

A LOOK AT 72 HOUR KITS

Every family should have a 72 hour kit and an emergency plan. Most people don't (less than 10%), despite years of promotions, campaigns and warnings. Why don't you have a 72 hour kit?

While emergency responders and governments of all levels will respond as best they can, in many cases they cannot get to everyone immediately or other people are in more dire straights and require help ahead of you. Whether it is a temporary power outage or a widespread disaster, a 72 hour kit for your family may make you more comfortable or even save a life.

While there are many lists for 72 hour kits and kits are for sale, many people are intimidated by the costs and bulk of a kit and uncertainty as to what is really necessary. Many items are already in your home and you don't need to purchase duplicates. Just put them together in a bag! Here are a list of absolute necessities, a few good ideas for extras and then a link to extensive information on 72 hour kits:

THE ESSENTIALS

If you don't have these, you don't have a kit. Roughly \$100

- ✓ **Water** – you can do without food for days or weeks but water is the most essential thing in any kit. Plan on 2 to 3 litres per person per day. One of those large water-cooler bottles per person will be great for a home, litre bottles for a go bag. Cost is minimal.
- ✓ **Radio** – to listen to emergency messages, instructions, and to hear critical weather reports. Hand crank is best so you don't have to worry about batteries going dead.
- ✓ **Flashlight** – if the power goes out, or you need to evacuate in the night, a flashlight will be a huge help. Hand crank is best, again so the batteries don't go dead or leak in your kit.
- ✓ **\$50 in small bills** – start with \$50 as most bank machines and credit cards don't work when the power is out. Small bills. Think of putting \$20 per paycheque in the kit and you will build enough for any major long-term emergency. \$50 should be the start.
- ✓ **Candle and matches** – another light in case the batteries fail in the flashlight. As well, these can be used to light a fire.
- ✓ **Toilet Paper** – worth its weight in gold when you don't have any!
- ✓ **Toiletries** – small toothbrush and toothpaste, bar of soap, mouthwash or gum, shampoo

GOOD IDEAS FOR AN INTERMEDIATE KIT

Add these to make a very good kit. These are highly recommended and will cost roughly \$20 plus the cost of a first aid kit. The checklist is no cost, but will help identify things (such as a computer or camera) that you wouldn't want or couldn't have sitting in a bag all year, but you couldn't live without! All of these are small, affordable, and easy-to-carry even when you have the water!

- ✓ **Garbage bags** – can be made into rain gear, used for garbage or other useful things.
- ✓ **First Aid kit** – unless you have first aid training, a basic kit will do.
- ✓ **Photocopy of prescriptions, insurance, driver's license, passport, marriage certificate, will** – in tight plastic bag
- ✓ **Emergency blanket and hand warmer/heat pack** – both cheap, both small, both wonderful
- ✓ **An out of town contact name, number and email** to reunite dispersed family members.
- ✓ **Small, easy-to-eat food**; candies, nuts, granola bars. Small, can be easily carried, inexpensive and better than nothing. An emergency is no place to worry about diets!
- ✓ **A checklist** – there are lots of stuff that aren't cheap, you only have one of or are heirlooms. A checklist will help you identify what is critical to gather on very short notice such as:
 - Cell phone charger – you don't want a dead phone during an emergency
 - Computer, camera
 - Photo albums, pictures
 - Purse/wallet
 - Heirlooms, antiques, valuables
 - Jewellery
 - Medications, oxygen
 - Pet supplies, especially cage, leash, blanket, food and water.
 - Infant supplies
 - Glasses
 - Clothing for current weather

LOTS OF TIME AND MONEY

These are the things that turn people off 72 hour kits – they are expensive, bulky, almost never used in most emergencies and are too heavy to carry anywhere. It's not that they are wrong, but most times you can't haul these to a reception centre (especially when fleeing) and they cost too much for most people to have. Some events, like floods, might have days or even weeks of notice for you to put everything together. These are the non-essentials but will make life comfortable:

- Monthly or Weekly Computer Backup** – in case the emergency is data loss
- Work gloves**
- Tools** – Minor repairs, shut off the gas when instructed, debris cleanup.
- Pet records; vaccinations**
- Medical records**
- Blankets/sleeping bags**
- Canned food and manual can opener / Ready to Eat Meals**
- Camp stove**
- Extra clothes – take some of those old comfy clothes**
- Extra car keys and house keys** – easy things to lose in the confusion
- Whistle**
- Duct Tape**
- Tarp** – can make tent, rain cover
- Small pocket knife**
- Camera** – to record damage, situation or for presentations and debriefings!
- Good book or cards**
- Sun Block, sun glasses, sun hat** – OR –
- Winter mitts (not gloves), balaclava, ski goggles** – in case of extreme cold

EMERGENCY PLAN

If you have a kit, it's time to have a plan! A kit is not much good without a plan.

Where would you go if the family got separated? Who would you call to find out or let others know who is okay? What escape routes are there from your home? Have you discussed these with every family member?

An emergency plan isn't much good if nobody knows about it. You need to discuss it as a family. If a child is old enough to know their home phone number, they are old enough to memorize an out-of-area emergency number of a friend or relative to reunite families.

EXTRAS FOR YOUR CAR

This kit should stay in your car at all times in case you are caught away from your home 72 hour kit.

Minimum:

- Warning Triangles
- Jumper cables
- Fire Extinguisher
- Small Shovel
- Candle and matches
- Windshield fluid – backup in case you run out
- Emergency Blanket and hand warmers – can be augmented by the blanket below
- Water

Extras

- Blanket – can use the hand warmers and blanket with the emergency blanket outside
- Cat litter – for traction
- Tire Chains
- Whistle – to attract attention if you're down a ravine
- Energy bars
- Tow Rope
- Road Map
- Flashing bike lights – to augment the warning triangles, in place of flares. Watch the batteries!