

NATION PREPARATION

Steady

The UK Household Resilience Manual

*Power cuts, floods, storms and winter.
Calm, practical, ready.*



NATION PREPARATION

Steady

The UK Household Resilience Manual

Power cuts, floods, storms and winter. Calm, practical, ready.

2026 edition, version 1.0. Facts, phone numbers and benefit figures correct as of October 2026.

Before you start

This manual is general information, not professional advice. It doesn't replace advice from the emergency services, your council, your energy or water company, the NHS, your insurer or a qualified professional. In an emergency, ring 999 and follow the instructions you're given at the time; they take priority over anything in this book.

Our recommendations are our own. Where we suggest going further than government guidance (for example, planning for seven days rather than the government's three), we say so. Nation Preparation is independent and is not connected to, or endorsed by, the UK Government, the British Army or any public body. Quoted material is used for reference and attributed in each chapter's source list.

Things change. Phone numbers, schemes, benefits and warning systems are reviewed by the organisations that run them. Everything in this edition was checked against primary sources in October 2026; check the source before relying on a figure, especially money figures. Nothing here is financial, legal or medical advice.

Safety. Never use a barbecue, camping stove, generator or patio heater indoors or in a garage: carbon monoxide kills without warning. Fit and test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

Crown copyright. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. Other sources are paraphrased and credited in each chapter's notes.

Your copy. You're welcome to print this manual and its appendices for your own household. Please don't resell or share the file publicly.

© 2026 Nation Preparation. All rights reserved.

Nation Preparation, 80A Ruskin Avenue, Welling, London DA16 3QQ

nationpreparation.co.uk

CONTENTS

What's inside

CHAPTER 1	
The Steady Mindset	5
CHAPTER 2	
Know Your Local Risks	10
CHAPTER 3	
The 72-Hour Plan	18
CHAPTER 4	
Water	25
CHAPTER 5	
Power Cuts	32
CHAPTER 6	
Storms and Floods	40
CHAPTER 7	
Cold, Heat and the Car	50
CHAPTER 8	
Low Chance, Big Impact	59
APPENDICES	
Forms and cards to print	69

CHAPTER 1

The Steady Mindset

In one minute

- Being ready isn't about expecting disaster. It's about having a few things sorted so a bad day stays a bad day.
- Feeling stressed when something goes wrong is normal. The aim isn't to feel nothing; it's to stay able to think.
- Most UK households aren't ready, and you can make a real start in an afternoon. In a 2026 government survey, 37% thought they had three days of bottled water, but only 4% actually had 3 litres per person per day for everyone at home. [1]
- When something happens, use **STEADY**: Stop and breathe, Take stock, Essentials first, Ask and check on others, Do one thing at a time, Your plan.
- Children take their cue from you. Calm, simple, truthful explanations work best.

A book for ordinary emergencies

There are no bunkers in this manual, and no stockpiles of tinned beans for the end of the world. The things that actually disrupt British households are ordinary: a storm takes the power off for a night, a burst main shuts off the water, a flood warning comes in at 2am, or the car gets stuck on a closed road in snow.

The government's new Be Ready campaign puts it the same way. It talks about being ready "for everyday emergencies like severe storms", and says being ready for three days "helps you manage while support reaches those in need." [2] That last part matters. When most households can look after themselves for a few days, the emergency services can get to the people who can't.

So this book has one job: help your household get through those few days calmly, safely, and without spending a fortune.

Where most of us are

In 2026 the government surveyed more than 10,000 UK adults about how ready they felt. [1]

- **13%** felt their household was largely or totally prepared for an emergency.
- **50%** felt only slightly or not at all prepared.
- **37%** said they had enough bottled water for three days. But when asked how many litres they actually had, only **4%** had three days' worth for everyone at home, at 3 litres per person per day. Most of us think we're more ready than we are.
- **23%** had a battery, solar or wind-up radio.

But almost three in four (**74%**) agreed there were effective things people can do to prepare.

[1] Most people know it's worth doing. They just haven't got round to it, usually because it feels big, vague, or a bit gloomy.

This manual tries to make it small, specific and calm. It's broken into small jobs, it's specific (how many litres, which numbers, what goes where), and it's written to be calm, not frightening.

Stress is normal, and useful in small doses

When the lights go out unexpectedly, your heart rate goes up. That's your body getting ready to act. The US Army's survival manual, written for soldiers cut off from their unit, describes stress plainly: "Stress is our reaction to pressure." It adds that "The goal is to have stress, but not in excess." [3]

A little stress sharpens you. Too much tips into what the manual calls distress, and that's when people make poor decisions. The signs it lists will be familiar to anyone who has had a rough week, never mind an emergency: difficulty making decisions, forgetfulness, constant worrying, carelessness, and snapping at people. [3] The NHS lists similar signs of everyday stress, including struggling to make decisions and being irritable. [4]

What helps, according to both: **anticipate what might happen and plan how you'd cope**. The Army manual names exactly that, anticipating what will cause stress and working out in advance how to cope, as two of the main ingredients in managing it. [3] The NHS, writing about ordinary life, says to "plan ahead for stressful days or events" and "set small targets you can easily achieve." [4]

That's the whole idea of this book. The planning you do on a quiet Sunday afternoon is what keeps you clear-headed when the power goes at 9pm in January.

Does preparing actually help you feel calmer?

There's some evidence that it does, though it isn't proof. In a 2019 Australian Red Cross study of 165 people who had lived through an emergency or disaster (reported in a 2023 Australian Journal of Emergency Management article), those who felt prepared reported lower stress and better recovery, and the more people did to prepare, the more prepared

they felt. [5] The researchers are careful to say this doesn't show cause and effect. We'll be careful too: being ready won't stop an emergency being upsetting, but it does give you something useful to do, and fewer things to worry about.

Be realistic, and stay hopeful

Two lines from the Army manual are worth keeping:

"See circumstances as they are, not as one wants them to be." [3] (para 1-16)

"Hope for the best, prepare for the worst." [3]

For a household, being realistic means two things. First, don't pretend it won't happen to you: storms, floods and power cuts happen across the UK every year. Second, don't catastrophise either. Most power cuts are fixed within hours. Most floods give some warning. And help does come.

STEADY: what to do in the first few minutes

The Army manual uses the word SURVIVAL as a memory aid, with a letter for each step of making good decisions when you're cut off. [3] Much of it is about being lost in the wilderness, which isn't much use in a semi in Swindon. So we've written our own version for homes. It's our own checklist, not the Army's or the government's.

S: Stop and breathe. Before you do anything, take a minute. The NHS calming breath: breathe in gently through your nose, counting 1 to 5 if it helps, then let it flow out through your mouth, counting 1 to 5 again. Don't force it. [6] A minute of this before you act beats ten minutes of rushing.

T: Take stock. What's actually happened? Is anyone hurt or in danger? Is it just your home or the whole street? What's still working: phone, water, gas, mobile signal?

E: Essentials first. Safety, then warmth and water, then light, then information. Danger to life means **999**. A power cut means **105**. A flood warning means following the warning's instructions (Chapter 6).

A: Ask and check. Ask for help if you need it, and check on others: a neighbour who lives alone, an older relative, someone with young children. A five-minute visit to someone who lives alone can make all the difference.

D: Do one thing at a time. Pick the next most useful job and finish it. Torches out. Fridge shut. Phones on low power. Lists help: the checklists at the end of each chapter are written for exactly this moment.

Y: Your plan. Get out the household plan you wrote in Chapter 3 and follow it. That's why you wrote it while things were calm.

Stick STEADY on the inside of a cupboard door, next to the fridge card.

Children: calm, simple, true

Children notice when adults are worried, and they fill gaps with their imagination. A few things help, based on NHS and British Red Cross guidance:

- **Check yourself first.** The Red Cross suggests talking about upsetting things when you feel able to, not in the middle of your own panic. [7] Take your STEADY minute first.
- **Simple, truthful explanations.** "The storm has broken a power line. People are working to fix it. We've got torches and blankets, so we'll be fine tonight." The Red Cross advises simple explanations and avoiding graphic images "that can stick in their minds." [7]
- **Honest reassurance.** The Red Cross suggests helping children see that big emergencies are extremely rare, and that when they happen there are people around to help. With everyday things like a power cut, you can say there are people whose job it is to fix it. [7]
- **Listen, don't dismiss.** The NHS advises listening carefully and not dismissing worries, and showing your child you understand how they feel. [8]
- **Keep routines.** The NHS notes that "children of all ages find routines reassuring." [8] Normal mealtimes and bedtimes help, even by torchlight.
- **Give them a job.** Children who are in charge of the torches or the board games feel useful, not helpless. (Our suggestion, not an NHS one. Many parents find it helps.)
- **Breathe together.** The NHS suggests a simple version for children: three deep, slow breaths, in for a count of three and out for three. [8]

If a child's worry carries on for a month or more, or you're concerned, the Red Cross suggests speaking to your GP. [7]

Looking after yourself afterwards

Feeling shaky, tired or tearful after an emergency is common, even once it's over. The NHS advises talking about your feelings to a friend, family member or health professional, and seeing a GP if you're struggling to cope. If you need help urgently but it isn't an emergency, call **NHS 111**. [4] If you need someone to talk to at any hour, **Samaritans** are free on **116 123**. [4]

Your Steady Mindset checklist

- ☐ I've read STEADY and put a copy inside a cupboard door
- ☐ I've tried the NHS calming breath once, when calm, so I know how it feels
- ☐ Everyone in the house knows: danger to life = 999, power cut = 105
- ☐ I've told the children, in a calm way, what we'd do if the power went off
- ☐ I've picked one neighbour or relative to check on in an emergency: _____

- ☐ I've booked an afternoon to work through Chapter 3 (the 72-Hour Plan): date _____
-

Sources for this chapter

1. Cabinet Office and Defra, *UK Public Survey of Risk Perception, Resilience and Preparedness 2026: Headline Findings*, gov.uk, published 19 August 2026 (core sample 10,791; official statistics in development). Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.
2. Cabinet Office, *Households encouraged to take small, simple steps to stay prepared in an emergency*, gov.uk, 22 October 2026; and Be Ready campaign homepage, beready.campaign.gov.uk. OGL v3.0.
3. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *ATP 3-50.21 Survival* (September 2018), Chapter 1 (paras 1-9 to 1-20, including 1-16 "Be realistic") and Figure 1-1. "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." Written for military personnel; the household adaptations here (including STEADY) are Nation Preparation's own. Nation Preparation is not connected with or endorsed by the US Army or the Department of Defense.
4. NHS, *Get help with stress*, [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk).
5. Richardson, Kelly and Mackay, "Australian Red Cross psychosocial approach to disaster preparedness", *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, July 2023, doi: 10.47389/38.3.31, reporting the 2019 Australian Red Cross study (Randrianarisoa et al. 2021).
6. NHS, *Breathing exercises for stress*, [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) (last reviewed 12 June 2026).
7. British Red Cross, *Talking with children about a major emergency* (session plan, 2024), [redcross.org.uk](https://www.redcross.org.uk).
8. NHS, *Anxiety in children*, [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk).

All web sources accessed 24 October 2026.

This chapter gives general information, not medical or mental health advice. If you're worried about your own or someone else's mental health, speak to your GP or call NHS 111. In an emergency call 999.