

Preparing a Disaster Supplies Kit

Why do we need 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, and telephones, may be cut off, or you may have to evacuate at a moment's notice. You probably won't have time to shop or search for the supplies you'll need. Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes.

What is a disaster supplies kit? The supplies you might need following a disaster or in the event of an evacuation. These are items that can help your family endure evacuation or home confinement.

What Kind of Container?

What should I put my family's disaster supplies kit in? Disaster Supplies kits can be large or small depending on how many persons you have to gather supplies for in your household. Remember that for your home disaster supplies kit you should include supplies for everyone in your household including pets. This may make a difference in what type of container you utilize for your kit. Next, remember that you may not be the one picking up or carrying the disaster supplies kit. Everyone should be able to get the kit and evacuate the home quickly. Some containers have wheels, some have straps and carrying handles to make evacuating quicker and easier.

Below are some options of types of containers to use for your disaster supplies kit. You may have something to use already or you may need to purchase them. Either way you will need something dedicated for your disaster supplies kit. Mark it clearly so that everyone is aware of the contents.



Disaster Supplies Kit Preparation – Food and Water ***Disaster Supplies Kit - Food***

How long can food supplies be stored?

To judge how long you can store food supplies, look for an “expiration date” or “best if used by” date on the product. If you cannot find a date on the product, then the general recommendation is to store food products for six months and then replace them.

Some households find it helpful to pull food products for their regular meals from their disaster supplies kit and replace them immediately on an ongoing basis, so the food supplies are always fresh.

What kinds of food supplies are recommended to store in case of a disaster?

- ✓ Avoid foods that are high in fat and protein, and don't stock salty foods, since they will make you thirsty. Familiar foods can lift morale and give a feeling of security in time of

stress. Also, canned foods won't require cooking, water or special preparation. Take into account your families unique needs and tastes. Try to include foods that they will enjoy and that are also high in calories and nutrition.

- ✓ Store supplies of non-perishable foods and water in a handy place. You need to have these items packed and ready in case there is no time to gather food from the kitchen when disaster strikes. Sufficient supplies to last several days to a week are recommended.
- ✓ Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. Foods that are compact and lightweight are easy to store and carry.
- ✓ Try to eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals and canned food with high liquid content.

Recommended Foods

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables. (Be sure to include a manual can opener)
- Canned juices, milk and soup (if powdered, store extra water).
- High-energy foods, such as peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars and trail mix.
- Comfort foods, such as hard candy, sweetened cereals, candy bars and cookies.
- Instant coffee, tea bags.
- Foods for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets, if necessary.
- Compressed food bars. They store well, are lightweight, taste good and are nutritious.
- Trail mix. It is available as a prepackaged product or you can assemble it on your own.
- Dried foods. They can be nutritious and satisfying, but some have a lot of salt content, which promotes thirst. Read the label.
- Freeze-dried foods. They are tasty and lightweight, but will need water for reconstitution.
- Instant Meals. Cups of noodles or cups of soup are a good addition, although they need water for reconstitution.
- Snack-sized canned goods. Good because they generally have pull-top lids or twist-open keys.
- Prepackaged beverages. Those in foil packets and foil-lined boxes are suitable because they are tightly sealed and will keep for a long time

Foods to Avoid

- Commercially dehydrated foods. They can require a great deal of water for reconstitution and extra effort in preparation.
- Bottled foods. They are generally too heavy and bulky, and break easily.
- Meal-sized canned foods. They are usually bulky and heavy.
- Whole grains, beans, pasta. Preparation could be complicated under the circumstances of a disaster.

What is the basis for the Red Cross recommendation to store supplies to last several days to a week? The American Red Cross recommendations to have food, water, and other emergency supplies on hand are not new, and are considered reasonable in case of any disaster. Our recommendations are to have supplies to last several days to a week. Most reasonable people would not consider such quantities of supplies as a "stockpile" or "hoarding."

Some families may choose to store supplies to last several weeks or more. Certainly, if they wish to do so, they may. It is always wise to have sufficient food and water supplies on hand in case access to such supplies may be disrupted by a disaster.

Disaster Supplies Kit - Water

What kinds of containers are recommended for storing water?

Make sure the water storage container you plan to use is of food grade quality, such as 2-liter soda bottles, with tight-fitting screw-cap lids. Milk containers are not recommended because they do not seal well.

Should water be treated before storing it?

If your local water is treated commercially by a water treatment utility, you do not have to treat the water before storing it. Treating commercially treated water with bleach is superfluous and not necessary. Doing so does not increase storage life. It is important to change and replace stored water every six months or more frequently.

If your local water is not treated commercially by a water treatment facility, that is, if your water comes from a public well or other public, non-treated system, follow instructions about water storage provided by your public health agency or water provider. They may recommend treating it with a small amount of liquid household bleach. Still, it is important to change and replace stored water every six months or more frequently.

If your local water comes from a private well or other private source, consult with your local public health agency about recommendations regarding storage of water. Some water sources have contaminants (minerals or parasites) that cannot be neutralized by treatment with liquid household chlorine bleach. Only your local public health agency should make recommendations about whether your local water can be safely stored, for how long, and how to treat it.

Can I use bottled water?

If you plan to use commercially prepared "spring" or "drinking" water, keep the water in its original sealed container. Change and replace the water at least once a year. Once opened, use it and do not store it further.

More about water:

- ✓ Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles
- ✓ An active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more.
- ✓ Store one gallon of water per person per day.
- ✓ Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).

Disaster Supplies Kit Preparation – First Aid Supplies

Anatomy of a First Aid Kit

First Aid kits come in many shapes and sizes. You can purchase one from a drug store or the St. Louis

Area Chapter, or you can make your own kit. Kits are designed for a variety of locations including your home, office or automobile. They're also important to have for special activities such as hiking, camping or boating. Whether you buy a First Aid kit or put one together yourself, make sure it has all the items you need to be prepared for emergencies. See the inventory list below but also be sure to include any personal items, such as medications and emergency phone numbers, or items your physician may suggest. Check the kit regularly to make sure flashlight batteries work, out-of-date contents are replaced, and expiration dates are current. Remember, the contents of a first aid kit can be dangerous in the hands of young children, so store your first aid kit in a secure place.

First Aid Kit Suggestions

- First Aid Cream
- Triangular Bandage
- First Aid Tape
- Gauze Pads and Roller Gauze (assorted sizes)
- Antibacterial Ointment
- Hand Wipes
- Disposable Gloves
- Hand Sanitizer
- Rescue Breathing Barrier
- Pencil and Notepad
- Antiseptic Wipes
- Plastic Bags
- Band-Aids (assorted sizes)
- Safety Pins
- Blanket
- Scissors and Tweezers
- Cold Pack
- Small Flashlight and Extra Batteries
- Combined Sterile Dressings
- SOS Banner
- Gauze Pads and Roller Gauze (assorted sizes)
- Sting Relief Pads
- Conforming Bandages
- Syrup of Ipecac (use only if instructed by Poison Control Center)

Disaster Supplies Kit Preparation –Tools, Supplies, Clothing and Bedding

Items marked with an asterisk are recommended.

Supplies and Tools

- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils*
- Emergency preparedness manual*
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries*
- Flashlight and extra batteries *
- Cash or traveler's checks, change*
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife*
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench to turn off household gas and water
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of the area (for locating shelters)

Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Soap, liquid detergent
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach

Clothing and Bedding

Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.

- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Hat and gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses

Special Items and Important Family Documents

Remember family members with special requirements.

For Baby

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications

For Adults

- Heart and high blood pressure medication
- Insulin
- Prescription drugs
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eyeglasses
- Non-Prescription Drugs
- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)

Important Family Documents *(Store in a waterproof, portable container)*

- Will, insurance policies, contracts deeds, stocks and bonds
- Passports, social security cards, immunization records
- Bank account numbers
- Credit card account numbers and companies
- Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

Additional information is available from the American Red Cross, www.redcrossstl.org, or your University of Missouri Outreach and Extension Center.