

# Disaster Supplies Kit



## Why talk about a Disaster Supplies Kit?

After a disaster, local officials and relief workers will be on the scene, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it may take days. Basic services, such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones, may be cut off for days or even weeks. You may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You probably will not have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you will need. A Disaster Supplies Kit can help your family stay safe and be more comfortable after a disaster.

## What is a Disaster Supplies Kit?

A Disaster Supplies Kit is a collection of basic items that members of a household would probably need in the event of a disaster. The items are stored in a portable container(s) near, or as close as possible to, the exit door. Every household should assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit and keep it up to date. The number of people in a household and their ages and abilities will determine how many containers will be required to carry the kit items.

## What to Tell Children

Parents and caregivers should:

- Involve children in disaster preparedness at home so they are aware of the need to prepare and know what is being done. As they are able, have children help plan and assemble kits and put them where they will be ready if needed. Involving children is the first step in helping them know what to do in an emergency.
- Ask children to help the household remember to keep the kits updated by rotating the emergency food and water or replacing it every six months, and by replacing batteries as necessary. Children could make calendars and mark the dates for checking emergency supplies.
- Ask children to think of items that they would like to include in a Disaster Supplies Kit, such as books or games or nonperishable food items.
- Involve children in preparing plans and disaster kits for pets and other animals.

## Tips for Preparing Your Disaster Supplies Kits

- Keep items in separate airtight plastic bags. This will help protect them from damage or spoiling.
- Observe the expiration or "use by" date on stored food and water. If you have prepared your own containers of water, replace them every six months to ensure freshness.
- Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update medicines, clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications. You may find that the best solution is to gradually acquire a reserve by refilling prescriptions a little early, but always using those on hand first to avoid having the expiration dates lapse. Be sure they are stored to meet instructions on the label. It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during a disaster because stores may be closed or supplies may be limited. Keep copies of essential prescriptions with you at all times.

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- Use easy-to-carry containers for the supplies you would most likely need for an evacuation. Label them clearly. Think about using:
  - Large trash container with handles and a cover
  - Camping backpack
  - Duffel bag
  - Cargo container that fits on the roof of your vehicle
  - Insulated cooler that protects stored items in hot climates
- Store water separately to prevent damage from leakage.
- Always keep your cell phone with you, if you have one. Do not pack it in the kit. Consider getting an extra cell phone battery to keep with your Disaster Supplies Kit.

## Assembling a Disaster Supplies Kit

You should assemble and maintain a portable Disaster Supplies Kit that you can use at home or can take with you if you must evacuate. In addition, if you have a vehicle, you should always keep it stocked with basic emergency supplies.

In a disaster situation, you may need access to your Disaster Supplies Kit quickly—whether you are sheltering at home or evacuating. Store the items in your kit in sturdy, clearly labeled, easy-to-carry containers near the door, if possible. Duffel bags, backpacks, and covered trash receptacles are good candidates for containers. In addition to the three-day supply of food and water in your Disaster Supplies Kit, you should consider maintaining a two-week supply of food and water in your home.

Following a disaster, having the right supplies can help your household endure home confinement or evacuation.

Assemble the following items for use at home or in case you must evacuate. Pack them in easy-to-carry containers and label the containers clearly.

- Portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra, fresh batteries.
- Flashlight and extra, fresh batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Cash and coins.
- Copies of personal identification, such as driver's licenses, passports, and work identification badges, and copies of medical prescriptions and credit cards.
- An extra set of car keys and house keys.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Map of the area marked with places you could go and their telephone numbers.
- Items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, pacifiers, powdered milk, and medications not requiring refrigeration.
- Special items, such as denture needs, contact lenses and supplies, extra eyeglasses, and hearing aid batteries.
- Items for seniors, disabled persons, or anyone with serious allergies.
- Food—a three-day supply in the kit and at least an additional four-day supply readily accessible for use if you are confined to home. You may want to consider

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stocking a two-week supply of food and water in your home.

- Comfort/stress foods – cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, tea bags, instant coffee.
- Water—three gallons per person in the kit and an additional four gallons per person readily accessible for use if you are confined to home.
- Kitchen accessories: manual can opener; mess kits or disposable cups, plates, and utensils; utility knife; sugar and salt; aluminum foil and plastic wrap; resealable plastic bags.
- Medications—Prescription and non-prescription that are regularly used. Check with your physician or pharmacist on storage requirements.
- Household liquid bleach.
- For each person, one complete change of clothing and footwear, including sturdy work shoes or boots, raingear, and other items adjusted for the season, such as hat and gloves, thermal underwear, sunglasses, dust mask.
- Blankets or sleeping bag for each person.
- Small tent, compass, small shovel.
- Paper, pencil; needles, thread; small A-B-C-type fire extinguisher; medicine dropper; whistle; emergency preparedness manual.
- Sanitation and hygiene items: toilet paper, towelettes, soap, hand sanitizer, liquid detergent, feminine supplies, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, comb and brush, lip balm, sunscreen, plastic garbage bags (heavy-duty) and ties (for personal sanitation uses), medium-sized plastic bucket with tight lid, disinfectant, household chlorine bleach.
- Entertainment, such as games and books. Favorite comfort dolls, stuffed animals for small children.
- Roll of duct tape (10 millimeters thick) and scissors.
- Plastic sheeting pre-cut to fit shelter-in-place room openings.

## Shelter-in-Place

NOTE: In the unlikely event that a certain type of chemical hazard causes officials to advise people in a specific area to shelter-in-place in a sealed room, households should have in the room they have selected for this purpose:

- Plastic sheeting pre-cut to fit room openings
- Duct tape and scissors

Ten square feet of floor space per person will provide sufficient air to prevent carbon dioxide buildup for up to five hours. Local officials are unlikely to recommend the public shelter in a sealed room for more than 2-3 hours because the effectiveness of such sheltering diminishes with time as the contaminated outside air gradually seeps into the shelter.

NOTE: Always keep a shut-off valve wrench near the gas and water shut-off valves in your home.

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## Emergency Supplies for Your Vehicle

In addition to basic vehicle safety items—properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench, jack, jumper cables, tool kit, flashlight and extra batteries, reflective triangle, signal flares, duct tape—you should always keep a first aid kit and emergency supplies appropriate to the season in your vehicle. During winter in cold climates, make sure your vehicle has items such as a windshield scraper and snow brush, salt, sand, shovel, tire chains, and warm clothing.

Also recommended for the vehicle that members of the household would use to evacuate are a sleeping bag or blankets for each person, a tube tent, a compass, a shovel, and several rolls of quarters for public telephones and vending machines.

## Disaster Supplies Checklist for Pets

Prepare a pet disaster supplies kit that includes:

- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first aid kit. A pet first aid book also is good to include.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and carriers to transport pets safely and to ensure that your pets cannot escape. A carrier should be large enough for the animal to stand comfortably, turn around, and lie down. Your pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time while you have taken shelter away from home. Be sure to have a secure cage with no loose objects inside it to accommodate smaller pets. These may require blankets or towels for bedding and warmth, and other special items.
- Current photos and descriptions of your pets to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated and to prove that they are yours.
- Food and water for at least three days for each pet, bowls, cat litter and litter box, and a manual can opener.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and telephone number of your veterinarian in case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care.
- Pet toys and the pet's bed, if you can easily take it, to reduce stress.
- Other useful items include newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, grooming items, and household bleach.

## Emergency Sanitation

In many shelters during an emergency, people will need to use improvised, emergency toilets if the water supply has been cut off. These kinds of toilets consist of any watertight container with a snug-fitting cover.

- Use a garbage container, pail, or bucket.
- If the container is small, keep a large container (also with a cover) available for waste disposal.
- If possible, line both containers with plastic bags.
- Every time the emergency toilet is used, pour or sprinkle a small amount of regular household disinfectant, such as creosol or chlorine bleach, into the container to reduce odors and germs.
- After each use, replace the lid.

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## First Aid Kit

Assemble a first aid kit to include in your Disaster Supplies Kit and one for each vehicle. Include:

- First aid manual
- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Safety pins in assorted sizes
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Antiseptic
- Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- Sunscreen
- 2-inch and 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6 each)
- Triangular bandages (3)
- 2-inch and 3-inch sterile roll bandages (3 rolls each)
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Thermometer
- Tongue depressor blades (2)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Nonprescription drugs, including aspirin and nonaspirin pain reliever, antidiarrhea medication, antacid, laxative, vitamins

Remember to include prescription drugs in a Disaster Supplies Kit. Because the storage requirements of prescription drugs vary, some may have to be added to the kit at the last minute. You may want to pin or tape a note to the outside of your kit container reminding you to take along prescription drugs if you have to evacuate.

## First Aid Kit for Pets

A fully equipped household first aid kit contains almost all of the supplies you may need for your pets. A simple first aid kit for your pets should include these additional items in a waterproof container:

- Latex (or hypoallergenic material) gloves
- Gauze sponges ( a variety of sizes)
- Gauze roll, 2-inch width
- Material to make a splint
- Adhesive tape, hypoallergenic
- Non-adherent sterile pads
- Small scissors
- Grooming clippers or safety razor
- Nylon leash
- Towel
- Muzzle
- Compact emergency "blanket" (available in the camping department of many stores)

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- Water-based sterile lubricant
- Hydrogen peroxide (3 percent)
- Rubbing alcohol
- Topical antibiotic ointment
- Epsom salts
- Baby-dose syringe or eye dropper
- Sterile eye lubricant
- Sterile saline wash
- Diphenhydramine, if approved by your veterinarian
- Glucose paste or syrup
- Styptic powder or pencil
- Plastic card (such as old credit card) to scrape away stingers
- List of emergency phone numbers including those for your pet's veterinarian, an after-hours emergency veterinary hospital, and the National Animal Poison Control Center (1-888-426-4435)
- Petroleum jelly
- Penlight
- Clean cloth
- Needle-nose pliers

For a complete list of items for your pet first aid kit and detailed information on how to provide first aid for your pets, consult *Pet First Aid* by Barbara Mammato, DVM, MPH, a handbook sponsored by the American Red Cross and The Humane Society of the United States.



