



# How to Be Prepared for Natural Disasters

It is best to put two disaster kits together: one for your car in case a disaster strikes while you are away from the house, and another (supplementary) for the house. The kit for the road should include enough supplies for 2-3 days, and the kit for the house should include enough supplies for 5-7 days. it is a good idea

## Steps

- 1 Determine the hazards you could face.** Also, consider hazardous materials spills, plane crashes, train derailments, i.e. those hazards that may not be "natural". Local emergency managers and the American Red Cross can help you determine the risks in your area.
- 2 After you have identified the hazards, write a plan.** <http://www.ready.gov> is a place to start with a plan template in the "Are You Ready" book. Make your plan based on the hazards, ex. tsunami is not likely in Oklahoma while localized flash flood may occur.
- 3 Get three ways to get warnings.** Sirens are out-of-door warnings only. Get text alerts on your cell phone and email on your computer. Many local governments are offering these for free. Have a battery powered AM/FM radio with extra batteries.
- 4 Do you have an out-of-state contact that all in your family know to call?** This is the concept behind Safe and Well from the American Red Cross <<https://safeandwell.communityos.org/>>
- 5 Keep an eye on the news especially if you are dealing with an earthquake, hurricane, tornado, a winter storm, a heat wave/heat storm.**
- 6 Find a bag, in case your car becomes disabled and you need to walk, to hold all of the supplies.**
- 7 Pack your supplies in a backpack for your car-pack and pack your supplies in a bucket for the house.** Go to the local home supply store and get 5 gallon (18.9 L) buckets with the snap-on lids.
- 8 Consider supplies in the categories of clothing, food, shelter, and safety.**
- 9 Be prepared to dress in layers so you can add or remove clothing depending on the weather.** Be sure to pack long and short sleeve shirts, a pair of shorts, a pair of jeans, good walking shoes and socks, and a wind-breaker rain jacket. Additional items can be added/removed according to the season and type of potential disaster in your area, such as thermal underwear, sleeveless shirts, or water/canoeing shoes (shoes that make it easier to walk in water).
- 10 Pack non-perishable items that are easy to eat such as protein or energy bars, meat jerky, and canned snack-sized fruit.** Be sure to pack enough water.
- 11 Pack a sleeping bag with plastic ground cloths and tent for shelter, and pack some money for *both* kits.**
- 12 Pack flashlights and a hand-crank radio for safety.** Consider purchasing solar or crank rechargeable lights and radios, and maybe some glow sticks. Candles should never be used. Stationary flashlights of the highway safety type should be used for temporary lighting.

- 13 Consider buying an LED headlamp.** Flashlights with multiple LEDs have proven to be the most reliable lamps by comparison to conventional lamps. LED lights last a long time on batteries, and a headlamp leaves both of your hands free to cook, do dishes, read, or many other things.
- 14 For the house kit, pack additional food and water and know what important items you want to take with you if you need to evacuate.** Keep a carbon filter water pitcher in the refrigerator, and several fresh filter inserts standing by. This does *not* replace boiling water, as it is intended to be an after boil filter. Also, in the house kit, make sure you have "shelter in place" items, ex. duct tape, plastic sheeting material for windows and the knowledge of how and when to use them.
- 15 Realize that you can not count on water from your tap being clean.** Water can be contaminated, so you need to store enough water for drinking, and additional water for cooking (if you have a camp stove), flushing a commode, and washing. A reflector oven would be a good investment. They are available at any good camping store.
- 16 Have a waterproof, fireproof lock box where you keep all of your important papers.** In case of emergency, you can grab the box and go, or it can be recovered intact later.
- 17 Make a list of items that you would grab if you have time to evacuate (photos, family heirlooms).** Keep the list with your other disaster kit items.
- 18 Include a supply of necessary medications and rotate them to keep them fresh.**
- 19 Place the kit in a place where you can grab it in case you need to leave in a hurry.** If you're in a tornado-threatened area, and on a higher level if you are concerned about flooding or earthquakes, and you can reasonably plan on surviving on site, put your kit in an upper level closet.
- 20 Don't forget your pets, and be sure to have enough food and water for them.** You can prepare kits for your pets too! Be sure to include, a package of food, water, and anything else your pet would need in a safe, accessible place. Keep them all in a suitable pet-carrier so that you can grab on the fly.
- 21 Consider including a firearm and ammunition.** Looters often take advantage of overtaxed emergency services.
- 22 Don't forget cash.** Make sure to have cash in small bills such as ones, fives and tens. This is crucial in case ATM machines are disabled and banks are closed. Also, many convenience stores do not accept large bills.
- 23 Now that you have gone this far, practice your plan.** Do you have a way to call your out of State contact to let them know you are OK? Did it work? Did you practice evacuating? What were some hiccups? Did you practice a fire evacuation at three in the morning? Did everyone get out OK? Did you meet at the right spot?

Can you answer these readers' questions?

 Refresh

On **How to Install a Car Starter**, a reader asks:

What do I do if the new starter squeals and spins after installing?

Your answer...

Reply

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On **How to Calculate Wind Load**, a reader asks:

How do I calculate wind load on stacked containers given dimension and weight?

Your answer...

Reply

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On **How to Find the Status of a Social Security Claim**, a reader asks:

How can I check my claims status online if I did not receive a confirmation number from my local office?

Your answer...

Reply

## Tips

- Make sure there are no leaky pipes, or any other fire hazards. Use no open flame until you are absolutely certain there are no gas leaks. It's no good to be concerned after it goes bang.
- Scan important documents and store on memory stick in bug out bag.
- Don't depend on cell phone service. Towers and repeaters may be down. Even if the Cell Towers are working, you won't talk with a dead phone. Have three ways to power your phone.
- Make sure you have a back-up cell phone battery that is charged.
- Have a place you know is safe to go during an earthquake
- DO get an amateur radio license. "Hams" are able to talk long distances when cell phones are dead. The American Radio Relay League (<http://www.arrl.org>) offers classes through local clubs in your area.
- Check out camping supply stores near your house or on the web for items and ideas. There are emergency supply kits that have the essentials of high-energy bars and water packs that you can buy that can help remove the guesswork from what to pack.
- Lighting and info.: Consider purchasing self-powered radios and lights. The newer lights of this type use LEDs to conserve power and the radio will keep you informed of any complications, such as a fire, explosions following a quake, and tornado. Also consider the purchase of light sticks as well. Candles are **not** an option. Both the self-powered lights and self powered radios and light sticks may be found at any local discount department store or radio supply store.
- If you have room, consider adding something to heat water to your pack for hot beverages or instant add-water only foods (oatmeal, pasta, rice, etc). Don't forget waterproof matches, a camp stove, a pot, and a can-opener.
- Have a plan for rotating your disaster supplies.

## Warnings

- If you are outside during an earthquake, stay away from poles and buildings, and lay flat, covering your head with your hands.
- If you have a generator, be sure it is installed properly. If it is feeding power back into the electrical grid outside of your home it could injure or kill utility workers who are attempting to restore power in your area.
- Candles, lanterns, flame lamps, and sconces are for outdoor use only. If you have a gas stove or a gas heater, do not use these items at all.
- If you are plugging your generator into your house. Make sure you turn off the main breaker.
- Keep the generators outside your house. You don't need to add carbon monoxide to the disaster that is already there.

## Made Recently

Did you try these steps?

Upload a picture for other readers to see.