

How to Store Gasoline Long Term: Stockpiling Gas for Emergencies and Disaster Preparation

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In 2014, Americans consumed an average of 374.74 million gallons of gasoline daily. That comes out to over 1.5 gallons per adult each day.

In an absolute disaster situation where gasoline isn't readily available, the shortage will take a huge toll on our way of life and could affect our survival.

For these reasons, many smart-minded preppers are considering whether to stockpile gasoline.

Here we will go over:

- Should you stockpile gasoline?
- How long does gasoline last?
- Is it legal to stockpile gasoline?
- How much gasoline to stockpile
- How to store gasoline safely
- Gasoline alternatives

Should You Stockpile Gasoline?

There are all sorts of disaster situations which could put our gasoline in jeopardy. One of the most likely disasters to hit is a electromagnetic pulse (EMP), which could occur because of a nuclear attack, an EMP weapon, or solar flare. EMP would wipe out the electric grid and, depending on the size of the blast, could also fry electronics. That means gasoline pumps wouldn't work anymore.

Gasoline is also one of the first things to go during a war, as happened in the Bosnian war. And it is happening in Syria right now too.

But, just because gasoline would disappear in a SHTF situation, it doesn't mean you need to stockpile 10,000 gallons of it in a secret storage tank.

After a major SHTF disaster, you aren't going to need 2 gallons of gasoline per day to drive to work and the supermarket (hint: you won't be going to work anymore, and the supermarkets will be empty!).

What you WILL need a gasoline stockpile for is:

- Fuel for your Bug Out Vehicle
- Fuel for your gas generator
- Fuel for gas-powered tools (like a chainsaw)

How Long Does Gasoline Last?

When stockpiling gasoline, the first thing to remember is that it is PERISHABLE. Just like the rest of your prepper supplies, you should rotate your gasoline stockpile.

Exposure to air will cause gasoline to oxidize, which means the octane levels in the gasoline will change. This will cause sludgy buildup in your engine, which can clog and destroy it.

Never use old gasoline in an expensive engine! Because of oxidation, the gasoline might even become so stale that it won't turn on the generator or run the car – which would defeat the entire point of stockpiling gasoline.

Gasoline will probably hold up well for a few years so long as it isn't exposed to air (remember that even a small pinhole will let in air!). To play it safe, don't keep gasoline for more than a year.

There are stabilizers that you can add to gasoline to help it last longer, but you should still abide by the 1-year rule to play it safe when stockpiling gas.

Is It Legal to Stockpile Gasoline?

The EPA recommends only storing 1-5 gallons of gasoline, and the fire department recommends a maximum of 25 gallons. But these are just recommendations. Depending on where you live, you might have very different laws about storing gasoline.

For example, in New York, anyone with more than 110 gallons of gasoline in an underground storage tank must register. In California, gasoline must be stored in an approved container.

Before you stockpile gasoline, call your local fire department. They will know the laws and local fire codes regarding gasoline stockpiling.

How Much Gasoline to Store?

Since gasoline is perishable and needs to be rotated, never stockpile more than you can rotate in a 1-year period. So, that 10,000 gallon gasoline stockpile probably isn't a good idea!

To estimate how much gasoline you *absolutely must* have stockpiled, calculate:

- **How much gasoline you need to drive to your Bug Out Location**
- **How much gasoline you need to fuel your generator for 30 days**
- **How much extra gasoline you want to have on hand as a barter item**

As a general rule, your Bug Out Location should never be more than a full tank of gas away – or about 15 gallons depending on your type of car.

Assuming that you are only using the generator when necessary, then you'd need about 60 gallons of gasoline for a 30-day stockpile. The more alternative heating and lighting supplies you have, the less you will need to rely on your generator.

Use your own judgment to determine how much (if any) gasoline you want to stockpile as a survival barter item. I'd personally keep the gasoline stockpiles for myself and use items I know how to make myself for bartering instead.

How to Store Gasoline Long Term

You want to stockpile gasoline in case of a disaster...but stockpiling a highly-flammable liquid can be a recipe for disaster! If you are going to store gasoline, then you better make sure it is done safely.

The most common way of storing gasoline is those red plastic cans which are usually 1-5 gallons in size. This is fine if you just want to stockpile a few can's worth. Even with this small amount of gasoline, you still need to follow precautions:

- Store gasoline in a room not attached to the home, such as a shed.
- Keep the gasoline away from all heat sources, including direct sunlight, heaters, and hot water heaters. Remember that gasoline vapors are heavy and can travel to ignition sources! Keep the gas at least 50 feet away from pilot lights.
- Never smoke in the same room where gasoline is stored.
- Fill the gasoline tank to 95% to allow for expansion
- Store gasoline in a well-ventilated area – never in the trunk of your car!
- Choose smaller gasoline containers to make rotating your stockpile easier.

If you want to stockpile more gasoline, then you will need to make an underground storage tank.

Alternatives

I've got a relatively small amount of gasoline stockpiled in case of an emergency. The reason that I'm not stockpiling huge amounts is because *I don't want to be dependent on a commodity like gasoline.*

Instead of investing in a fancy underground storage setup, I am putting my time and money into renewable energies – like solar power and biodiesel. The best thing about these fuel and energy sources is that they are knowledge based.

I can't lug around 500 gallons of gasoline with me in a Bug Out situation, but my knowledge of how to make solar panels will come with me!

comments

1. **Ron**

July 30, 2019 at 2:04 am

Informative article, I live in California (earthquake country and political thing are getting crazier) and starting to stockpile food, water etc. stocking gasoline also. Just looking for all information I can to do it right.

2. **Broadwing**

November 3, 2019 at 8:22 pm

Back in 1976 I deployed to West Germany on Brigade 76 out of Fort Carson. We took our equipment and POL products from K-Towns storage facility's pre positioned war stocks in a West Germany. I signed for a Jeep and was issued 4 NATO 5 Gallon Fuel Jerry Cans full of regular gas. The storage info on the receipt stated the gas was from 1974 with stabilizer added in 1975. We used our first can while on a FTX at Wildflecken Army training area. Worked perfectly even after being in climate controlled storage for 2 years.

3. **J Clark**

January 27, 2020 at 6:49 am

Several times in my life I have lived in rural or semi rural areas, the sorts of places where gas stations are few & far between, and not open 24/7, more like 7am til 4pm. You must discipline yourself to fill up whenever you can. Sort of like the old saying, never skip a chance to pee.

I don't like storing gasoline. It's volatile, and ignites easy. The red plastic jerry cans are very heavy to lift & hold while you pour gas down a filler pipe. At 72 years old I use 20 litre containers. That's about 5 gallons, weighing about 40 pounds, so think about your strength as the cans come in 1, 2, 2-1/2, 5, & 10 gallon sizes. An American gallon is just under 4 litres and a Canadian gallon is about 4-1/2 litres.

At home I keep mine in a garden shed quite far from the pilot lights of furnace & hot water heater. At the cottage I keep the cans

in the outhouse, quite far from the gas barbecue, woodstove, and my shop. I use a lawn tractor, leaf blower, and portable generator (4 when the power goes out). I have rechargeable leaf blower, plug-in lawnmower, battery trolling motor, & electric sawsall for trimming trees & brush.

4. **John Moco**

February 27, 2021 at 6:40 pm

I do a midsized solar panel tied to a heavy duty battery normally used for my truck, (F150) and plug in a 2600W inverter. Recharge all the batteries for the electric tool collection. Good thing is that I can also run practically anything else in my house.

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