

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS®

PREP 101



EMERGENCY KIT

EMERGENCY KITS 101

Introduction: Why Have an Emergency Kit?

Staying at home is ideal in an emergency, but some circumstances (like a hurricane or a flood) require evacuation. That's why a portable, short-term emergency kit is an essential part of an emergency preparedness plan. Often called 72-hour kits, bug-out bags, or grab-and-go kits, these kits are meant to help you and your loved ones survive on your own until help arrives. Emergency response



agencies such as FEMA and the Red Cross can't help everyone right away when responding to a disaster. So, an emergency kit should contain enough supplies to last at least three days. However, it's best to have as much as you can reasonably carry a significant distance if you had to evacuate on foot. Think about your specific circumstances as you purchase or assemble your kit(s). Your needs will vary depending on the type of disaster, how many people you are providing for, your climate, and other factors.

It's best to keep emergency kits easily accessible near an exit in your home. This way you'll be able to grab them during a home evacuation and carry them with you to a safe place. Backpacks work the best because they keep your arms and hands free. Rolling duffel bags or suitcases also

work well for transporting kits—especially if you want to include extra water or other items that may be too heavy to carry. You might consider storing additional kits in vehicles, at work, or in a child's school backpack as appropriate.

1. What goes in an Emergency Kit?

If you and your family had to survive for three or more days away from home with only what you could carry, what would you need? Below are several categories of items to include in your kit (we've also included a detailed checklist at the end of the module).

Water- Water is one of the most important items in an emergency kit. As we learned in Water Storage 101, each person should have at least two quarts of drinking water per day. Three to five gallons is preferable, but would need to be kept in another container—like a boxed water kit that could be put in a car or a rolling cart. Keep in mind that one quart of water weighs about two pounds. Keep as much water as you can carry in your kit, and include items that will allow you to treat water from other sources you may find. You can do this by boiling, chlorinating, distilling, or filtering.¹

Food- Each emergency kit should have at least three days' worth of non-perishable food. Consider items that are ready-to-eat, calorie dense, and provide energy. Keep in mind the water needs for foods that require rehydration or boiling— but try to make those items as minimal as possible. They are better for long-term use, rather than in a kit. Meals-ready-to-eat and high calorie food bars work better in emergency kits because they don't require any extra gear or preparation. It's also nice to include a few small treats, especially for children (but not at the expense of more nutritious foods).

Shelter- Though FEMA and the Red Cross set up emergency shelters as quickly as they can, you may need to stay in your own shelter. This shelter might be a tent, tarp, or other type of portable shelter. Make sure you're proficient at setting up the kind of shelter you carry, since you may have to set it up in less-than-ideal circumstances (like at night or in a storm).

Items That Provide Warmth or Cooling-

Depending on the season, you'll need items that keep you warm or cool. Make sure the items you carry are appropriate for the season (see the Emergency Kit Checklist for our suggestions).

Light Sources- If you evacuate at night or shelter outdoors, you'll need a light source. Light sources can also help if you're sheltering indoors without electricity. Be sure to update your kit to have lights with LED bulbs, which last much longer than old filament bulbs.

Tools- Something as basic as a pocket knife can be extremely useful in an emergency. Carry tools that you are comfortable using and that meet your needs (see the Emergency Kit Checklist for our suggestions).

A First Aid Kit- You, a family member, or someone outside of your family may get injured during a disaster. Having (and knowing how to use) a first aid kit can save a life. You can purchase or assemble a first aid kit, depending on what's the best fit for your needs. We've included a list at the end of first aid items to include if you assemble one yourself.

Communication Devices- Having a portable radio can help you stay up to date on what's happening in your area. Make sure you have extra batteries. You can also use a hand-cranked or solar-powered radio. A cell phone could also help you communicate with others, as long as cellular towers in the affected area are operational. A whistle for signaling your location to rescuers is another crucial communication item to include.

Sanitation Items- During an emergency, you'll need a way to maintain cleanliness. This is especially true if you shelter outdoors. Think of the items you use every day for cleaning and personal hygiene. Include those items that will

help you stay clean and comfortable (see the Emergency Kit Checklist for our suggestions).

Extra clothing- If you have to leave home in a hurry, you may only have time to grab your emergency kit. Make sure that kit contains a full change of clothes that is appropriate for the season, including sturdy walking shoes. Store clothes in plastic zip-top bags to protect them from smoke and water damage. Keep in mind that you might stay a few days in a mass shelter or other building away from home, so consider carrying clothes that are comfortable to sleep in.

Cash- In a major disaster, the electricity may be out. ATMs and credit/debit card readers may be down. Having cash on hand can help you buy items you need. Keep cash in small bills so it's easier to get change if you need it.

Important papers- Some disasters, such as house fires or floods, can destroy a house and everything in it. If your house is destroyed or severely damaged, you may lose important identification and legal documents. Not to mention irreplaceable family keepsakes. Carry copies of important documents that will help you prove your identity and ownership of property for insurance purposes. Consider including digital backups of these documents as well as photos, etc.

Stress-relieving items- An emergency as minor as a temporary power outage can cause significant stress, especially for children. Items like books, playing cards, toys, and games can help relieve stress and keep you and your family, roommates, friends, or neighbors occupied during waiting periods. Special needs items- If you or a family member require special medications or have physical impairments, make sure you can provide for those needs in an emergency. Consider talking to your doctor about getting extra prescriptions or special equipment you may need during an evacuation.

2. Transporting, Maintaining, and Using Your Kit

Though you may be able to evacuate in a vehicle during a disaster, plan as though you'll have to walk. Make sure kits are an appropriate size and weight for the people carrying them. Store your kit in a portable container such as a back pack or duffel bag. If your kit weighs more than you can realistically carry for long distances, consider something with wheels. In recent years, many companies have started selling school backpacks with wheels. Also consider wheeled duffel bags or suite cases. You may want one of these for extra water, food, and other items in addition to your main kit. Those with physical impairments that require a wheelchair may need to store their kit in a bag that can attach to the chair. Others may need someone to carry their kit for them.

An emergency kit requires some basic maintenance. Food, chemical lightsticks, batteries, warm packs, and some first aid items expire. Children outgrow clothes. In addition to these factors, some kit items should be traded out seasonally. Spring and fall are good times to check kits and trade out items. As items are approaching expiration, consider using them up in an evacuation drill. Be sure you have replacement items beforehand, so there isn't a time you are without a complete kit.

To reduce stress and increase your chances of survival, learn to use the items in your kit before an emergency. Items like shelters, fire strikers, cook stoves, hand tools, and first aid items take practice to use efficiently. Practice using these and other items on camping trips, in the backyard, or during practice evacuation drills. Consider taking first aid and outdoors-related classes. In an emergency, what you know may be as important as what you have.

EMERGENCY KIT ITEM CATEGORIES

Water	Communications
Food	Sanitation
Shelter	Clothing
Warmth/Cooling	Cash
Lighting	Important Papers
Tools	Stress Relievers
First Aid	Special Needs

3. Types of Kits

Though you'll likely store your main emergency kits near an exit in your home, an emergency might occur while you're away. That's why it's a good idea to have additional kits in your vehicle, work, and/or school. And don't forget about your pets. Here are some additional kits to consider:

Vehicle Kits: These kits can contain the same items as your main emergency kit, but should include additional items you may need on the road. These items might include:

- Jumper cables
- Snow chains or cables
- A shovel
- Food or food bars that will store in fluctuating temperatures
- Extra water
- Comfortable shoes in case you need to walk
- Toilet paper and other sanitary items (wipes, hand sanitizer)
- First aid kit
- Other items you would need if stranded in your car for several days in extreme (hot or cold) weather

Work Kit: A kit kept at your place of work should contain all the basics of a standard kit. If you have room for a standard kit in your desk or office, that's a good idea. If not, create a kit with the same elements, but on a smaller scale. Don't scrimp on water or food to save space—cut back on the items you think would be less vital if you had to stay at your office for a few days sheltering in place.

MAINTAIN YOUR KIT

1. Check expiration dates on food, chemical lightsticks, batteries, warm packs, and certain first aid items.
2. Trade out seasonal items as appropriate.
3. Use items close to expiration in evacuation drills.
4. Make sure clothing still fits.

School Kit: If an emergency strikes while your child is at school, having a small emergency kit in their backpack will help comfort them. Be sure to check with your school administration to see what preparations they have made for the students and staff at the school so you can plan accordingly. Also, check with the school administration to see if the items in your child's kit are allowed at school. This kit should be minimal so it won't weight down their backpack too much. These items might include:

- Food and water (even just one water bottle and a food ration bar)
- A copy of the family emergency plan with phone numbers of contacts to call
- An emergency whistle
- Books or toys
- Comfort items
- A treat or two
- A change of clothing

Pet Kit: If you have to leave pets at home, leave extra food and water. If you're able to take your pet with you, make sure the shelter accepts pets. Be sure to have:

- Extra food and water
- Leash or harness
- Pet carrier (for smaller pets)
- Veterinary records and license
- Medication if needed

Conclusion

Disasters can strike without warning. It's important to be as prepared as possible. As Max Mayfield, former Director of the National Hurricane Center, has said, "Preparation through education is less costly than learning through tragedy." Emergency kits are one way to gain confidence that your family's needs will be met as you move toward safety or ride out a storm.



QUICK REFERENCE

- Kits should be easy to carry and contain the essentials to see you through at minimum the first three days of an emergency (ideally more).
- Kits should be in a portable container (backpacks or rolling duffel bags are great).
- Your kit should be kept in a place where it is easy to access in case of an evacuation (and so you can regularly rotate out expired or outdated items).
- Use the provided checklists to build your kits.
- Use the Kit Distribution list to record which person's kit contains which important item if you need to distribute group-use or heavy items among the different packs.
- You could use a second copy of the distribution list to track the expiration dates of the kit's contents so you know when to rotate items without pulling everything out of the pack.

EMERGENCY KIT ACTIVITIES

- Talk to your household members or family about the items you use every day that would be important for you to have in an emergency.
- Help children understand the reason for having an emergency kit, and what items are best to put in a kit, versus some items they might want to put in. (It's a good idea to put at least one or two comfort items in for each person, adult or child. A favorite blanket, a book, art supplies, etc.).
- Build or select your emergency kits together, and select the best places to store them so they will be accessible in an emergency when you need to evacuate your home.
- Simulate an emergency evacuation. Evacuate to a local park, school, or church. Have each person in your group think about items that would have made your "stay" more comfortable, and think of ways to incorporate them into their kits (but always without sacrificing the essentials).



IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

1 Your kit should be in a portable container located near an exit so you can grab it on your way out of the house in a serious emergency. Do not overload your kit—you may have to carry it long distances to reach safety or shelter.

2 Personalize your kit. Make sure you will fill the needs of each family member.

3 Keep a light source in the top of your kit so you can find it quickly in the dark.

4 Enclose the extra clothing, matches, personal documents, and other items that could be damaged by smoke or water in plastic zip-top bags to protect them. If it's raining when you have to evacuate, you will appreciate dry clothes.

5 Consider the needs of elderly people as well as those with handicaps or other special needs. For example: for babies store diapers, washcloth, ointment, bottles and pacifiers, and other special supplies.

6 Each family member should have their own kit with food, clothing, and water. Distribute heavy items between kits.

7 Inspect your kit at least twice a year. Rotate the food and water. Check children's clothing for proper fit. Adjust clothing for winter or summer needs. Check expiration dates on batteries, light sticks, heat packs, food, water, and first aid items.

YOUR EMERGENCY KIT CHECKLIST

Your emergency kit should meet your needs for 3 days minimum.

The following is a list of items we recommend to be in your Emergency Kit. Be sure to consider individually each family members' emotional, physical, etc. well being.

Portable Container

- Durable, water-resistant backpack, frame pack, day-pack, or duffel bag
- Rolling suitcase/cart if needed for heavy items

Water

- As much water as you can carry (extra portable water: 3-5 gallons of water stored for sanitation and drinking)
- Method of water filtration and treatment

Food

- Minimum 3-day supply of food: Food ration bars, meals-ready-to-eat.

Warmth and Shelter

- Windproof/waterproof/ strike anywhere matches
- Second method to start a fire
- Tent/shelter
- Wool blend blanket/ sleeping bag
- Emergency reflective bag/ blanket
- Hand and body warm packs
- Poncho
- Lightweight stove and fuel

Light Sources

- LED Flashlight w/ batteries
- Candle
- Lightsticks
- LED Headlamp
- Hand-crank LED flashlight

Tools

- Pocket knife
- Shovel/trowel
- Hatchet or axe
- Sewing kit
- 50-foot nylon rope
- Multi tool
- Duct tape

First Aid

- First-aid kit and supplies
- Burn gel and dressings
- Potassium Iodide Tablets
- N95 respirator mask

Communications

- Radio with batteries alternate power sources
- Whistle with neck cord

Personal Sanitation

- Toilet paper/tissues
- Toothbrush and paste
- Hand sanitizer/soap
- Sanitary napkins/tampons
- Comb
- Razor
- Shampoo/Conditioner

Extra Clothing

- A complete outfit of appropriate clothing for each family member. Include extra socks, underwear, hat, sturdy shoes and gloves (Include clothing that will be comfortable to sleep in)

Important Papers

- Copies of documents important to your family (such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, wills, insurance forms)
- Phone numbers you might need

Stress Relievers

- Games, books, hard candy, inspirational reading
- For children: small toys, paper and pen, favorite security items

Money

- At least \$20 in small bills

Money

- Extra food and water
- Camp stove
- Mess kits and other cooking equipment
- Sun block
- Insect repellent
- Snake bite kit
- Special medication or other needs
- Prepaid cell phone

Custom Items

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ADDING TO YOUR EMERGENCY KIT

Auto Kit

- Jumper Cables
- Tire chains
- Extra water and temperature-stable food
- Oil, washer fluid, and transmission fluid
- Shovel
- Ice melt or sand for winter traction
- Sturdy and comfortable shoes
- A change of clothes
- Rain gear
- Blankets or emergency bags
- Light sticks
- Flares
- Car Jack
- Tire iron

Baby/Toddler Kit

- Formula
- Bottles
- Snacks for toddlers
- Diapers
- Wipes (handy for more than just baby!)
- Changes of clothes
- Onesies
- Binky/pacifier
- Toys
- Blankets

School Kit

- Small water bottle
- Food ration bar
- Small first aid kit (some bandages and single-use antibiotic ointment packets)

- Additional snack/treat
- Emergency bag
- Emergency whistle

Work Kit

- As much food and water as you can store in your work space
- Change of comfortable clothes (in case you shelter in place at work)
- Blanket
- First Aid kit
- Other items needed to shelter in place

EMERGENCY KIT LARGE ITEM DISTRIBUTION

PREP SCHOOL EMERGENCY KITS FIRST AID KIT LIST

Basic Items

- Adhesive bandages - 3/8 in x 1 1/2 in
- Adhesive bandages - 3/4 in x 3 in
- Butterfly closures
- Cotton tip applicators
- Finger splints
- Sterile gauze dressings - 2 in x 2 in
- Sterile gauze dressings - 4 in x 4 in
- Adhesive tape roll
- Examination gloves
- Instant cold compress
- Antibiotic ointments
- Alcohol prep pads
- Antiseptic towelettes
- First aid instructions

Custom or Special Needs Items

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Basic Items

- Fingertip bandages
- Knuckle bandages
- Spot bandage (7/8 in)
- Extra large bandage (2 in x 4 1/2 in)
- Non-adhesive sterile pad (2 in x 3 in)
- 3-inch Sterile roller gauze
- Round eye pad
- Iodine prep pad
- Porous cloth tape (1/2 in x 10 yards)
- Transpore 1-inch plastic tape
- Fine point tweezers
- EMT shears
- Tongue depressor
- First aid booklet
- Ammonia inhalant
- Pain reliever
- BurnFree® Single Dose Packets (0.125 oz.)
- Sterile trauma sponge 5 in x 9 in
- Moleskin (for blisters)
- QuikClot® (to stop bleeding)
- Sterile eye wash
- Bite and sting kit
- Triangular bandage
- Safety pins

