UK EDITION

The Civilian Survival Handbook

What to do in a nuclear alert, a long power cut, a water outage and extreme weather

Calm, practical steps for UK homes and flats, with colour diagrams, checklists and every fact sourced to official guidance.



- ✓ Go in, stay in, tune in: the shelter room
- ✓ Safe water, including the official bleach method
- ✓ Power, light, heat and food, safely
- ✓ First aid, toilets and comms
- ✓ Floods, storms, snow and heatwaves
- ✓ Fill-in plan pages and cut-out cards

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Cut-out cards 175

If you only read 10 pages

Short on time? Read these ten pages in this order. Then fill in the **Emergency numbers** and **Our shelter room** pages in Chapter 13 and cut out the cards at the back. That takes about an hour and covers most of what matters.

1. **Find your situation** — 7
   Eight emergencies, the first steps for each, and where to turn next. Chapter 1.
2. **Go in, stay in, tune in** — 21
   The UK's official steps for a radiation or chemical alert. Chapter 2.
3. **Choosing the best room** — 22
   Where to shelter in a house or a flat. Chapter 2.
4. **The shelter room** — 23
   What to keep there, and for how long. Chapter 2.
5. **How much water you need** — 37
   3 litres per person per day, and how to store it. Chapter 3.
6. **Making other water safer** — 40
   Filter, boil, tablets, and the official bleach method. Chapter 3.
7. **Carbon monoxide** — 71
   The danger in every power cut. What never to burn indoors. Chapter 5.
8. **The bag method** — 90
   A toilet when you cannot flush. Chapter 7.
9. **CPR for adults** — 105
   Six steps that save lives while help is coming. Chapter 8.
10. **What goes in a go bag** — 126
    One bag per person, packed before you need it. Chapter 10.

How the book works

Chapter 1 is for right now. If something has just happened, start there. Chapters 2 to 12 explain each topic in depth, survival-first: shelter, water, power, heat, food, toilets, first aid, comms, leaving home, weather, then money and your street.

Each chapter ends with a "to do this week" checklist, a one-page summary to pin up, and its sources. Small numbers in the text ([1]) point to that list. Every source is an official body, with the web address and the date we read it. "Our calculation" means our own arithmetic; "our suggestion" means our advice, not an official instruction.

01

CHAPTER 01

The First Hour

Open the book here if something has just happened. Find your situation below, do the short list of steps in order, then turn to the chapter it points to. Most UK emergencies are short, and most of what keeps you safe in the first hour costs nothing.

IN THIS CHAPTER

→ Find your situation

→ Power cut

→ Water off, or a boil water notice

→ Emergency Alert, radiation or chemical alert

→ You smell gas

→ Carbon monoxide alarm sounds

→ Flooding expected

→ Someone is very ill or unconscious: call 999

→ You are told to leave home

→ The first six hours

→ The rest of the first day

→ First hour, first day, first week

→ Prepare in one weekend

Find your situation

What has just happened?

Find your situation. Each has a first-hour action block in Chapter 1.

Power cut
105 (NI 03457 643 643)
Then Chapter 4

Water off or boil notice
Your water company
Then Chapter 3

Emergency Alert: radiation or chemical
Go in, stay in, tune in
Then Chapter 2

You smell gas
0800 111 999 (NI 0800 002 001)
Then Chapter 5

CO alarm sounds
Get out, fresh air, get advice
Then Chapter 5

Flooding expected
Floodline 0345 988 1188
Then Chapter 11

Someone very ill or hurt
999 or 112
Then Chapter 8

Told to leave home
Go bags, follow instructions
Then Chapter 10

Numbers: Be Ready; National Gas; HSENI; GOV.UK flood warnings; NHS. Check them once a year.

Each block below gives you the first minutes and the first hour. Do the steps in order: stay safe first, then find out what has happened, then protect what you have.

If this has happened	Start here	Then read
Power cut	Power cut	Chapter 4
Water off, or a boil water notice	Water off	Chapter 3
Emergency Alert, radiation or chemical alert	Emergency Alert	Chapter 2
You smell gas	Gas	Chapter 5
Carbon monoxide alarm sounds	CO alarm	Chapter 5
Flooding expected	Flooding	Chapter 11
Someone is very ill or unconscious	Call 999	Chapter 8
You are told to leave home	Leaving home	Chapter 10

GOOD TO KNOW

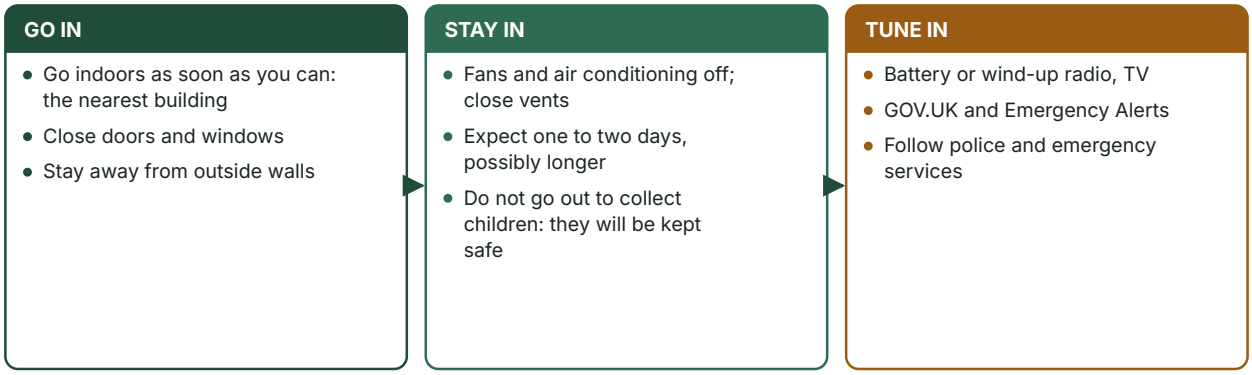
Our suggestion: write the key numbers from this chapter on paper and keep them with your torch. A list on a phone with a flat battery is no help. There is a fill-in page for them in Chapter 13.

Go in, stay in, tune in

For a radiation emergency, the UK's official advice has three parts: **go in, stay in, tune in** [5,6]. Be Ready gives the same advice for a chemical emergency, if you are outside nearby [5].

Go in, stay in, tune in

The UK's official advice in a radiation emergency (UKHSA, GOV.UK Be Ready)



Sources: UKHSA, What to do in a radiation emergency; GOV.UK Be Ready. See Chapter 2.

STEP BY STEP

1. **Go in.** Go indoors as soon as you can and stay there. Close doors and windows and keep away from outside walls [5,6].
2. **Use the nearest building.** Do not travel home to shelter (our reading of [6], which says to go indoors as soon as you can). Ready.gov says the safest buildings have brick or concrete walls [7].
3. **Stay in.** Turn off all fans and air conditioning. Close all outside doors, windows and vents, including trickle vents in windows, if you can [6].
4. **Do not go out to collect children** from school or nursery if you have been told to stay indoors. Staff will give advice and keep them where they are [6].
5. **Pets:** if you do not know where your pet is, do not go out to find it. Once inside, do not let pets out [6].
6. **Tune in.** Follow the news and official UK advice on GOV.UK for what to do next [6]. Use radio, TV and the police or emergency services too [1,5].
7. **Medicines:** if you take regular medication, contact NHS 111 online or by phone rather than leaving the building [6].

You cannot see radiation, so official information is your guide, not what you see out of the window (our suggestion).

SAFETY FIRST

Vehicles and tents do not give enough shelter from significant radiation. If you are in one, move to a building safely, without taking needless risks [6]. The US CDC says: if you are in a car, get inside a building right away [9].

The CMO steps, in order

These are the UK Chief Medical Officers' steps, published 16 December 2025, close to their own words [1]:

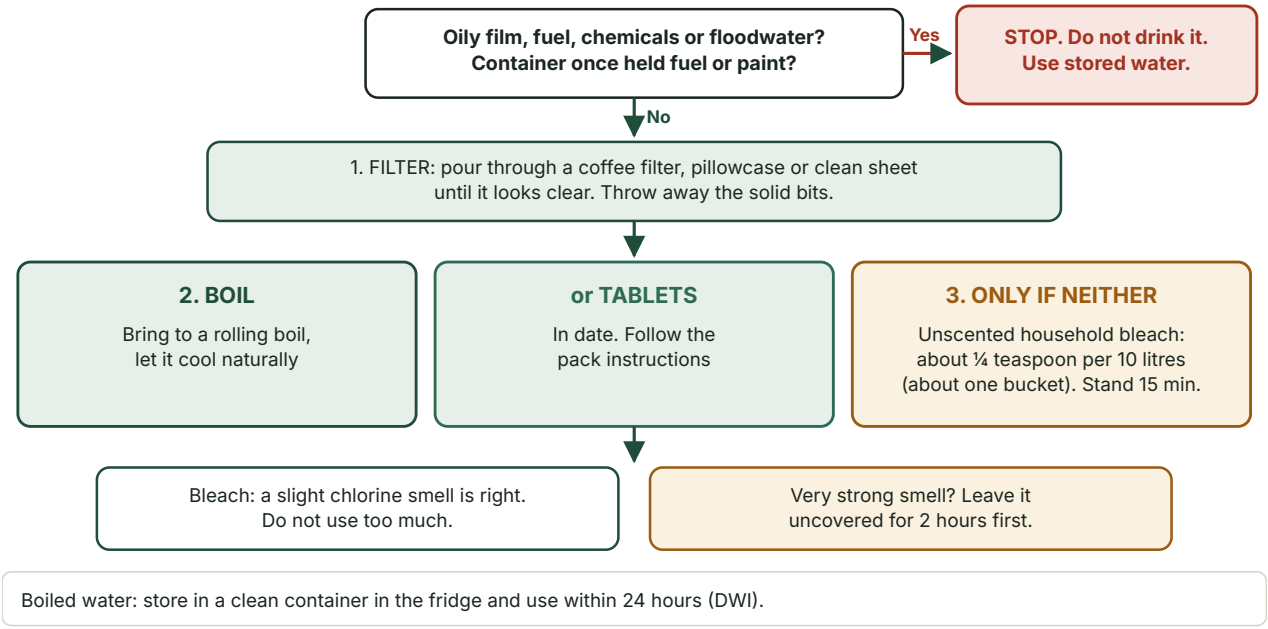
STEP BY STEP

1. Use a clean container to collect the water. Do not use a container that used to hold chemicals such as fuel or paint.
2. Once it is full, check that the water looks clean. If there is an oily film on top, do not drink it.
3. Find something to filter the water through: a coffee filter, pillowcase or bedsheet.
4. Pour the clean-looking water through the filter, then throw away any solid bits caught in it. Repeat until the water runs clear.
5. If you can, disinfect the filtered water by boiling it, or by using water purification tablets as long as they are in date.
6. If you cannot boil the water and you have no purification tablets, you can use regular household bleach, ideally unscented. Do not use too much. Add approximately one-quarter of a teaspoon of unscented household bleach for every 10 litres of water (approximately one bucket). Leave it to stand for 15 minutes.
7. The water should have a slight chlorine smell. If the smell is very strong, leave it uncovered for 2 hours before drinking.
8. Store the water in a cool, dark place.

The CMOs say water treated this way should be used for drinking rather than for washing your hands or cooking [1].

Making doubtful water safer

UK Chief Medical Officers (16 Dec 2025). Bottled or stored water first, always.



Boiled water: store in a clean container in the fridge and use within 24 hours (DWI).

Sources: UK CMOs, water and sanitation scripts (16 Dec 2025); DWI boil water notice. See Chapter 3.

Emergency numbers

The printed numbers come from the official pages cited in the chapters shown. Check them once a year.

Who	Number	Chapter
Emergency: police, fire, ambulance, coastguard	**999 or 112**	Ch 1, 8
NHS medical help, not an emergency	**111**	Ch 8
Power cut: England, Scotland, Wales	**105**	Ch 1, 4
Power cut: Northern Ireland (NIE Networks)	**03457 643 643**	Ch 1, 4
Gas emergency: Great Britain	**0800 111 999**	Ch 1, 5
Gas emergency: Northern Ireland	**0800 002 001**	Ch 1, 5
Floodline	**0345 988 1188**	Ch 1, 11
Text 999 (register first: text 'register' to 999)	**emergencySMS**	Ch 1, 9

Our own numbers

Who	Name	Number
Our water company		
Our GP surgery		
Our pharmacy		
Out-of-area contact		
Neighbour		
Neighbour		
Work		
School or nursery		
Vet		
Home insurer and policy number		

Our shelter room

Go in, stay in, tune in. Choose your room now, while it is calm (Chapter 2).

The best room in our home

Why: cellar / middle of the building / most walls between us and outside

Second choice

How we close it up

- [ ] Doors and windows shut
- [ ] Fans and air conditioning off
- [ ] Vents closed, including trickle vents
- [ ] Pets brought in if nearby

Keep ready (at least two days: our suggestion)

- [ ] Water: 3 litres per person per day
- [ ] No-cook food
- [ ] Battery or wind-up radio
- [ ] Torch and batteries
- [ ] Medicines and first aid kit
- [ ] Phone, charger, power bank
- [ ] Warm clothes and blankets
- [ ] Bin bags for outer clothing
- [ ] Bag toilet kit
- [ ] Something for children to do

Iodine tablets

Only if officials give them to you and tell you to take them. Iodised salt is not a substitute (UKHSA).

Cut-out cards. Six cards, two to a page. Cut along the dashed lines. Keep one set on the fridge, one in each go bag and one in the car. Every line comes from the chapter shown, where the source is given.

Power cut

CIVILIAN SURVIVAL HANDBOOK

1. Torch, not candles. Is it just you? Look outside.
2. Report it: 105 (NI 03457 643 643). Danger to life: 999.
3. Turn off irons, ovens, electric fires and fryers. Unplug the TV and computer.
4. Fridge and freezer doors shut. Note the time.
5. Never use a barbecue, camping stove or generator indoors.
6. Radio on. Check on neighbours.

Be Ready; UK CMOs. Chapters 1 and 4. Emergency: 999

Radiation or chemical alert

CIVILIAN SURVIVAL HANDBOOK

1. GO IN: get indoors as soon as you can, the nearest building.
2. Close doors, windows and vents, including trickle vents. Fans and air con off.
3. STAY IN: you may need to stay one to two days, possibly longer.
4. Do not go out to collect children: staff keep them safe.
5. TUNE IN: radio, TV, GOV.UK. Follow official advice.
6. Iodine tablets only if officials tell you to.

UKHSA; Be Ready. Chapter 2. Emergency: 999