

Creating your emergency preparedness kit



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Disasters and emergencies can happen at any time. A disaster could be a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, tornado, flood or earthquake. Or it could be man-made, such as a bioterrorist attack or chemical spill. You should know the risks and danger signs of different types of disasters.

You also should have a disaster plan. Preparing for a disaster can reduce the fear, anxiety and loss caused by disasters. Be ready to evacuate your home if necessary, and know how to treat basic medical problems. Make sure you have the insurance you need, including special types like flood/flood content insurance.

Below is information that will help you build a disaster supply kit. Once you have planned for the safety of you, your family and your possessions, you will have peace of mind and be able to help others. Every family is different, and each will have its own needs and concerns. As you prepare your kit, consider any unique needs, including mobility, disability, special needs and other medical needs for your family.

Preparations for natural and man-made disasters are similar in some ways. Make sure your emergency kit is stocked with the items on the checklist below, and develop plans for communication, records, each family member and your pets. Defining your risk will help you develop an appropriate plan.

After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having sufficient food, water and other supplies to last for at least 72 hours. To assemble a disaster kit, store your items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as plastic bins or a duffel bag.

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

- Water—one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food—at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered/hand-crank radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association weather radio with tone alert
- Flashlight
- First-aid kit
- Face mask
- Hand sanitizer
- Extra batteries
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place
- Moist towelettes, paper towels, garbage bags and plastic ties
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener
- Local maps

- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery

You may also want to add these additional emergency supplies to your kit, based on your individual needs:

- Prescription medications
- Non-prescription medications, such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication or antacids
- Glasses and contact lens solution
- Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records saved electronically or in a waterproof container
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing appropriate for your climate, and sturdy shoes
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper to disinfect water
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups and plates, and plastic utensils
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

You should maintain your kit by storing it in a cool, dry place. You will also want to make sure that your boxed food is in a tightly closed plastic or metal container. Remember to replace expired items as needed. As disasters come and go, you may want to re-think and update your kit, per your family's needs.

I suggest that everyone follow weather and emergency alerts to find tools and information to help get your home, family and business ready to deal with disasters:

- Get emergency information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's mobile app, including weather warnings for up to five locations, as well as disaster, aid and shelter information.
- Sign up for National Weather Service alerts to receive SMS text and email alerts, and see its suggested weather apps to stay informed.
- Receive emergency alerts by enabling your smartphone with the Wireless Emergency Alert public safety system. This includes automatic emergency alerts for severe weather, disasters and national emergencies.
- Find government information and services to help you or a family member deal with a disaster or crisis while traveling or living outside the United States.

No matter what kind of disaster you experience, it may cause emotional distress. After a disaster, recovery can take time. Stay connected to your family and friends during this period.

Brothers and sisters, thank you for allowing me to serve you!