Low-Cost Emergency Supply Kit

Build Your Own Kit for Less

You can build your own emergency kit inexpensively. Though pre-made emergency supply kits are available for purchase, they are often costly. They may include items you don't need and lack those you do. You know your household's needs best and can be sure to include the items you and your family will need.

Why should I prepare an emergency kit now?

It is wise to be prepared to take care of your household in case of an emergency, such as severe weather. It is much easier to build a kit when the weather is not a concern and you are not under pressure. It can be stressful when a major storm is forecasted and the supplies likely to be needed are not on hand. Time is limited. You may face crowds and long lines at stores as well as empty shelves for specific items if you need to be out shopping at the last minute.

What types of weather-related events should I prepare for? And for how long?

Some examples of weather conditions that can occur here are severe thunderstorms, flooding, snowstorms, nor'easters, hurricanes and tornadoes. It is best to prepare your household for a minimum of three days and up to one to two weeks. Keep in mind that in the event of a major storm, first responders may not be able to get to you for several hours or days. Other people may also need assistance. You need to be able to take care of yourself and your family until then.

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Sources

Build a Kit, https://www.ready.gov/kit, March 8, 2021.

Emergency Kit Checklist for Kids and Families, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/checklists/kids-and-families.html, September 1, 2020.

How can I prepare an emergency supply kit on a budget?

First, look at the list provided here, gather the items you already have, and cross them off the list. Then put a star by the items that would be most important to you and your family. Also, consider other must have items your family would need in event of an emergency. You can plan ahead and buy the needed items over time. Watch for coupons. Consider whether or not you want to download store and other apps and subscribe to an e-mail list that may help you keep costs down. Perhaps you can plan to buy one sale item each shopping trip or each time you receive income.

Think about your options—dollar, discount, warehouse and thrift stores, online, and sales at drugstores, home improvement, sporting goods, outdoor, and outfitter stores. Check out clearance and out-of-season items. You may be able to buy specific items in bulk with family or friends. If asked for gift suggestions for your upcoming birthday, anniversary or other special occasion, you might suggest an item or two you do not currently have as possibilities. Be sure to consider any specific items that would be important for your household's well-being in a disaster.

Where should I keep my emergency supplies? What should I store them in?

Keep your emergency supplies in an easily accessible, dry location. Creating labeled, individual kits in durable bags or containers is suggested. Duffle bags, backpacks, plastic containers, and wheeled totes and suitcases are some examples of containers you might use to store your emergency supply kit.

Also, review the contents of your kit twice every six months to make certain all supplies are in place and replace any items that might have expired such as food or batteries. Also, consider how household needs may have changed in the past six months. For many, it may be convenient to remember to do this when the time changes.

What should I bring with me if I need to leave area due to weather conditions?

You may need to evacuate quickly. Having your basic supplies ready in advance will be helpful. You may hear this referred to as a "go kit" or "bug out bag". It is recommended that you pack enough supplies for at least three days. Consider where you will be going and your own particular needs as you review the supplies lists and gather items.

How can I be better prepared for an emergency when I am away from home?

Put together emergency kits for your car and workplace. In addition to a first aid kit, you will likely want to be prepared for common situations on the road such as a flat tire and dealing with cold weather. For your workplace kit, include food and other supplies needed for at least 24 hours.

For more information about food supplies, see Pre-Storm To-Do List: Your Emergency Food Supply at eden.uconn.edu.

What supplies do I need?

Refer to our Emergency Supply Kit Check List fact sheet with items suggested from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).