

# A Household Toilet for Oregon Emergency Kits

## What?! Toilets in our emergency kits?

Well, yes. If the Big One strikes and water and sewer lines are broken, we'll need them, won't we? *Scientific American* (2011-05-03) says, "the Cascadia subduction zone is arguably the biggest seismic hazard in the U.S." And the United States Geologic Survey says that Oregon faces a 37% chance of a magnitude 8.0 or greater earthquake within the next 50 years. So ask yourself: What will you do when the toilets don't work? Do you have the knowledge and materials you need to build a safe, functional toilet for your family?

## Why aren't toilets on most lists of emergency supplies?

One reason is that emergencies like epidemics or snowstorms don't damage sanitation systems. But earthquakes do.

Another reason is that we just don't talk about toilets very much. Call it "toilet blindness".

When the earthquake hit northern Japan in March 2011, sewer and wastewater infrastructure was destroyed even in well-prepared communities. After the earthquakes in Christchurch New Zealand, people quickly built toilets appropriate for the emergency stage of the crisis. Now many people whose sewer service isn't restored yet are building beautiful ecologically sustainable toilets in their homes.



## How about just buying a camping toilet?

A camping toilet is not cheap and what do you do when it fills up? We've noticed that recommendations in most cities take for granted a disposal option. They assume that city officials will get sewers up and running. Or that they will send trucks around to pick up your bagged waste. This might work for a short term disruption of water or sewer service. But for a major earthquake, this could lead to an epidemic. We're pretty sure there are easier and better ways to prepare.

## So what's the solution?

***The Christchurch Twin No-Mix Emergency Toilet.*** It's our adaptation of a toilet designed by New Zealand emergency responders and ecological sanitation advocates.

- It's safe and manageable..
- You can get two buckets, lids, and a seat for less than \$20.
- You can use the buckets to store emergency supplies.
- "No-mix" means urine is separated from feces: pee has volume but is generally sterile; poo has pathogens but when you add sawdust, paper or peat moss, it composts down to small volume.

The how-to info (on the other side) tells you what you need to make Christchurch Twin and how to use it in an emergency.

"No-Mix" is one of the principles of long-term ecological sanitation. If sewer disruption continues, therefore, you can learn composting and recycling appropriate for the disaster recovery period. The rolling plastic carts that the Christchurch team has adapted for safe composting can also be used to store emergency supplies.

**Acknowledgements** A big thank you to the Compost Loo Team of the New Zealand Permaculture Emergency Response Network – James Bellamy, Lisa Johnston, Matt King, Gary Williams and Felicity Yellin. They've given us permission to use this toilet name and to adapt their instructions and nice drawings, which are posted at [www.composttoilets.co.nz](http://www.composttoilets.co.nz)