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ARE YOU READY FOR AN EMERGENCY?

2021 was a year of drought, wildfires, flooding, tornados, hurricanes, cyclones, and 19 major earthquakes.

If a disaster forced you to leave home in a hurry, what would you take with you if you had only minutes to decide?

By now everyone has heard the advice of civil and other authorities to have a “Go Bag” or an emergency escape kit ready in the event you must hunker down at home or leave unexpectedly. Disaster management organizations urge families to store and annually update emergency supplies. Even minor situations, such as water or electrical shutdowns in your area, may necessitate having to dip into emergency supplies for a few hours or even several days. Are you ready?

It's not that difficult to prepare in advance for an emergency, but it does take a modest investment of time, energy, and a small amount of money. Most of the items you will need can be obtained over-the-counter (OTC). But you have to get these things ready *before* you need them! Not only will shortages occur in an emergency, but some of the items may have to be ordered online since they may not be available in local stores.

Think about organizing things in four categories. (1) Go Bag, (2) Go Box, (3) identification documents, (4) water, food, and clothing. If you have to evacuate by car, these things should be light enough to stow in an automobile in a hurry. In case you are advised to stay put, store these in the same area that you will retreat to in an emergency.

The following are *suggested items* that can get you started. You may not need all of the supplies listed, depending on where you live. But begin now to plan for protecting your family and yourself from an unexpected adverse event.

Go bag. Your Go Bag (or backpack) is the key to being ready for an emergency. If you have to leave your residence at a moment's notice, this may be the only thing you will have time to grab. While the following list may seem like a lot, you can make the items in your bag as compact as possible. Buy them in travel-size containers. Plan for enough personal sundries, toiletries, and medications for three days.

Try to keep it simple. Put toiletry and sundry items in ziplock bags and label them. This helps to retrieve small items quickly when you need them. National chains like REI, Dick's Sporting Goods, and Alpine Shop (St Louis) carry ultra-compact survival gear that can easily fit in a Go Bag. Useful supplies are also available online for camping, outdoor survival, hiking, etc. Check your Go Bag every spring and fall to change out seasonal articles and replace expired items.

- Blanket (thermal foil emergency type)
- Bottle/can opener
- Cash for several days
- Cell phone, charger, and cables
- Coins (quarters for vending machines)
- Clothing (see below)
- Disinfecting wipes (disposable)
- Face masks (N95 type)
- First-aid kit
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Food (see below)
- Gloves, disposable (nitrile or vinyl)
- Hand, dish, and laundry soap
- Identification documents (see below)
- Keys (home and car, extra set)
- Kleenex tissues (travel packs)
- Magnifier glass with light
- Maps (paper, local and regional)
- Matches (water/windproof)
- Medications (OTC and Rx)
- Pens and notebook
- Personal toiletry items
- Personal sundry items
- Pillow (inflatable)
- Pocket knife
- Portable charger for devices (brick type)
- Rain poncho
- Reflective safety vest
- Safety pins, rubber bands
- Scissors
- Sewing kit (needle and thread)
- Shoes (sturdy, water-resistant)
- Toe and hand warmer packets
- Toilet paper
- Toilet seat covers
- Took kit or multi-tool
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Trash bags for storage/waste
- Water bottles (six-pack)
- Water purification tablets
- Whistles

Go Box. This is a plastic bin that can be used for larger supplies if you can evacuate by car. It should be light enough to stow in a car quickly. Your Go Box could contain some or all of these items:

- Blankets (heavy cloth)
- Camp stove and fuel
- Extra batteries (sized for all devices, check expiration dates)
- Extra water, food, and clothing (see below)
- Face dust/particle masks (extra N95)
- First aid kit for car
- Gloves (work type)
- Jumper cables
- Paper towels, shop towels
- Pot, skillet, utensils (camping size)
- Radio AM/FM (battery operated)
- Tape (waterproof for repairs)
- Toilet paper rolls
- Tool kit
- Zip lock bags, trash bags (extra)

Identification Documents. These are papers and certificates you may not have enough time to find and organize in an emergency. Make copies of these documents and keep them in a ziplock bag in your Go Bag or a dedicated location of your home so they can be rounded up at a moment's notice.

- Birth certificates (all family members)
- Car title
- Cash, credit, and debit cards
- Driver's license
- Durable Power of Attorney for health care (DPA)
- Insurance documents
- List of emergency contacts and meeting places (in the event of separation)
- Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Passport, passport cards
- Proof of address (utility bill, driver's license,
- Social Security and Medicare cards (if applicable)
- Vaccination record cards

Water, Food, and Clothing. Whether you have to evacuate or stay in your home, you should plan on enough water, non-perishable food, and clothing for at least three days.

Authorities suggest the following:

- Three days change of clothing, seasonal and/or plan for “layering.” (in Go Bag)
- Dried food kits (non-perishable for water reconstitution, three days supply)
- Protein-dense foods, such as protein bars, almond butter, raw nuts, etc.
- Water (ideally, 3 gallons per person. Small pouches for Go Bags are available online. Also larger cartons for Go Box.)

Special Needs. If you have special medical needs, are disabled, have pets, a baby or small children, or other circumstances that would make an emergency evacuation difficult, it is all the more important to prepare in advance for what you will do in a disaster.

Evacuation Plan. A forced evacuation can be stressful and usually happens amid challenging conditions and circumstances. The American Red Cross suggests that you not only make a plan but that you practice your emergency plan so that you and your family will know what to do in a crisis. Their website includes a page to help you make your disaster preparedness plan. It also includes a template you can download to put your family disaster plan in writing, including a contact list. See the link below.

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/make-a-plan.html>.

Last Minute List. Finally, make a list of items you have to add to your Go Bag at the last minute. Make the items easy to find and keep this list as short as possible. Keep the list near your Go Bag.

In the event of a disaster, if civil authorities order an evacuation, be prepared to leave immediately. Let friends know where you are. Keep your gas tank at least half full all the time, especially in winter. Your Go Bag will give you peace of mind, knowing that you're ready. Remember, no one is immune to disaster. Preparation is the most important key to your survival.

Note

If all this seems overwhelming to you, you can simply purchase a complete ready-to-go emergency backpack. They are available online, contain provisions for 3 days for at least two people including water and food, and cost anywhere from 100 to \$175. These backpacks contain most of the essential emergency items listed in this newsletter. A couple of examples you can check out online are Stealth Angel Outdoor & Urban Survival Backpack and Everlit Complete 72 Hours Survival Kit for Family.

References on file

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