



Courtesy of Florida Insurance Center, Inc.

Everyone should have some basic supplies on hand in order to survive for at least three days if an emergency or disaster occurs. This article discusses some basic items that every emergency supply kit should include; however, it is important that you also consider the unique needs of your family in order to create an emergency supply kit that will meet those needs. Ideally, you should maintain at least two emergency supply kits: one full kit at home and smaller portable kits in your vehicle or at your workplace or other places you spend time.

A basic home emergency supply kit could include the following 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 or hand crank radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio with tone alert, and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape for sheltering in place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation

- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Local maps
- Cellphone with charger and inverter

Water

Water is an essential element to survival and a necessary item in an emergency supplies kit. Following a disaster, clean drinking water may not be available. Your regular water source could be cut off or compromised through contamination. Prepare yourself by building a supply of water that will meet your family's needs during an emergency.

How Much Water Do I Need?

You should store at least one gallon of water per person per day. A normally active person needs at least one gallon of water daily just for drinking; however, individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet and climate.

To determine your water needs, take the following into account:

- Children, nursing mothers and sick people may need more water.
- A medical emergency might require additional water.
- During warm weather, more water may be necessary. In very hot temperatures, water needs can double.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person.

How Should I Store Water?

It is recommended you purchase commercially bottled water, in order to prepare the safest and most reliable emergency water supply. Keep bottled water in its original container and do not open until you need to use it. Observe the expiration or "use by" date. Keep the water stored in a cool, dark place.

Preparing Your Own Containers of Water

It is recommended you purchase food-grade water storage containers from surplus or camping supplies stores to use for water storage.

Before filling with water, thoroughly clean the containers with dishwashing soap and water and rinse completely so there is no residual soap.

If you chose to use your own storage containers, choose two-

Additional Emergency Supplies

Once you have gathered the supplies for a basic emergency kit, you may want to consider adding the following items:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper. When diluted at nine parts water to one part bleach, it can be used as a disinfectant. Or, in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use bleach that is scented or color safe, or that has added cleaners.
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

liter plastic soft drink bottles—not plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have had milk or fruit juice in them. Milk protein and fruit sugars cannot be adequately removed from these containers, and provide an environment for bacterial growth when water is stored in them. Cardboard containers also leak easily and are not designed for long-term storage of liquids. Also, do not use glass containers, because they are heavy and breakable.

Storing Water in Plastic Soda Bottles

Follow these steps for storing water in plastic soda bottles.

- Thoroughly clean the bottles with dishwashing soap and water, and rinse completely so there is no residual soap.
- Sanitize the bottles by adding a solution of 1 teaspoon of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to a quart of water. Mix the sanitizing solution in the bottle so that it touches all surfaces. After sanitizing the bottle, thoroughly rinse out the sanitizing solution with clean water.
- Fill the bottle to the top with regular tap water. If the tap water has been commercially treated from a water utility with chlorine, you do not need to add anything else to the water to keep it clean. If the water you are using comes from a well or water source that is not treated with chlorine, add two drops of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to the water. Let the water stand for 30 minutes before using. A slight chlorine odor should be noticeable in the water; if not, add another dose of bleach and allow the water to stand another 15 minutes.
- Tightly close the container using the original cap. Be careful not to contaminate the cap by touching the inside of it with your finger. Place a date on the outside of the container so you can know when you filled it. Store in a cool, dark place.

Water can also be treated with water purification tablets that can be purchased at most sporting goods stores.

Water that has not been commercially bottled should be replaced every six months.

First Aid Kit

Knowing how to treat minor injuries can make a difference in an emergency. You may consider taking a first aid class, but simply having the following items can help you stop bleeding, prevent infection and assist in decontamination.

- Two pairs of latex gloves, or other sterile gloves if you are allergic to latex
- Sterile dressings to stop bleeding
- Cleansing agent/soap and antibiotic towelettes
- Antibiotic ointment
- Burn ointment
- Adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes
- Eye wash solution to flush the eyes or as general decontaminant
- Thermometer
- Prescription medications you take every day, such as insulin, heart medicine and asthma inhalers. You should periodically rotate medicines to account for expiration dates.

- Prescribed medical supplies, such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment and supplies

Non-prescription drugs:

- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid
- Laxative

Other first aid supplies:

- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant

Supplies for Unique Needs

Consider the unique needs of your family members, including growing children, when building your emergency supply kit.

For Baby:

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications
- Moist towelettes
- Diaper rash ointment

For Adults:

- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eye glasses

Ask your doctor about storing prescription medications such as heart and high blood pressure medication, insulin and other prescription drugs.

During cold weather, you must think about warmth. It is possible that you will not have heat. Think about your clothing and bedding supplies. Be sure to include one complete change of clothing and shoes per person, including:

Maintaining Your Kit

Just as important as putting your supplies together is maintaining them so they are safe to use when needed. Here are some tips to keep your supplies ready and in good condition:

- Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers to protect it from pests and to extend its shelf life.
- Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented or corroded.
- Use foods before they go bad and replace them with fresh supplies.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front.
- Change stored food and water supplies every six months. Be sure to write the date you store it on all containers.
- Re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your family's needs change.

Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack or duffel bag.

- Jacket or coat
- Long pants
- Long-sleeved shirt

Kit Storage Locations

Since you do not know where you will be when an emergency occurs, prepare supplies for home, work and vehicles.

Home

Your disaster supplies kit should contain essential food, water and supplies for at least three days.

Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.

You may want to consider having supplies for sheltering for up to two weeks.

Work

You need to be prepared to shelter at work for at least 24 hours. Make sure you have food, water and other necessities, like medicines, in your kit. Also, be sure to have comfortable walking shoes at your workplace in case an evacuation requires walking long distances.

Your kit should also be in one container and ready to “grab and go” in case you are evacuated from your workplace.

Vehicle

In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car. This kit should include:

- Jumper cables
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid kit and necessary medications in case you are away from home for a prolonged time
- Food items containing protein such as nuts and energy bars; also canned fruit and a portable can opener
- Water for each person and pet in your car
- AM/FM radio to listen to traffic reports and emergency messages
- Cat litter or sand for better tire traction
- Shovel
- Ice scraper
- Warm clothes, gloves, hat, sturdy boots, jacket and an extra change of clothes
- Blankets or sleeping bags

Also consider:

- A fully-charged cellphone and phone charger

- Flares or reflective triangle
- Baby formula and diapers if you have a small child

Be prepared for an emergency by keeping your gas tank full. If you find yourself stranded, be safe and stay in your car, put on your flashers, call for help and wait until it arrives.

Florida Insurance Center, Inc. is committed to helping you and your loved ones stay safe when disaster strikes. If you would like more information on developing a family emergency plan or building a disaster supply kit, please contact us at (813) 754-3561 or www.floridainsurancecenter.com today.