Home Hardening: Fortify Your Home Before Disaster Strikes

Your home is your most important survival asset — and most of the improvements that make it resilient cost less than €50 and an afternoon of your time.

Introduction

Emergency preparedness conversations focus heavily on what to put in a bag. But the most critical survival environment in any non-evacuation scenario is your home. The building you shelter in, the utilities running through it, and the neighbourhood surrounding it are all variables you can actively improve — before any emergency forces you to rely on them.

Home hardening is not about turning your house into a bunker. It is about addressing the specific, predictable ways that common emergencies compromise a normal residential property. A locked door that can be kicked in is a vulnerability. Utilities you don't know how to shut off in an emergency are a hazard. A home with no stored water is a crisis waiting to happen.

This guide covers the five practical areas where targeted, affordable action makes your home meaningfully more resilient.

Securing Entry Points

In a civil unrest scenario, power outage, or any event that raises community tension, the physical security of your entry points determines how safely you can shelter in place.

1. **Upgrade door frames, not just locks.** The weakest point of most residential doors is not the lock — it is the door frame. A standard door frame splinters within two kicks. Install a door frame reinforcement kit (steel plates that extend the lock's strike plate across the full depth of the frame). These cost €30–60 and take under an hour to install.
2. **Add a secondary security measure to sliding doors.** Sliding glass doors can be lifted out of their tracks or forced open with minimal force. Place a cut-down wooden dowel or metal security bar in the track when the door is closed. This is a €0 improvement that eliminates a common point of entry.
3. **Check window latch quality.** Standard window latches are designed for convenience, not security. Add secondary window locks (available at any hardware store for €5–10 per window) to any ground-floor or easily accessible windows.
4. **Use your PREPORA duct tape to seal gaps during air quality or chemical emergencies.** 10 metres of industrial-strength tape can seal the gaps under doors and around window frames to meaningfully reduce particle and vapour infiltration.

Power and Utilities

Not knowing how to shut off your utilities in an emergency can turn a manageable incident into a catastrophe.

1. **Locate and test your electrical main switch today.** Your household's main electrical breaker is typically in a fuse box near the meter. Open the cover, identify the main switch, and confirm it functions. Label any unlabelled circuits now while it's not urgent.
2. **Locate your water main stopcock.** In most homes this is under the kitchen sink or where the supply pipe enters the building. Confirm you can turn it — older stopcocks can seize. If yours is stiff, apply a small amount of penetrating oil and test it now.
3. **Know your gas isolation valve location.** Gas meters have an inline isolation valve — usually a quarter-turn lever near the meter itself. If you smell gas after an emergency, this valve stops the supply to the entire property. Know where it is before you need it. If in doubt, call your gas supplier to show you.
4. **Have a backup charging strategy.** Your PREPORA power bank provides mobile device charging during outages. If you heat your home with gas and use an electric ignition, keep a box of long-reach matches nearby — many gas hobs and boilers can be manually ignited during a power failure.
5. **Consider a battery-backup LED lamp for your utilities area.** If you need to operate fuse boxes, stopcocks, or gas valves in the dark, you want hands-free lighting. A clip-on LED headlamp placed near your fuse box costs under €10 and solves a real problem.

Water Storage at Home

Running water is one of the first things to become unreliable after a flood, earthquake, or major infrastructure event. Storing water costs almost nothing and can be critical.

1. **Establish a minimum household water reserve.** The target is 3 litres per person per day for 72 hours plus an additional reserve for hygiene and cooking. For a family of four, that is 36 litres of drinking water as a baseline. Start with this and build toward a 2-week supply over time.
2. **Use purpose-designed food-grade water containers.** Dedicated water storage containers (5–20 litre rigid containers with secure lids) are available for €5–20 each. Avoid repurposing containers that held non-food substances — chemical residues leach into water over time.
3. **Rotate your water supply.** Sealed containers of commercially treated water last 1–2 years. Filled tap water in clean containers should be replaced every 6 months. Label containers with fill dates.
4. **Know your emergency water sources.** Your home's hot water tank holds 80–150 litres of water that is safe to drink in most emergencies. The water inside toilet tanks (not the bowl) is also potable in a clean system. Know where your home's reserve water is before you need it.
5. **Pair stored water with your PREPORA water filter.** If stored supplies run out, your PREPORA portable water filter and purification tablets allow you to safely drink from any available water source — including collected rainwater, garden water butts, or streams.

Safe Room Concept

In a prolonged emergency, having a designated fallback shelter room within your home significantly improves both safety and psychological resilience.

Identify one interior room — preferably one without exterior windows, or with minimal windows — as your household's safe room. Ideally this is a ground-floor room if your risk profile is primarily security-related, or an upper-floor room if flooding is a primary concern.

Pre-position the following in or near this room:

- Your PREPORA kit or a subset of its most critical items
- Emergency candles, matches, and a flashlight
- A battery-powered radio
- One emergency blanket per person
- A three-day supply of water and food rations
- A basic first aid kit

The purpose of the safe room is not permanent habitation — it is a known, equipped location your entire household can converge on when an emergency escalates beyond a manageable level. Everyone in the household should know where it is and what is stored there.

Neighbourhood Coordination

Your neighbourhood is a resource. People who know their neighbours and have made basic coordination plans fare significantly better in emergencies than those who don't.

1. **Know your immediate neighbours by name.** Introduce yourself if you haven't. Exchange mobile numbers. This takes five minutes and creates a communication network that costs nothing.
2. **Identify vulnerable neighbours proactively.** Elderly residents living alone, households with young children, and neighbours with disabilities or medical conditions may need assistance in an emergency. Knowing who they are before an event means you can include them in your response plan.
3. **Know your local emergency services contact points.** Beyond 112 (EU) or 999 (UK) / 911 (USA), identify your local police non-emergency number, your municipality's emergency management office, and your nearest physical emergency shelter location. Write these down and keep them with your kit documents.
4. **Join or start a neighbourhood alert group.** Many municipalities have text or app-based community alert systems. If yours does, sign up. If it doesn't, a basic group message thread between half a dozen trusted neighbours provides significant early warning capability.

Key Takeaways

- The strongest door lock is worthless on a weak door frame — reinforce the frame, not just the hardware.
- Know how to shut off electricity, water, and gas at the source before any emergency makes this urgent.
- Store a minimum of 36 litres of water for a family of four as a 72-hour baseline; pair this with your PREPORA water filter for extended resilience.
- Designate a safe room with pre-positioned supplies and ensure every household member knows where it is.

> ***Home hardening is the preparedness investment with the highest return — most improvements cost under €50 and require no specialist skills.***

Part of the PREPORA Survival Guide series. Download the full guide at prepora-gear.com/guides.