK

Close the worst gap this week. One purchase usually moves a row from short to OK.

### 0–4 rows OK

Run the Minimum Weekend (page 10) — about \$300 and two days from zero to baseline.

**KEY PRINCIPLE.** You cannot close a gap you have not measured. The people who cope best in real disruptions are rarely the ones with the most gear — they are the ones who measured their gaps in advance, so under pressure they execute a plan instead of inventing one.

## My top three gaps — fill in last, after all six audits

Gap	First action to close it	~ cost
1.		
2.		
3.		

## Worked example — so the numbers have a face

Two adults, one child, a cat. Water found: 12 L bottled  $\div 12 \div (3 \times 3 \text{ L}) = 1.3 \text{ days}$  — **short**. Shelf food:  $\sim 9$  person-days  $\div 3 = 3 \text{ days}$  — **at minimum**. Insulin in fridge: **21 days — OK, but cold-chain plan missing**. Their top gap was never food — it was water and a cool box. Yours will surprise you too; that is the point of measuring.

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Audit 1 · Household snapshot

Every other number in this workbook scales from this page: who lives here, who depends on what, and who needs help moving. Fill it in once; update it when anything changes.

Name	Age	Medication / special needs	Needs help to evacuate?

### Special factors — tick what applies, then carry it into every later audit

- Infant or toddler — formula, nappies, and their own water line
- Elderly or reduced mobility — evacuation help, spare glasses, hearing-aid batteries
- Chronic condition — the medication horizon is your most important number (audit 4)
- Home medical equipment that needs power — oxygen, CPAP, powered bed (audit 5)
- Pets — their food and water count on top of yours; carrier within reach
- No car — your evacuation plan is public transport, a neighbour, or on foot (audit 6)

### Weekday reality check

Disruptions do not wait for evenings. On a normal weekday afternoon, who is where — and how does each person get home if phones and transit are down?

Person	Usually at (school / work)	Gets home by

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Audit 2 · Water horizon

Water is the only resource where running out causes problems within 24 hours. Planning figure: **1 gallon per person per day** for drinking and basic cooking (WHO emergency planning minimum). Your **water horizon** = total stored ÷ (people × daily figure). Count only what you would actually drink.

### Step 1 — count what you have

Where / container	Counts because	Amount
Sealed bottled water	safe until the printed date	
Food-grade containers with a fill date	rotated every 6 months	
Other (filtered, workplace, car stash)	note where it lives	
<b>TOTAL</b>		

Doesn't count: the kettle, open jugs, juice and fizzy drinks, pool or pond water (untreated).

### Step 2 — compute the horizon

My horizon = total \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ ( \_\_\_\_\_ people × 1 gallon ) = \_\_\_\_\_ days › dashboard, row 1.

### Step 3 — close the gap

Household size	3-day minimum	14-day goal
Household of 1	3 gal	14 gal
Household of 2	6 gal	28 gal
Household of 3	9 gal	42 gal
Household of 4	12 gal	56 gal
Household of 5	15 gal	70 gal
Household of 6	18 gal	84 gal

### Container options — effort vs capacity

Bottled multipacks	zero effort, rotates itself through normal drinking	best first step
10–20 qt jerrycans, food-grade	stackable, fits under beds and in wardrobes	the workhorse
Large barrel (100 qt+)	serious capacity; needs a spot, a pump, and a rotation date	14-day goal

Storage: food-grade containers, cool and dark, off concrete floors, fill date in marker, rotate every 6 months. Non-drinking water is separate maths — at the first sign of trouble, the bathtub and big pots become your flushing and washing reserve.

If supply is ever suspect: a rolling boil for 1 minute makes water biologically safe (3 minutes at high altitude). Full purification doses live in the companion playbook **The First 72 Hours**.

Sources: WHO household water guidance; EPA emergency water storage and disinfection.

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Audit 3 · Food horizon

Count **shelf-stable food only**. In a power cut an unopened fridge keeps food safe for about **4 hours** and a full freezer about **48 hours** (half-full: 24) — so they are a bonus you eat first, not part of your horizon. Planning figure: ~ **2,000 kcal per adult per day**.

### Step 1 — walk the shelves and count days

Shelf-stable food I can serve	~ person-days
Ready to eat, no cooking (tins, bars, nuts, crackers)	
Needs only boiling water (oats, noodles, couscous)	
Needs real cooking + extra water (rice, pasta, dried beans)	
<b>TOTAL ÷ people in household = my food horizon, in days</b>	

My food horizon = \_\_\_\_\_ days › dashboard, row 2. Minimum 3 days · goal 14 — and keep at least 3 of those days eatable with **no cooking at all**.

### Step 2 — spend shelf space on dense food first

Food	~ kcal / 100 g	Why it earns its shelf
Vegetable oil	~ 880	densest calories you can buy; goes into everything
Peanut butter, nuts	~ 590–620	no cooking, no fridge, children eat it
Oats, rice, pasta (dry)	~ 360–370	cheap bulk — but needs water and heat
Honey, sugar	~ 300–400	keeps almost forever; energy and morale
Tinned fish in oil	~ 230	protein + fat, eaten cold from the tin
Tinned beans / vegetables	~ 80–120	low density — count them honestly

### No-cook day menu — write one real day from your shelves, right now

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner

If you could not fill three boxes from what is on the shelf today, that is your gap — not a bigger freezer.

### Step 3 — the rotation that makes it cost nothing

Buy only what you already eat, one extra of each per normal shop until you reach 14 days — then stop. New tins to the back, tonight's dinner from the front (first in, first out). Done this way the reserve is free: you eat all of it eventually, just later.

Sources: FoodSafety.gov power-outage figures; Ready.gov food guidance; kcal values are typical label figures.

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Cooking without the grid

When gas and electricity fail together, cooking becomes a safety question before a comfort one. Decide your method now, in daylight — not at 2 a.m. in a power cut.

**Outdoor beats improvised indoor.** People die every year running barbecues, camping stoves or generators indoors — carbon monoxide is invisible and quiet. Unless a method is explicitly certified for indoor use, treat it as outdoor-only, and pick the outdoor spot now: sheltered from wind, stable surface, water within reach.

### Methods compared

Method	Fuel	Indoors?	Notes
Camping gas stove	Butane / propane	With ventilation	Most convenient; canisters age — date them
Rocket stove	Dry sticks, wood	No — outdoor only	Renewable fuel; build or buy once
Alcohol stove	Methylated spirits	With ventilation	Slow but quiet and very reliable
Solid-fuel tablets	Hexamine	With ventilation	Emergency only; excellent shelf life
Haybox (DIY)	Any initial heat	Yes — passive	Finishes grains and stews for free

**The 10-minute haybox.** A cool-bag, a wool blanket and a towel-wrapped pot: boil the pot for 5 minutes, seal it inside, walk away. Retained heat finishes the cooking — and saves half of every fuel you own. Try it once on a normal Tuesday.

### My cooking plan

Role	Method	Fuel stored (how much?)	Outdoor spot?
Primary			
Backup			
No-fuel fallback	Haybox (retained heat)	none needed	indoors — passive

### Fuel safety — three rules

Store fuel outdoors or in a ventilated space, never next to the heater  Original containers only, dated  Enough for 7 days of one hot meal a day — more is storage risk, not resilience

### Practice log — the first use must not be in the dark

Date	Method tried	What we cooked	Worked?

Remember from the food audit: dry staples (rice, pasta, beans) cost water *and* heat. Your no-cook days (audit 3) are the buffer while you set this up.

Sources: Ready.gov generator and cooking safety; CDC carbon-monoxide guidance.

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Audit 4 · Medication & medical

The gap that hurts most and is the easiest to miss. One number per person: how many days of every medicine they depend on are physically in the home right now?

Person	Medication + dose	Days in hand	Refill source + phone

Lowest number above = household medication horizon = \_\_\_\_\_ **days** › dashboard, row 3. Goal 30 days: ask your pharmacist or prescriber about refilling a few days early each cycle — in many places that is the legal, boring way to build a buffer.

**COLD CHAIN.** Insulin and some other medicines need refrigeration. Plan a 72-hour fallback *now* — an insulated cool box plus frozen packs — and ask the pharmacist how long yours tolerates room temperature. Not during a power cut.

### First-aid kit — ten things, checked twice a year

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable gloves                | <input type="checkbox"/> Painkillers (paracetamol / ibuprofen), in date |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sterile gauze pads               | <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical tape                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tweezers + scissors                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dressings — one large, two small | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal rescue meds (inhaler, EpiPen, GTN)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Antiseptic                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Printed medication list (below)                |

### The printed medication list — worth more than the medicines

One page: every household member's medications, doses, prescriber, pharmacy. In an evacuation this paper replaces what you left behind; without it you are explaining from memory in a queue.

Our pharmacy + phone

Out-of-hours / backup pharmacy

Prescriber / clinic + phone

Sources: American Red Cross first-aid kit contents; CDC personal medication preparedness.

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Audit 5 · Energy & communications

When the grid drops, two numbers decide how well you cope: **hours of light** and **hours of phone**. Count them now — both go to the dashboard.

### Step 1 — inventory what stores power

Source	What it runs	~ hours
Power bank(s) — charged?	phones	
Laptop battery	phone top-ups via USB	
Car battery + charger cable	phones, radio (engine on, outdoors)	
Torch / headlamp + spare batteries	light	
Battery / crank radio	information	

My light runtime ~ \_\_\_\_\_ h · my phone runtime ~ \_\_\_\_\_ h · dashboard, rows 4–5.

### Step 2 — spend power top-down

- 1 **Comms + information** — phones to power-saving, radio for news.
- 2 **Light** — a headlamp beats candles: hands free, no fire risk.
- 3 **Medical devices** — if audit 1 flagged powered equipment, it owns the biggest battery.
- 4 **Food cold chain** — fridge and freezer doors stay shut; that is the whole strategy.
- 5 **Comfort last** — entertainment only when everything above is covered.

### Step 3 — the blackout box

One labelled box on one known shelf, so nobody searches in the dark:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headlamp per adult + spare batteries<br><input type="checkbox"/> Power bank at least 10,000 mAh — recharge monthly<br><input type="checkbox"/> Battery or crank radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Charging cables + car charger<br><input type="checkbox"/> FRS walkie-talkie (licence-free), channel agreed: CH _____<br><input type="checkbox"/> Matches / lighter — light only; see the CO warning, page 10 |
|--|---|

Check-in rhythm if networks drop (e.g. radio CH + 08:00 / 20:00)

Where the blackout box lives (exact shelf)

Sources: FEMA / Ready.gov power-outage guidance; American Red Cross home preparedness.

## PART 2 · THE AUDITS

## Audit 6 · People & roles

A crisis is a team event. Roles decided over one calm dinner beat roles improvised at 3 a.m. — and most sustained disruptions are survived with neighbours, not alone.

### Who does what — one name and one backup per row

Role	Who	Backup
<b>Driver</b> — vehicle, fuel, routes		
<b>First aid</b> — owns the kit and the med list		
<b>Comms &amp; information</b> — radio, check-ins, official sources		
<b>Children &amp; vulnerable</b> — one adult owns this entirely		
<b>Supplies &amp; cooking</b> — rationing rhythm, water discipline		

### Where we meet

Rally point 1 — near home	
Rally point 2 — outside the area	
Out-of-area contact — name + phone	

(A wallet-sized version of this card is in the companion playbook **The First 72 Hours**.)

### The neighbour network — three doors you can knock on

Who / where	Skill or resource	Contact

Trade is two-way: note what *you* bring (tools, medical training, a car, a generator, childcare) and mention it when you talk to them. The conversation costs five minutes on a calm Tuesday.

**The whole rehearsal: one dinner.** Walk the household through this page and the dashboard. When everyone can answer “where do we meet and who does what,” mark People & roles **talked through** › dashboard, row 6.

## PART 3 · CLOSING THE GAPS

# The minimum weekend — zero to baseline for about \$300

If the dashboard came back mostly short, do not optimise — execute this list in one weekend and re-score. Prices are rough; most items are one-time buys.

Buy / do	~ cost	Done
Water: containers + bottled, to the 3-day minimum (audit 2 table)	\$15–30	
Food: start copy-canning — one extra of everything you already eat	\$40–60	
Medication: top up toward 30 days (ask about early refills)	varies	
Headlamps + spare batteries	\$20–30	
Power bank at least 10,000 mAh	\$20–30	
Battery / crank radio	\$15–25	
First-aid kit (page 7 list)	\$15–25	
Cash \$100–200 in small notes, hidden at home	—	
Document copies: paper set + encrypted USB	\$10–15	
Pair of FRS radios (licence-free)	\$25–40	

## Only \$100 this month? Buy in this order

1. Water containers + fill them › 2. Headlamp + batteries › 3. First-aid basics › 4. Cash reserve, small notes › 5. One extra week of food you already eat. Everything else can wait for next month.

## The warm room — collapse the household into one heated space

Pick the smallest room you can insulate — ideally interior, few windows. Seal drafts with towels; hang a blanket over the doorway. Everyone sleeps there, in layers, bedding doubled. Ventilate briefly twice a day.

**Never run charcoal, camping-gas stoves or generators indoors — carbon monoxide kills quietly.** If you heat with anything that burns, a battery CO alarm is part of the heater.

## Home hardening — five cheap upgrades that buy you time

- Smoke + CO alarms on every level — test the batteries today, not in winter
- Fire extinguisher + fire blanket in the kitchen, mounted where you can grab them
- Find and label your water, gas and electricity shut-offs — practice the water one once
- Draft-proof the warm room: seals and draught excluders — the cheapest heating you will ever buy
- Before storm season: secure or store anything outdoors that the wind can throw
- Photograph your meters, shut-offs and fuse box — your phone gallery becomes the manual

## PART 3 · KEEPING IT ALIVE

## The quarterly 20 minutes

A baseline decays quietly: water dates pass, medicines expire, batteries drain, households change. Four times a year, 20 minutes, the same checklist — that is the entire maintenance cost of everything in this workbook.

- Water** — check fill dates; rotate anything older than 6 months
- Food** — FIFO shuffle: anything within 3 months of its date moves to this month's menu
- Medication** — expiry dates + days-in-hand for every dependent member (audit 4)
- Power** — recharge power banks, test torches, replace stale batteries
- Alarms** — press the test button on every smoke and CO alarm
- Bag & blackout box** — seasonal swap: warm layer in autumn, sun and heat kit in spring
- Dashboard** — re-score page 2: has anything slipped from OK to short?
- People** — one dinner talk-through if anything changed: new home, new school, new job

**Schedule it now or it will not happen.** Four 20-minute slots in the calendar — 1 Jan · 1 Apr · 1 Jul · 1 Oct, or any rhythm you will actually keep.

**Skip-proofing:** anchor each review to something that already happens — first day of a school term, the clock change, the first heating bill. A habit tied to a date survives; a loose intention does not.

### A focus per quarter — so no review feels like starting over

<b>Q1 — water</b>	full rotation check, purification stock	<b>Q2 — bag &amp; summer</b>	seasonal swap, sun and heat kit
<b>Q3 — documents</b>	re-scan, insurance, cash reserve	<b>Q4 — warm room</b>	drafts, bedding, CO alarm, winter kit

### Review log

Quarter	Date done	Biggest gap found	Fixed by (date)
Q1			
Q2			
Q3			
Q4			

### Once a year — on top of any quarter

- Full water rotation: empty, rinse, refill, re-date every container
- Re-scan documents to the USB; check the insurance still matches the home
- Swap alarm batteries (smoke + CO) even if they still test fine
- Re-take the Resilience Score online — compare with last year

### Seasonal extras

- Before winter — warm-room check (page 10): drafts sealed, bedding ready, CO alarm battery fresh
- Before storm season — outdoor sweep: secure or store anything the wind can throw

## PART 4 · SOURCES &amp; NEXT

## Where this comes from

Every operative figure in this workbook follows published public guidance. Check the originals — that habit is itself a resilience skill.

WHO — drinking-water and household water treatment	who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water
EPA — emergency water storage & disinfection	epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/emergency-disinfection-drinking-water
Ready.gov — water, food, build a kit	ready.gov/water · ready.gov/food · ready.gov/kit
FoodSafety.gov — food safety in an outage (4 h / 48 h figures)	foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage
CDC — power outages & personal medication preparedness	cdc.gov/disasters
American Red Cross — first-aid kit & household preparedness	redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies

## What to do next — in order

1	<b>Go back to page 2</b> and fill the dashboard and your top-3 gaps. Then put a re-audit date in your calendar — six months from today.
2	<b>Take the Resilience Score</b> — 21 questions, 5 minutes, free. It finds the blind spots a self-audit can't. › <a href="https://systemsfaillab.com">systemsfaillab.com</a>
3	<b>Build your Kit List</b> — 90 seconds, personalised to your home and region, printable. › <a href="https://systemsfaillab.com">systemsfaillab.com</a> › Kit List
4	<b>Keep the companion playbook</b> — <i>The First 72 Hours</i> covers the event itself: the hour-by-hour map, stay-or-go, the grab bag. Free at <a href="https://systemsfaillab.com">systemsfaillab.com</a> .
5	<b>Stay on the Thursday Briefing</b> — one calm email a week: what changed, what matters, one action. That's the whole cadence.

### Your first week after the audit

Day 1–2	Close the water gap — containers bought, filled, dated (audit 2).	Done
Day 3	Pharmacy run: top up toward 30 days; ask about early refills (audit 4).	
Day 4	Build the blackout box; charge everything (audit 5).	
Day 5	One dinner: roles, meeting points, the whole rehearsal (audit 6).	
Day 6–7	Copy-canning shop + fill the dashboard on page 2. You are at baseline.	

**Want the fridge-magnet version?** The printed **Field Card Pack** — 12 laminated reference cards (water, rehydration, bleeding, stay-or-go, comms) — is free for referring 3 friends to the Thursday Briefing: [systemsfaillab.com/refer](https://systemsfaillab.com/refer)

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