**Be Ready For Emergencies**

By Gemie Martin

**Family Emergency Plan—Basic Steps**:

* Develop a family emergency response plan and hold practice drills. Determine what to do in case each different emergency happens
* Store drinking water (1 gal / person / day) for at least two weeks. Have several methods to purify water both at home and in your 72 hr. kits
* Establish a 3 month supply of food
* Assemble (or update) your 72 hr. kit
* Put together a first aid kit. Have family members acquire basic first aid skills
* Have a list of emergency contacts with addresses and phone numbers for extended family, ward members, home and visiting teachers, ward leaders, doctors, public safety agencies etc.

Keep this list accessible to everyone in the home (including on your cell phones). Have copies of this list in your 72 hr. emergency kits (sealed in a zipper pouch to stay dry) and in the glove box of your vehicles and in your “Grab and Go” binder (if you have one)

* Have a supply of cash which can be used in the event you must evacuate your home and/or cannot access money from your bank or ATM. Keep this in a secure place in your home. Also have a supply of cash in your 72 hr. kit. Small bills and quarters are ideal because people you deal with may not be able to make change
* Plan how basic hygiene needs will be met if water and sewer systems are down
* Plan for emergency power sources (generator, fuel, wood logs, etc.) to safely obtain light, heat and refrigeration
* Acquire an emergency NOAA radio to keep informed. Learn to use it
* Have several alternate methods of cooking foods and boiling water such as grills, solar ovens or cookers, Dutch ovens, apple box ovens, etc. Store fuel for these
* Have sources of emergency light, (flashlights, candles, lanterns, etc. Store batteries or fuel for these
* Take pictures of your home and valuables and make an inventory of your possessions (including the cost of the item should it need replaced). Keep this in a secure place (preferably a safe deposit box or fire proof safe). Keep copies in your 72 hr. kit (sealed in a zipper pouch to stay dry). If possible have both a hard copy and a copy on a thumb drive
* Make copies of important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, bank accounts, savings accounts (including IRAs and 401ks), investments, credit card accounts, property deeds, wills, insurance information, mortgages, health and immunization records, etc. keep these in a secure place (see above) as well as in your 72 hr. kit

**Plan to Stay Safe at Home**:

* Know where to go in the home if a tornado is imminent
* Have a rehearsed plan as to how to escape the home in case of a house fire, (where to meet outside your home, etc.)
* Have Smoke Alarms and CO Monitors (Check regularly to see if plugged in and working)
* Have charged fire extinguishers handy
* Keep Baking Soda handy in the kitchen
* Teach family members (who are old enough) how to turn off natural gas and water supplies to your home. Check often to make sure the necessary tools are in place to accomplish this **(if gas is turned off, a plumber must turn it back on)**

**If Family members are away from Home**:

* Consider communication, where to meet, etc.
* Go over how to stay safe in buildings, cars, etc.
* Teach children to follow school personnel if a disaster happens while they are in school
* Help children memorize parent’s phone numbers
* Know your company’s emergency plan for the workplace
* Identify and know escape routes at work, church, schools, etc.
* Consider having an Emergency Kit for work
* Give trusted co-workers emergency contact information

**Alternative Cooking Methods**: Have several ways to prepare food in the event of a power failure. For in-depth information on this subject visit the website: [www.peaceofpreparedness.com](http://www.peaceofpreparedness.com) click on the “Resource Library” tab, then the “Emergency Cookers” tab

* Outdoor Grills (store propane or charcoal and lighter fluid). Follow the directions that cane with your grill.
* Dutch Oven (store charcoal and lighter fluid). There is much available online. Store cast iron where it will not rust. Season properly. Food just seems to taste better when cooked in a Dutch Oven
* Apple Box Oven (also needs charcoal and lighter fluid). Research online or visit the above website for instructions on how to construct
* Tornado Stove (Store charcoal and/or Propane—can use wood as well)
* Rocket stove (uses wood) See above website on how to construct. Also available online if you wish to purchase one that is already made.
* Tin can stove (from # 10 can—make “buddy burners” from tuna cans and paraffin wax)
* Tri-fold stove for 72 hr. kits (available from Emergency Essentials. Use canned fuel—NO “Buddy Burner”)
* Solar Ovens and cookers (work best on clear sunny day)
* Retained Heat cooking (insulated slow cooker)—Wonderbox. Food must first be heated before being placed in the retained heat cooker to complete cooking.

**72 Hr. Kits (See handout “72 Hour Kit Checklist” on the website** [**www.preparednessplano.org**](http://www.preparednessplano.org) **under “Topics and Downloads” in the “Emergencies” category** ):

* **SAFETY FIRST**: Be sure to keep your kits out of the reach of small children who may ingest harmful chemicals or medicines and could choke on small parts or cut themselves on sharp objects. If there are dangerous items your child will need, keep those things in **your** pack. I would not put any plastic zippered bags in a child’s pack that are large enough for them to put their head into.
* We have opted not to have flammable liquids (like the liquid candles popular in many kits) in our packs. The exception would be a small butane lighter (the type used to light cigarettes) to be used in starting a fire. I do not have candles in my 72 hr. kit at all because of the safety issue.
* We have a large storage bin with items we will need to take with us if we are to evacuate. It is kept in the garage where it can be quickly loaded into the car. In it we have larger and heavier items that do not fit well in the back packs such as tents, ground covers, shovels, water, etc.
* Your cell phones, winter coats, wallets, handbags, shoes, etc. are among the items you may need to round up at the last minute. Try to have them together as much as possible (I keep my cell phone and keys in my handbag). Have a check list of items that will need to be rounded up at the last minute in or on your “Grab and Go” container or your “Grab and Go” binder.

**Emergency Back Packs:**

* We have found that the individual hiking-type backpacks work best for our family. We want each person to be able to survive well on their own in the event they become separated from other family members.
* You can sometimes find nice backpacks very inexpensively online at [www.coleman.com](http://www.coleman.com/) in the outlet store part of their website.
* Day packs or even school backpacks could be used for small children. Visit [www.sosproducts.com](http://www.sosproducts.com/) to find inexpensive school sized backpacks. Be careful not to overload children’s backpacks.
* We store our filled back packs on shelves in our individual bedroom closets. Because of food and medications are involved, a cool, dry, place will preserve them longer. If stored in the garage or car in the summertime, their shelf life will be shortened.

**Zipper Bags**:

* These are wonderful to use in organizing your kit. You will actually have many kits within a kit. They help keep all the items inside your pack dry. You can easily find the item you are looking for if it is grouped with other items it is similar to or will be used with. You could use these bags if necessary to store damp things as well as wastes. (It is a good idea to include several empty extras.) I use different sizes from a 2.5 Gallon Hefty One Zip down to the snack size.
* To get the excess air out of the 2.5 gallon, I fill it, partially zip it up then lay on it to squish the air out and finish zipping it while I am still laying on it. Do not try this with hard items such as cans in the bag.

**Water: the single most important item you will take**:

* You should carry a minimum of 64 ounces/person in your 72 hour kit. This will **not** get you through 3 days. Active adults need about one gallon of water/day. If you can, take more water. Each of our family members will have two 32 ounce Nalgene (virtually indestructible) water bottles in their kits. These bottles will have a carabiner to attach it to a belt or the outside of the pack if necessary.
* If we are to evacuate by car, we have a supply of smaller containers of water in our garage that we can throw in before we leave. We are counting on being near enough to a water source after the first day to be able to use our filters and treatment systems to purify water for drinking.
* Be sure to test all bottles before putting them into your pack to make sure they do not leak.
* Used soda pop 2 liter bottles are “PETE.” Many juice bottles are “PETE” and can be recycled as water storage bottles. See [www.providentliving.org](http://www.providentliving.org) for instructions on how to sterilize bottles before re-using them.
* Newer water storage bottles are somewhat flimsy which makes them less secure for a 72 Hr. Kit

**Food in 72 Hr. kits:**

* Plan to have at least one complete meal each day. You can have things to snack on for the other
* Food items should need little or no preparation. I include hot chocolate mix in our kits to add more protein and to help flavor treated water. I plan to do very little heating of the water unless it is very plentiful. I have a collapsible burner and fuel in case we do reach a point where we need to catch fish or animals for food and cook them or boil water.
* If you include MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) in your kit, take a permanent marker and write the expiration date on them when you purchase them.
* Even expired MREs may be edible—the nutritional value may be less. If crackers have gone rancid, even though they may not taste as good, they are not harmful to eat.
* MREs have a shelf life of five years if stored below 75°. I have mine marked to be changed out in four years because we do not cool our closets to less than 75° in the summer.
* I encourage you to find conventionally sealed cans (which are increasingly hard to find, especially in the smaller sizes) and include a can opener. If you decide to go with the pull-top cans, store these in a zipper bag and check them more frequently.

**72 Hr. First Aid Kits**:

* As much as possible get single use packets for the contents of the first aid kit that goes in your 72 hour kit.
* I have a soft pouch made by Sawyer that houses most of my 72 hour first aid supplies. The Sawyer bag has belt loops on it so it can be carried outside of the back pack if you wish. I then have a one quart zippered storage bag that has larger items like the triangular bandage which will not fit in the Sawyer bag.
* Electrolyte tablets or powders are included in many of the large first aid kits. If you do not find them at the drug store, go online. They can be very important to restore the electrolyte balance due to fluids lost through vomiting, diarrhea, or excessive sweating due to hot weather.
* Germ Pro (a hand sanitizer that keeps working for up to 4 hours) can be purchased from [www.germproproducts.com](http://www.germproproducts.com/)

**Shelter provisions for 72 Hr. Kits:**

* The tube tents we have for our 72 hour kits are very simple. They are open at the ends. These require trees or something similar in order to set them up. Tube tents offer little if any protection against animals such as skunks. They would not work well to shelter us in a Texas-type rain storm.
* We have a few two man tents in our “Grab and Go” container should we ever need to evacuate and can take our car. There are two and three man tents available that are lightweight and easy to set up, they just do not fit in the backpack.
* The small rescue blankets are made out a material that will reflect back 80% of your body heat. There is also a sleeping bag version made of the same material. These items are available from Emergency Essentials as well as many sports center stores and in some first aid kits.

**Sleeping Bags**:

* Your sleeping bag should be chosen to keep you warm in the type of weather you are likely to encounter. They are rated to withstand certain temperatures. Choose accordingly.
* Using a compression bag to stuff your bag in is a very good idea.
* A ground pad for your sleeping bag is a good idea. Air mattresses are not a good option in the winter. They put a layer of cold air just under your body, making you cold. Good ground pads y insulate you from the coldness and dampness of the ground and provide a layer of cushion which would be needed if you find yourself sleeping on a gymnasium floor or the hard ground.

**Clothing:**

* Clothing can be changed to accommodate the different seasons. I keep all the winter clothing items in one zipper bag and the summer in another.
* Make sure to keep children’s clothing updated so they won’t discover in an emergency that they have no clothing that fits.
* Even in the summer, long pants offer the best protection for you from bites, scrapes, scratches, and etc. If needed, you could always cut them off.
* If there is room you could include a lightweight jacket in your pack otherwise when you grab your pack, grab your coat or jacket at the same time. It can be worn around the waist if needed.
* Socks should be primarily natural fibers like wool and cotton. Wool socks will keep your feet warm in the winter. Wool also absorbs moisture. If it is not going to be cool enough to keep the wool socks with you, take an extra pair of cotton socks. Your shirt for summer should be light weight, loose fitting, and light in color.
* You need comfortable shoes or boots for walking. You need a spare pair in case your main pair gets wet or lost. An old pair will do. Make sure that children have not outgrown the shoes stored for them. Our plan is to wear a good sturdy pair and keep an old pair in our 72 hr. kits

**Communications during Emergencies:**

* Cell phones are wonderful if they work. Keep where handy to grab.
* There are hand cranked emergency flashlights which have an adaptor that can be used to charge some types of cell phones.
* A whistle can be worn around each person’s neck and can help locate a person if lost or buried in debris.
* Have children practice blowing into the whistle. Children should be taught to stay in place if they become separated from the rest of the group (provided there are no obvious dangers where they are).
* The best signal mirrors (in my opinion), are the metal ones sold by the scout shop. They have a hole in the center which can be used to site airplanes to make sure your signal is seen. They come in a little fabric case. Aluminum foil can be used as a large signal mirror.
* There are many emergency short wave radios on the market. Research to find what is right for you. Consider features, size, battery needs, etc.

**Hygiene:**

* A plan to dispose of human wastes should be devised. We have several portable toilets in our “Grab and Go” kit. A bucket with a toilet seat (made to fit it) could be used. The seats can be purchased with the bucket (along with a supply of bags and enzymes) or the items can all be purchased individually. The bags and enzymes could be put in your home toilet and used in case you are sheltering in place and the sewer and water systems are down. (Garbage can liners may be less expensive than those you would purchase from preparedness stores.)
* If water supply is out, hand sanitizers by every basin are a must. That is where people are used to cleaning hands

**Light and Fuel:**

* You should have at least two types of fire starters. Keep matches in a water proof container and it goes without saying, away from children. Cotton balls and dryer lint, make great tinder to get fires going
* I have several compressed fuel heat tabs. You can buy them at the Army/Navy stores. They take up very little space.
* Each person should have a flashlight. Consider a headband type to keep both hands free for working. Mine is a Princeton Tec Fuel brand. It can be focused to direct the light where it is needed. Store the batteries separately. A large lantern and spare 6 volt batteries or propane will be part of our “grab and go” kit.
* The fuel cells that you can purchase from Emergency Essentials can be used for cooking and for warmth. Their lid is the temperature control. Do **NOT** use them in a closed tent to keep warm when sleeping. ems

**Equipment and Tools**:

* Many of these items are optional, but useful. Some, like the camp shovel, axe, saw, and cook stove are not needed by every family member. Make sure you have tried out the equipment and that it actually works.
* Each person should have a bowl, cup and spoon. These can be spare items you have around the house. We do not carry paper or Styrofoam because they can be damaged too easily and cannot be reused.
* At least one person in your group should have an aluminum or ceramic covered metal pan (or large cup) to be used to boil water This large cup can be used to heat things in and can double as your bowl. A stainless steel spoon or several heavy duty plastic spoons complete the necessary equipment for eating.
* There are collapsible cups available that do not take up much space.
* Everyone except small children should have several garbage bags. I have several different sizes in my pack. These can be used to line a makeshift toilet or latrine. They can be used to contain clothing that is wet or has come in contact with Poison Ivy, Oak or Sumac. They can be used as ground cover if necessary. They can also be used as a poncho (although we have the small emergency ponchos in our kits).
* I include tin foil in my kit in case we catch fish to cook. My foil is a small roll, mashed flat. I removed the ends of the box it came with and store the foil in the flattened box. The box protects it and has the serrated edge to be used to cut the foil.
* Steven Ririe suggests you have 35 yards of fish line. You can wind about ½ of that around a sewing machine bobbin. I have two bobbins in my kit. I have taped them so they do not unwind. All my fishing equipment is in a small plastic container.

**Other Items for 72 Hr. Kits:**

* Money. Vending machines, Laundromats, and phone booths take quarters so it is important to have a good supply. One dollar bills are preferable.
* Think small for the “boredom busters,” as Stephen Ririe calls them. Also consider the safety of each. I keep my pencil sharpened with tape around it so it won’t slip out, in the spiral of my small notebook. This also helps keep it from getting lost
* Permanent marker to mark, identify and label possessions. It could also be used to write on an injured person’s clothing their name, pertinent medical information, and a contact’s phone number in case their condition worsens and they are not able to talk.
* The documents are very important. In the event of a disaster that destroys your home, you will need proof of ownership. You may need to be able to prove that you are who you say you are. Medical records are very important to have with you. Up-to-date immunization records can determine if you or your child needs a Tetanus booster. You may need to cancel or reorder credit cards.
* Have a current picture of each family member in your 72 Hr. kits

**Rotate and Replace Items in your 72 Hr. Kit**

* Many things in the kit will have an expiration date. Twice a year (near General Conference time for us), we have a family home evening where we go through our 72 hr. kits; replace what it missing; and switch out all food items except the MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), which have a longer shelf life. Make sure you check the expiration dates on the medicines in your kit as well. Toss out expired items and replace them.
* Make sure clothing fits

**Other Kits to have for Emergencies**:

**First Aid Kit (See Handout: First Aid Kit Checklist (listed on the website:** [**www.preparednessplano.org**](http://www.preparednessplano.org) **as “First Aid Kit” under “Home Safety and First Aid”)**

* Keep from children
* Include a first aid manual—The Boy Scout First Aid Merit Badge Book is what we have
* A tackle box is a good container
* Learn basic first aid skills
* Replace expired items

**Car Emergency Kit (See Handout: “An Emergency Kit for Your Vehicle” on the website:** [**www.preparednessplano.org**](http://www.preparednessplano.org) **under “Home Safety and First Aid”)**

* We have ours in a small back pack in the trunk of the car and back of the van
* “Fix-a-Flat” sealant will not work if the tire stem valve is on the bottom of the tire (where the flat is). Move the car to re-locate it to the upper half of the tire. Do not store inside the vehicle which can reach temperatures of 120° or higher.
* For women especially, have a “CALL POLICE” sign to post. Keep car doors locked and stay inside the car if stranded alone

**Work Emergency Kit:**

* Can be kept in your desk or locker at work
* Make sure you include contact information

Sources: [www.providentliving.org](http://www.providentliving.org), 72 Hour Kit: Emergency Preparedness Handbook by Stephen D. Ririe and many other online sources, lectures attended, and Ensign articles.