



The Ultimate 120-Hour Kit

by Carolyn Nicolaysen

For years government and relief organizations advised the public to prepare to live for 72 hours without the help of outside agencies, as emergency services will focus their resources on care for the injured, and rescue operations.

In recent years government agencies have raised the length of time to prepare for. They now recommend at least 96-120 hours. I encourage everyone to prepare for 120 hours — 5 days. We have seen in recent disasters that help almost always takes 5 days to arrive.

A good kit is a must for everyone. You may not live in earthquake or hurricane country, but a fire, flood and terrorism disaster can occur anywhere. Prepare now to be self-reliant in emergencies by following this simple formula for a great kit.

Because this is a comprehensive list we will spend two weeks exploring the items every good kit includes.

1. All great kits begin with a great backpack. Make sure your pack is large enough for everything on our list. You do not want to be forced to carry another pack as the goal is to keep your hands free to care for children or pets, and to clear debris.

Your pack should have padded shoulder straps for comfort and should be supported from the waist when it is carried, for optimum support. A pack with several compartments will also allow you to separate items and organize your kit enabling you to find things quickly.

Purchase a backpack that is a bright color, which can easily be found in a cluttered closet or cupboard, for grab-and-go conditions. Some have asked about rolling backpacks. My concern is threefold for recommending against these.

First, they do not leave your hands free; second, they cannot be rolled when flood waters or debris is present, and third, they are often built so once filled the metal bar supporting the rollers digs into your back, fine in the store but awful after a half hour of walking.

2. For those with disabilities and unable to carry a pack I recommend a fishing vest. Purchase a vest larger than you really need for a good fit. Add items to the pockets and add a few more pockets, making it possible to carry more items. You will not be able to carry all the items we discuss the next two articles but you will be able to have the essentials with you.
3. Water: The most important item in your pack is water. Three gallons of water per person is optimum; however it is impossible to carry this amount. Purchase mylar pouches or boxed water, which has a five-year shelf life for inside your pack.

You may also want to purchase a water bottle carrier for each family member. These support a sports size or liter-size bottle of water, which can then be carried by means of the lanyard around the neck, over the shoulder or tied to a belt loop.

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Grab a bottle of water as you leave your home to use with your lanyard in addition to what is stored in your kit. If you add commercially bottled water to your pack it should be changed every year.

4. Food: The best choices for food are those specially designed for survival. These have a 3-5 year shelf life, which allows you to forget about them for longer periods of time — MREs, energy bars or carb bars. You can also use granola bars, nuts, trail mix, foil packed tuna, and individual servings of canned fruit.

Never add jerky or salted nuts or other salty foods to your pack as they will increase your thirst.

Never store anything in your pack that is packaged in glass. It is not recommended that you store dried foods as these will use up your precious water supplies before you can eat them.

Remember foods purchased at the grocery store will need to be rotated at least once a year.

5. Disposable plates, cups and utensils: You will need to determine what items you need depending on the foods you have chosen. If you are storing MREs and energy bars you will only need eating utensils as these items can be eaten directly from their packaging.
6. Cash: There may not be many services available; however, you will want to be prepared to purchase food, water, fuel, or housing, as they become available. Children who are old enough to manage money wisely should have around \$20.00 in small bills and coins in their kits. Every adult should have \$100.00 to \$200.00 in coins and small bills. You may become separated from your spouse, thus each person should be prepared to handle expenses on their own.

Do not have bills larger than \$10.00 in your kits as there are, unfortunately, always people who will take advantage of an emergency situation and you don't want to "tip your hand" that you have more cash available, thus paying more for what you need. There will also be places where only cash is accepted and change may not be available.

7. Local Map: You may think you know all the back roads out of an area but in an emergency you may become frustrated and confused as you try to evacuate. GPS may not be available, plan on it.
8. Evacuation Maps: Once you have determined your out-of-state, or out-of- area evacuation destination, purchase detailed maps for your route. Roads may be closed or clogged with traffic and you may want to find an alternate route rather than the one you normally take. Mark alternate routes with different colors of marker.
9. Identification Card: Each member of the family should have an identification card for themselves in their kits. Parents should also have a copy of each child's ID card in their kit. During an emergency you may not be able to remember important information.

Each card should include: Parent's names, address(es) and phone number(s), home address, parent's cell phone numbers, close family and friend's phone numbers, name, address and phone number of a local contact person, name address and phone number of an out of state contact person, name and phone numbers for; Doctor, dentist, optometrist, and clergy, any medications, special medical conditions, and allergies.

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10. Phone numbers: Cell phones may not be working and land lines may only allow you to call out of the area time-to-time as local lines will be overcome with emergency calls. Include the following in your list of important numbers: Spouse, Doctor, Dentist, Optometrist, Hospital, Police Station, Fire Station, Parents, Clergy, Neighbors, Siblings, Poison Control, Insurance agent(s), Local Contact person, Out of area contact, Child's school(s), Children's friends (any place they may be playing when an emergency strikes). These may all be important to relay to your out of area contact person as they may have more luck tracking down family members.
11. Photos: Each kit should have several family photos. You should include individual photos of each family member as well as a family group photo. Individual photos may be used to post if you are separated and a family photo can be used to prove a relationship if there is a question.
12. Multi-function tool or pocket knife: These will provide everything from can openers to knife blade, pliers, saw blades and screw drivers. A must-have tool!!
13. Flashlight with batteries: Store flashlight and batteries separately in your pack, batteries can leak ruining your flashlight. Headlamps are perfect for a kit as they leave your hands free. Place flashlight or headlight on the top of the items in your kit or in a front pocket where it can be accessed quickly.
14. Extra set of keys: Home, office, vacation house, RV, car(s), safety deposit box, etc. These should also be kept at the top of your kit or in a front pocket for fast access.
15. Basic First Aid Kit: Everyone should have basic first aid items in their own kit. A larger, more complete kit should be included in a Grab and Go kit or kept in your car.
16. Whistles: Everyone in the family should have a whistle with a lanyard in their kit in case they become separated from the family or are feeling that they need help. I suggest families develop and practice a whistle signal that family members can blow when trying to find each other in a crowd or when a child feels threatened. Think of this as your family's own Morse code. Two long and one short blow perhaps.

Whistles should be taken out of packs and worn around the neck until the family is safely home again.
17. Dust Mask: Make sure to include a *good* dust mask in each kit. These are important when cleaning up debris, when living through the aftershocks of an earthquake, in case of a fire, and also in case of severe illness. Look for N95 masks, found in most pharmacies.
18. Moist Towelettes: I recommend you store individually wrapped wipes. The larger boxes and tubes of wipes can dry out if they are not used often. These have dozens of uses so store plenty, at least one for each mealtime and then a few a day for cleaning up after moving debris, or washing up children.
19. Large plastic bag: These can be used for cleaning up trash, as a shelter or as rain gear. Simply cut a small hole in the bottom just large enough to slip your head through. Next, cut a small opening about ¼ of the way down the bag on both sides for armholes.
20. Biohazard Bags: These bright red bags can be used for sanitation by lining a 5-gallon bucket.

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Toilet seats can be purchased to go on these buckets and they are wonderful (compared to the possible alternatives).

These bags are also great for disposing of medical waste such as diabetic needles and bandages from wounds. The bright red color makes it easy for children to distinguish between ordinary trash and a bag they should not touch.

21. Emergency Blanket: An emergency Mylar blanket is the most compact and easiest to store in a backpack. These blankets will retain 90% of body heat. They can also be used as a shelter from the sun or as a reflector to signal for help. There are dozens of uses.

While you are at it copy the Nauvoo Times article Mylar Blankets: Not Just for 72 Hour Kits Anymore and add it to your kit.

For the next two weeks, work towards assembling these items for your kits. We will add more items next time. Backpacks are on sale now so take advantage of the savings and after scouring your home for old packs add the new ones needed. Now is the time to prepare.