



SURVIVOR FAMILY

EVACUATION!

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Introduction

The frequent news of hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, earthquakes, and tsunamis makes it clear that it's important to be prepared when disaster strikes. You never know when a disaster, natural or otherwise, makes it make it necessary to leave your home.

For most people, an extreme event either induces panic or a “freeze” reaction. What would you do? Where would you go? How would you survive? It can be so overwhelming that you put it on the backburner and think, “This will never happen to me.”

This is especially true when others depend on you for security and shelter. Seniors, children, invalids, and even pets left alone to fend for themselves often spend their doomed last hours experiencing pure terror. Your job is to provide your dependents with a defense plan of action and communication. Pets may be secondary, but the last thing you want is family members extremely distraught about the status of kitty and pooch. Include all family members in your disaster survival plan.

The fact is disaster can happen to anyone, anywhere. Some examples of disasters requiring evacuation are:

- Flooding
- Mudslides
- Tornadoes
- Hurricanes
- Nuclear catastrophes
- Wildfires
- Earthquakes
- Tsunamis
- Toxic waste spills
- Terrorist attacks

It's important to think about what might happen in the area where you live. Do you live near a coastline? That makes flooding and hurricanes a reality. Inland you may need to worry more about severe storms causing flooding and tornadoes.

No matter where you live you need to think about the possibility of a terrorist attack. Of course no one wants to think about the devastation that could cause. Attacks happen and if you're not prepared you could find yourself without the essentials.

Replacing Fear with Preparation

It's important to be prepared for an emergency situation so that when it comes you won't feel panic. Panic causes you to make unwise decisions and could even cost you your life in a disaster.

The purpose of preparedness is not to focus on all the bad things that can happen. You don't need to walk around in fear concerned that the end is near. Instead, you do need to face the reality that bad things can happen but have the assurance you're ready for anything.

When you feel prepared, instead of panic you'll go through a checklist and follow your plan. You'll have what you need to survive including shelter, food, communication, power, and be able to care for your family members.

Don't wait to begin planning and preparing for survival. You probably won't be able to afford to purchase everything you need all at once. For most people it takes time to gather the right supplies.

That's why it's important not to put off your survival preparedness. When you begin now – before there's an emergency – you'll have time to purchase items, make plans, and get organized so that when it an emergency comes around you're ready.

Don't feel like you have to do everything at once. Prioritize what you need and chip away at the list a little bit at a time. This way you'll be able to break it up into manageable chunks without feeling overwhelmed.

Surviving an Evacuation

The most common type of emergency will require you to evacuate an area. With some disasters, such as a hurricane, you have a little more time to prepare to leave home. But with many disasters you have just a few moments to leave with the essentials.

It's important to be prepared ahead of time so that you can have all of your needs met in an emergency evacuation. In this section you'll learn about what you need to do to successfully leave your home.

72 Hour Emergency Kit

The most important thing you can have on hand is a 72 hour emergency kit. Three days' worth of supplies will give you enough to get through most disasters until you can find a more permanent place to go.

You can also put a kit together that will last three days and can fit into a backpack so that you can grab it and go. There are a couple of different ways you can go about putting a kit together.

First, there are commercial kits available that you can just purchase. These generally come with freeze dried food, emergency ponchos, first aid kit, flashlights, and other items you might need.

This might be the best option for you if you don't want to spend the time to put together your own and you can afford the kit all at once. They do tend to be pricey, so if you have a large family it might not be practical to do it this way.

Another thing to consider about premade kits is that they're a great start, but they may not fit the individual needs of you or your family members. You'll still need to add more items to make them complete.

If you'd rather make your own, you can begin gathering supplies a little at a time until you have what you need. You may already have some of these things in your home. Find a spot in your home where you can store supplies and can get to them easily.

There are several things you need to keep in mind that will make your kit more efficient and effective:

- Your kit needs to be small enough and light enough that you can carry it for long distances if needed.
- You should make sure that you replace items that expire on a regular basis.
- The kit needs to be waterproof as many natural disasters occur in water.
- You need to know how to use all the things in your kit. If you don't like something or don't know how to use it, take it out.

- Every member of the family should be able to carry their own kit, unless they are babies or toddlers. But even small children can carry their own backpack of supplies.
- Your kit should have supplies for staying home in an emergency as well as evacuating. It's best to cover all your bases. For example, in a nuclear disaster or disease outbreak you'll need to stay indoors and seal off at least one room.

When it comes to an emergency kit, it's important to plan for enough food, water, and other supplies to be comfortable and healthy for minimally 3 days. There are many things that should go into your kit. The following are suggested items:

- A portable radio that includes a hand-crank and solar-power option.
- Flashlight with hand-crank option (many radios now come with this feature)
- Glow sticks
- First aid kit (see First Aid section for more details)
- Waterproof matches
- 3 day supply of food
- Three gallons of water per person
- Water purification tablets
- Manual can opener
- Disposable plates, cups, and utensils or mess kit
- Aluminum foil, plastic wrap, resealable bags in a variety of sizes
- Small container of bleach
- Hygiene items such as toilet paper, soap, hand sanitizer, detergent, feminine hygiene items, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, lip balm, sunscreen, baby wipes
- 10 gallon bucket – can be used to store items and can also double as a toilet or stool. Large trash bags to line bucket for use as a toilet.
- Sleeping bag
- Complete change of clothes
- Small tent

- Small shovel
- Compass
- Duct tape and scissors
- Small sewing kit with needle, thread, safety pins, and buttons (can be used for more than just clothing)
- Plastic sheeting to seal off windows and doors in a room of your home
- Prescriptions for medication and eyeglasses
- Over the counter medications
- Whistle
- Emergency poncho
- Emergency blanket
- Baby items such as wipes, diapers, food, bottles
- Necessary items for family members with disabilities or seniors in the home
- Extra keys for your home and vehicles
- Photos of your family members and pets in case you need them for identification purposes. For example, if you get separated.

It's important to elaborate a little more about what clothing items should be in an emergency kit. You need to make sure that every family member has:

- A pair of sturdy boots – most natural disasters leave debris behind and you want to protect feet
- Socks – wet feet cause big problems
- Rain gear – coat or poncho
- Hat and gloves for cold weather – make sure they're waterproof
- Thermal underwear in cold climates
- Sunglasses

- Masks – both for dust and disease prevention
- Layers so that you can add more if necessary and remove them for warmer weather

You'll need to adjust clothing so that it fits the season you're in. In addition, you need to adjust it for changes in size. For example, clothing for children needs to be replaced every season and you need to accommodate for weight gain, weight loss, or pregnancy.

It's most important to plan for being cold and wet rather than hot and dry. You can always alter clothing to make it cooler, but it's hard to add to it if you don't have enough layers to keep warm.

During the winter, make sure you have a coat available to you that's warm enough and waterproof. Water, snow, and ice can make it difficult to keep warm if you get damp. Wet clothing won't retain body heat.

When it comes to food for a three day emergency kit, there are different ways you can do it. Some people purchase Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) that are used by the military for survival in the field. This is a simple way to choose foods.

You can also purchase premade kits that have dehydrated food for your 72 hour kit. You may still want to add favorite snacks. In addition, some emergency preparedness retailers make energy bars that are made to supply all the calories you need for a day.

You may also choose to create your own three day supply. The following is an example of a very inexpensive food list you would need for each person to provide enough calories. This is also easily transported in a small space:

- 2 pouches dry hot chocolate mix
- ½ pound of trail mix
- 2 packages chewing gum (avoid mint that will taint the flavor of all the other food)
- 5 Beef jerky sticks
- 2 pouches of dry apple cider mix
- Small juice box
- 20 pieces of hard candy (jolly ranchers, butterscotches, peppermints)
- 3 fruit rollups
- 2 packages of instant soup
- 1 can of soup containing meat

- 3 packages of saltine crackers (each containing 2)
- Gel fuel for preparing soups and drinks
- At least a 2 liter bottle of water

In an emergency you're not really as concerned with nutrition as you are with keeping calories in your body and eating foods that taste good. Gum can also help to curb your appetite when you're not eating as much as normal.

Whatever you do, don't choose foods that you don't like for your kit. If you don't like them now, you won't like them in an emergency. Also keep in mind any allergies in your family when designing a menu for your kit.

If you're ready for a list of food that's a little more substantial, here is another way to put together food for each person:

- 6 juice boxes
- 3 milk boxes (the type that are stable at room temperature)
- 2 granola bars
- 1 package of graham crackers (about 9 crackers)
- 5 packages saltines (2 per package)
- 1 cup trail mix
- 6 fruit rollups
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup raisins (or 5 small packages)
- 1 can tuna (3 oz)
- 7 beef jerky
- 1 package gum
- Hard candies or M&Ms
- Fork, knife, and spoon
- Pack of hand wipes (or baby wipes)

- 2 liters of water

This is a great list because it doesn't require you to heat any food. You can simply eat it as is. All of this can be stored in a large Ziploc bag and placed in a backpack. Divide each of the food items into three and eat a third each day.

You also need to check your food kit every six months. Look for items that are close to their expiration date and use them. Replace those items with new ones in your kit.

It's important to keep your emergency kit free from water and also that it's easy to carry. Most people find that the best way to carry their kit is in a sturdy hiking backpack. These usually have space to store a sleeping bag as well as other personal belongings.

Many backpacks also can accommodate hydration systems so that you can store and access water easily. Backpacks are made to distribute weight evenly so that you can handle walking for long distances with your things.

Even young children can carry their belongings in backpacks. Not only does this help them feel confident and like helpers, it also takes some of the burden off of the adults who will probably carry a little extra.

Don't forget to pack some fun items to help pass the time. This is important for both children and adults. Some examples include:

- Coloring books and crayons
- Playing cards
- A favorite book
- Knitting supplies
- Notebook and writing utensils
- Post it notes
- Travel games
- Glow bracelets/necklaces (also great for a source of light and help you to see your children in the dark – they can just think it's fun)

Emergencies are stressful and having some things to take your mind off of the stress can be very beneficial and keep you from panicking. Kids also have a lot of energy and need some things to do so that they don't feel worried.

Evacuation and Shelter

When you have to leave home quickly, you need to have a plan in place. It's important to practice emergency drills to make sure every person in the family knows where to go and what to do.

If everyone is at home and you need to evacuate, practice getting your emergency kit and meeting at a designated spot in the home. Discuss a signal to tell everyone it's time to go in an emergency.

Practice with safety drills regularly so that your family just remembers what to do without having to think much about it. Drills for different situations may be necessary. For example, you might want to have drills for:

- Tornadoes
- Fire
- Hurricanes
- Biological/terrorist attacks

It's important that you don't instill fear in your children when doing these drills. Explain that you want them to feel powerful and prepared in an emergency. Don't use scare tactics that will cause them to feel insecure and panicked.

While it would be nice if everyone were home during an emergency, there's the distinct possibility that you'll be scattered when something occurs. You also need to have a plan to coordinate when you're not at home together.

Determine how you will contact each other in an emergency and who will be the main contact. It can be chaotic when everyone is trying to contact multiple people. Choose one point person that should be called in an emergency.

Text messaging is also an effective way to communicate in an emergency. When the earthquake happened in Haiti in 2010, many people were unable to call using cell phones. But text messages did get sent and received more consistently.

For older children with phones and adults, texting is a good way to communicate when cell towers seem clogged up with communication.

In addition, it's important to have a designated meeting place in an emergency. It could be your home, but if your home is being affected by disaster you'll need another place to meet.

Discuss a central location and then practice meeting up at that location. The more you practice the easier it will be to find each other during a real emergency.

Make sure that children have your telephone number and address memorized in case they're at school or a friend's house and need to call you. Also make sure they know the number of another point of contact in case they can't reach you.

This could be a neighbor, family member, or family friend. Your kids will feel more secure knowing that they've been able to get in touch with someone who can help them to find you.

In addition, designate someone to be a point of contact that doesn't live in your area. This is someone who won't be in the path of the same disaster and may be better able to handle passing messages on and organizing an evacuation.

Once you've all practiced evacuating your home or finding each other during a disaster, it's important to decide what to do next. If you can't stay home, where should you go?

You need to have a wide variety of options. Different emergencies will cause you to have different needs. You might be able to get to a hotel nearby, but that costs a lot of money. And if you have pets, it can be difficult.

It's important to map out a few hotels that would be in your price range and can be easily accessed. If you have pets, call ahead and find hotels that accept pets and find out what their pet policy is.

Look for hotels that are close by, but also broaden your range to find those that are fifty, a hundred, or even two hundred miles away. Keep this information handy with your emergency kit so that you can have it when you need it.

While a hotel is a comfortable place to stay, there are many reasons why you might not be able to stay in one. First, the cost may be out of your price range. Hotels can be expensive and the cost can really add up quickly to stay more than a night or two.

Second, if many people are evacuating, you may not be able to find space in a hotel. Hotels and motels fill up quickly in emergencies and you may find that there's no room in the inn, so to speak.

It's important to have a few backup plans if you're not able to find accommodations in a hotel. Many people look to stay with family members during an emergency situation. If you have family members or friends nearby, discuss the possibility of staying with them should the need arise.

There may be times, for example in hurricane, when you need to get further away. Prearrange accommodations with family members or friends who live in distant areas so that you have a place to go. Regularly keep up with those family members so that it's not a surprise when you need to take advantage of the arrangement.

You'll have more luck with these arrangements if you're also willing to open up your home should the need arise. When people feel like it's a two way street, they'll be more willing to offer aid.

If you don't have family or friends you can stay with and a hotel is out of the question, there are still a couple of options. First, make sure that you have tents and sleeping bags that can accommodate everyone in your family.

If all else fails you can find an open area that's suitable for camping and pitch a tent. If you're evacuating due to weather, you'll need to get pretty far down the road before using this option. You may also use your vehicle as a shelter if weather allows.

Another possibility is staying in a disaster shelter. Many communities set these up when there's an emergency leading to evacuation. However, these are often crowded and can be unsafe at times.

During Hurricane Katrina, the superdome in Louisiana was converted into a shelter. However, there were horror stories about what went on in the overcrowded shelter. While steps have been taken to insure this doesn't happen again, a shelter is a place where you can't control who else will share the space.

You shouldn't count on shelters to be available when you need them. Churches may offer a better solution if they set up shelters. But as a last resort it can be better than being trapped outside in the elements.

Whatever you do, make sure that you explore your options ahead of time so that you're ready for whatever crops up. Have a list of people and places you can contact for emergency shelter. Also scope out some possible areas where you could camp if necessary.

Keep a list of local relief agencies such as the Red Cross and local churches that might set up shelters so that you're prepared.

Transportation and Fuel

When it comes to evacuating, transportation is key. If you own your own vehicle it's a good idea to keep it fueled. Many people let their vehicles sit on empty or get very low before refueling.

It's a good practice to always keep your car with at least half a tank of gas so that if you have to evacuate quickly, you can get down the road before needing to refuel. Often during an evacuation, gas supplies run low and it's hard to find it when you need it.

In addition to keeping your tank supplied, you should consider storing some gasoline to use during emergencies. If stored improperly, though, gasoline can become a fire hazard as it's combustible.

Make sure that if you choose to store fuel, you do it in the proper container. Keep it in a cool place that doesn't have a wide fluctuation in temperatures. You also want to use your fuel and rotate it so that it stays fresh and effective.

Don't store gasoline in your home as it can lead to a fire. Some places may have ordinances against storing gasoline. Many places require that it be stored underground for safety reasons. Make sure to find out what the law is in your area.

There are other sources of fuel, though, that you can use in an emergency including:

- Wood – provides heat for warmth and for cooking
- Propane – easily stored in tanks and can be used for a wide variety of purposes, some cars even use this fuel
- Kerosene – great for using as a light source and can be used in many different ways
- Solar energy – having solar powered equipment will allow you to take advantage of a free and safe source of energy

Having some extra gasoline on hand can help you to keep your car moving during an evacuation, but don't count out other sources of fuel that can be useful for you.

If you don't own your own vehicle, it may be difficult to rely on public transportation in an emergency. This was another area where many people learned from experiences of those in Katrina.

During that time, many people didn't have transportation and couldn't evacuate even though they wanted to. And there were no accommodations made for pets for those who needed public transit.

The best thing to do in this situation is plan ahead to get rides with friends or family members nearby. Have a list of people to contact in this type of emergency. You can always try to work with public transit, but it's hard to count on this service during an emergency.

Planning for Pets

When making your emergency plans, don't forget about your furry friends. Often people don't think about them until it's too late. Make sure to have supplies for them in your 72 hour kit including:

- Food
- Bowls for food and water
- Water
- Collar with proper identification
- Leash/harness
- Kennel or carrier
- Bedding
- Litter box and litter for cats
- Any medications your pets take regularly
- Coats for cold and wet weather
- Comfort items such as catnip and toys

For many people, pets are just a part of the family. Don't forget to make sure they have what they need or you'll find yourself even more stressed and heartbroken when you can't take care of them.

It's not uncommon for pets to be overlooked in a disaster and end up in shelters, diseased, or even dead because they were left behind. Make sure you have a plan to keep your pets safe and healthy with you.

Important Documents

In an evacuation, you need to make sure that you have important documents with you. The originals should be kept in a safety deposit box for long-term storage. But having scanned documents and hard copies in your emergency kit will help you to keep things organized properly.

Some examples of important documents that you should have with you (at least copies of them) are:

- Inventory of your home (furniture, electronics, etc.)
- Copies of all insurance policies
- Copy of will
- Deeds to properties and land
- Vehicle titles and registration
- Tax returns
- Investments
- Credit card and bank account numbers
- Driver's license
- Social security card
- Birth and marriage certificates
- Passport

While you may keep the originals in a safe place where they're not at risk of being destroyed in a fire or flood, having copies in your emergency kit will make it easy to iron out your affairs when you get to a safe place. Keep documents in a waterproof pouch so that they will be safe in your pack.

In addition to these documents that are critical, you may also want to make a list of important things you want to keep for personal reasons such as photos, jewelry, letters, or favorite items.

Make sure you know what you would grab if you only have a few minutes to leave your home. And when it comes to important family photos and other documents make sure to scan them electronically and keep them on a portable drive.

Put a drive with those files on it in your safe deposit box and keep one in your emergency kit. What most people regret losing most is family photos that can't be replaced. Make sure to have electronic copies of them so that can never happen to you.

Home Business Data

Especially if you work from home, you need to make sure you back up important information and documents. Keep them on a portable drive and have a copy in your safe deposit box as well as your emergency kit.

This can include financial documents, tax information, articles of incorporation, and any other documents that you need to use regularly.

Cloud storage makes it possible to store information on a server that's not in your home. However, in a major disaster that technology can fail. Make sure you have your own copies of documents so that you don't lose all that you've worked so hard to build.

First Aid and Medications

Natural disasters commonly result in injuries –both minor and major. It's important that you're prepared to handle medical emergencies appropriately until you can get to help during an evacuation.

First and foremost, you'll benefit from taking first aid and CPR classes. The best resource for this is the Red Cross. They offer courses at many different levels. Start at the beginning and take more advanced classes if you can.

The more you know, the safer you'll be during an emergency and the more you'll be prepared to handle whatever gets thrown at you. Even children can take some first aid and CPR classes and you should help your child to do so.

In first aid classes you'll be taught:

- How to stop bleeding
- Skills to splint sprains and breaks
- Techniques for treating burns
- What to do if someone goes into shock
- How to keep blood pumping when the heart stops
- How to safely move someone with a neck or back injury

This information can be lifesaving in an evacuation situation. Instead of panicking and wondering what to do, you can immediately jump in and help when there's an injury or illness.

You'll also need to have a good first aid kit with you. For a 72 hour emergency kit it's important to have the necessities but that your kit doesn't take up too much space. It also needs to be in a waterproof container.

Many people use plastic resealable bags for their first aid kits. That can be okay, if you don't have any other options. But in general it's better if it's in a hard case. The following is a list of supplies that are good to have in your 72 hour kit:

- 3 days' worth of prescription medications and a copy of your prescription
- Over the counter medication for diarrhea, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, allergy medicine, ipecac
- Alcohol swabs
- Safety pins

- Adhesive bandages
- Elastic bandage
- Antibiotic ointment
- Hydrocortisone ointment (for burns and rashes)
- Instant hot packs and cold packs
- Medical tape
- Water purification tablets
- Sunscreen (needed even if it isn't a warm season)
- Lip balm
- Petroleum jelly (small container)
- Triangle bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Nail clippers
- Soap
- Hand sanitizer
- Cotton balls
- Children's medications (if you have children)
- Shot records
- Medical history
- CPR Mask (protects you from germs and vomit)
- Disposable gloves
- First aid instruction book

- Feminine hygiene products (if necessary)

You should be able to fit your first aid kit in your backpack so that it doesn't require extra space. It's also a good idea to keep a first aid kit in your vehicle so that if you're unable to get home in an emergency, you still have these supplies with you.

Cash

During a disaster, electronic methods of payment may become impossible to use. If electricity is lost or banking systems go down, your credit cards and debit cards may be of no use.

The opposite can also be true. During Hurricane Katrina, gas stations actually stopped taking cash because they were concerned about having it on hand for security purposes.

It's important, then, to have cash and your credit cards/debit cards in your emergency kit so that you can pay for things you need. It's also a good idea to have traveler's checks. These are accepted just like cash, but are safer to have in your pack.

How much cash should you have? That's a hard question to answer. But you'd be best having at least enough cash to pay for a hotel for several nights. With your emergency kit you'll have food and clothing.

You should have as much as you can, but this will obviously be limited by your budget. Try to put a little away each paycheck so that you can build your emergency cash.

Even children's packs should have a little cash, even though the bulk of cash should be held by adults. But having a few dollars and some change is good for children.

Protection

This is an area where personal preference will guide your decisions. Some people feel that it's important to have weapons and ammunition for personal protection. Others are uncomfortable with using firearms.

It's important to do what feels right for you. If you do choose to carry weapons for personal protection, it's important to make sure trained in how to use them properly and take care of them safely.

Having firearms that you don't know how to use can actually be more dangerous and are likely to get into someone else's hands. Also make sure your children understand gun safety so that you have no tragic accidents.

Bartering During Disaster

While it's important to have money in a disaster, it can also be valuable to have other things during an emergency. Things that don't seem like a big deal can become more valuable when they're hard to get.

There are many items that are specifically good for trading during a disaster including:

- Tobacco/cigarettes
- Coffee
- Chocolate
- Gold and silver
- Batteries
- Medical supplies (though you should hold on to those as much as possible)
- Ammunition (though it's not a good idea to trade unless you're doing it with someone you know well and trust)

Having these items will give you something to trade for the things that you need, even if you don't use them yourself. Remember that you don't have a lot of space in a three day emergency kit, so you'll want to have a small supply of anything you choose for bartering.

You can use your items to get what you need. For example, someone may want to trade batteries for 10 cigarettes. Even if you don't need the batteries at the moment, you should go ahead and make the trade (especially if you don't smoke).

This can fulfill a later need you may have or you can use the batteries to barter later for something you need. Cash is good to have, but it's not always as valuable as being able to trade for things that are needed by people immediately.

Planning For Long-Term Disaster

While it's always important to plan for a 72 hour emergency that takes you away from home temporarily, you also need to plan for long-term problems. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or disease outbreaks will have effects that last longer than three days.

When disaster strikes, fortune favors those who are prepared. For example, when there's an emergency grocery store shelves quickly empty and in a major disaster more deliveries are nowhere in sight.

Looting and violence can also make it impossible to get the things that you need if you don't already have them. Disaster can bring out both the best and the worst in people. It's best to make sure you have the things you need in your home so that you won't rely on stores or relief agencies for survival. They may not have what you need.

Infrastructure Takes a Long Time to Return

Even when the immediate danger has passed, there can be long-term problems with survival if you're not prepared. For example, after the terror attack of 9/11, no one could leave the city and it took weeks for transit and public works to return to working order.

After Hurricane Sandy, even after the hurricane ended it took weeks for people to get power back and to be able to visit a store for their needs. Those who weren't prepared had to rely on relief organizations for food and many people didn't have what they needed to cook food or have light during dark hours.

Long Term Food Storage

You may have a refrigerator and freezer stocked with food, but if you lose power that food will spoil quickly. It's important to have food stored that is nonperishable. It's a good idea to have a goal to have at least 2 weeks' worth of food stored in your home.

FEMA recommends two weeks, but many people choose to have even more – and you can't have too much. You may want to work up to a month, three months, six months or more.

Some people even work toward having a year's worth of food stored. That can be an overwhelming task. But if you start small, you can work your way up to having more and more.

When it comes to planning for storing food long-term, it can be hard to determine what to purchase. One way to begin is by creating a two week menu of foods you can serve your family that don't require you to have appliances.

Possible sources for heating and cooking food include sterno fuel and propane camping stoves. Make sure you consider how you'll heat foods that need to be heated before eating.

Make sure that in addition to a camping stove, you also have plenty of propane stored so that you can use your stove for a couple of weeks if necessary.

After you've made a two week meal plan, make a list of all the things you'll need to make those meals. Then you can begin purchasing the items. If you can do it all at once, that's great. But if not, buy a little at a time.

To increase your storage for longer, simply repeat the two week menu. In an emergency you won't mind that you don't have much variety – you'll be happy that you have what you need.

Make sure to choose foods that your family likes and include items that are comforting such as desserts and hot chocolate. If your family doesn't want to eat a food now, they're not going to like it any better when there's no other choice.

The following is a list of foods that store well and should be considered for your long-term food storage:

- Wheat (you'll also need a wheat grinder to make flour – one that you can crank by hand in case there's no power)
- Rice
- Dried beans
- Popcorn
- Canned meat (tuna, chicken, SPAM)
- Canned soups
- Honey
- Crackers
- Chips
- Hot chocolate mix
- Apple cider mix
- Canned pasta sauces
- Dried Pasta

- Canned juices
- Oats or instant oatmeal packages
- Sugar
- Canned vegetables
- Canned chili
- Canned beans
- Canned fruit
- Pancake mix
- Drink mix (Kool-Aid, lemonade, etc)
- Condiments (purchase in small containers so that you don't need to refrigerate)
- Dried fruit
- Trail mix
- Packaged cookies
- Candy
- Beef jerky
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Bread (can be kept in the freezer for storage – even if power is out you can use it for many days)

The most important thing is to have a menu plan so that you know how you'll use the food. Wheat, dry beans, and rice are great if you know how to use them and cook with them. If not, don't make them a priority. Buy what you know how to use and what you enjoy.

Also make sure you have items to prepare and clean up such as:

- Aluminum foil
- Plastic wrap

- Disposable plates, cups, cutlery
- Wet wipes
- Matches
- Paper towels
- Dishwashing liquid
- Manual can opener
- Knives
- Cooking pans

These items are essential to using the food you've stored.

It's also important to rotate your food supply. Food, even in cans and boxes, has an expiration date. You should make sure you're buying the foods you like so that you can use them before they go bad and replace them with new items.

When you buy new cans, put them in the back of the shelf and push the older purchases forward so that you can use them first. You don't want to waste any money on spoiled food or find out that the food you were counting on is no good to you in an emergency.

Water

A good rule of thumb is that you should store a gallon of water per person per day. That means that for a two week supply you'd need to have 14 gallons of water stored for each person in your household.

When it comes to water it's best to err on the side of having too much rather than not enough. It's also important that you make sure you have proper water storage. The gallon containers you buy in the supermarket aren't made for long-term storage and can eventually leak and cause damage to your storage room.

Two liter bottles that soda comes in are much better for storing water. You'll need to clean the bottles with a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach per liter of water to make sure you clean the bottle well before adding water for storage.

If you're using water from your tap that's treated by the local water supply, you don't need to add anything to it. This water is already treated and clean. If you're using water that's not chlorinated, you'll need to add eight drops of bleach to every gallon of water to prevent the growth of microorganisms.

Make sure you use plain bleach with no added scents.

You can also purchase large barrels specifically made for storing water. They should be food-grade and make sure that they're cleaned and sanitized before using. These are usually too large to store inside and if they do happen to leak they can flood your home.

When storing outside in a cold climate, make sure you don't fill the containers to the top. You need to allow some space for freezing and expanding. Water should be replaced every year to make sure that it stays fresh and potable.

If you think that water has become contaminated, you need to make sure and purify it before drinking it. You can do this in several ways. First, filter out any impurities by running the water through filter paper or even a fine cloth.

Next, you need to disinfect it. You can do this by boiling it for at least five minutes, adding 8 drops of bleach to a gallon, or using water purification tablets.

The more water you have stored the better. Think about all the ways you use water beyond drinking such as:

- Brushing teeth
- Bathing
- Flushing toilets
- Laundry

While these may not be your top priorities during an emergency, they'll become important long-term. You'll want to have as much stored as you can so that you can handle not having a water source for at least two weeks.

Hygiene and Sanitation

It's also important to stock up on hygiene supplies that you may not be able to purchase during an emergency. You may not care much about how you look and smell, but good hygiene is also about preventing illness and disease.

You'll need an extra two week supply of items such as:

- Deodorant
- Toothpaste
- Shampoo
- Soap
- Laundry detergent

- Dishwashing liquid
- Bleach
- Baby wipes (get clean without water)
- Antibacterial wipes
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Feminine hygiene supplies
- Diapers (if you have need)
- Thick garbage bags and ties for sanitation
- Large trash can for sanitation
- Camping toilet (optional)

During a disaster, you may not be able to use toilets. This can create a major problem with health and sanitation. But you don't have to be unprepared for this situation. One way to continue to use your toilet is to empty the water and line it with thick plastic bags.

After using the toilet, add a small amount of disinfectant solution made of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. Then close the bag, tie it off and place it in a large trash container (preferably outside).

When infrastructure returns to normal you'll be able to dispose of this waste. But in the meantime it keeps you from having to live in filthy and unsanitary conditions. You can also purchase a camping toilet which basically allows you to do the same thing.

Some people also use a large bucket lined with trash bags to as a temporary toilet. You'll also need to make sure that you clean hands with hand sanitizer or wash them if possible.

Having baby wipes in addition to toilet paper can help you to stay cleaner in a situation where water isn't available.

Power and Fuel

Long-term you may also find that you need to prepare for having energy so that you can have light, electricity, or be able to cook. There are many ways you can plan to have energy when you need it.

First, stocking up on batteries is essential for keeping flashlights and lanterns going. You can also use batteries to supply radios when you don't have a source of electricity or solar power.

You may also want to consider purchasing a backup generator so that you can continue to have electricity during a power outage. If you have a generator you'll also need a supply of fuel to keep it going.

Most generators use diesel fuel for power and this is a fuel that can be safely stored. You'll just need to make sure you check city ordinances for proper, legal storage. There are also generators that run on propane and that are the simplest fuel to store.

You may also want to have a store of wood. Wood is a great fuel during an emergency. You can use it for cooking and you can also use it to warm your home if you have a fireplace or wood burning stove.

Coal can also be used in a coal stove, though most people don't have those in their homes.

Gel fuel is perfect for warming up foods or cooking. It can be used indoors to warm foods and keep them warm. You can buy it by the case and store it in your home. If you have a camp stove, make sure you keep plenty of propane on hand so that you can use it. A gas grill can also be used outdoors for cooking and uses propane fuel.

Many people are tempted to use candles for lighting, but these can pose a fire hazard and most emergency management agencies discourage the use of candles during an emergency situation.

But you don't want to forget to have plenty of matches and lighters in your supply so that you can light your camp stove, grill, or gel fuel.

Financial Savings

In a tough economy, putting money into savings is tough at times. But when you're preparing for a disaster you need to make sure you don't ignore this important principle. When an emergency comes along, you won't have much warning.

If you don't have enough money to pay for a hotel, pay for extra fuel, or other necessities you could be in a bad position. In addition, disasters often make it difficult or impossible to work and earn income.

You may need to have savings to live off of while you're waiting to find a new source of income. If you're not saving anything right now, it's important to start immediately. Even a small amount will eventually add up.

You may think that you're stretched too thin to save money – and now you have to buy even more for emergency preparedness. But there are ways you can save a little money here and there.

Here are a few tips for building your savings:

- Create a budget and stick to it.
- Eliminate a few luxuries such as a morning cup of coffee at an expensive coffee bar and funnel the money into savings
- Every time you get paid, put a small amount in savings – even if it's just \$2.
- Work to get out of debt and stop using credit cards to pay for things.
- Pay into savings first – before you pay for anything else. Generally, people find that they can make due with what's left but if you wait you won't have anything left.
- Look for items you have in your home that you don't need anymore. Sell them and use that money to start your emergency fund.
- If you have a little windfall of unexpected money, put that money into savings instead of splurging.
- Put all of your spare change in a jar. When the jar is full take it to the bank and deposit in your savings account.
- Use coupons for groceries. Put your discounts into savings.

There are many small choices you can make that will add up to big savings. If you're already in the habit of saving, keep up the good work. But if not, begin small so that when an emergency happens you'll be prepared.

If you're stuck in debt, you should invest some time developing a debt management plan to get out of it. When you're free from credit card debt you'll have much more income to devote to savings.

It may seem tough to sacrifice now to save money. But in the end the true financial freedom you'll have will be better than anything you had to give up temporarily.

Medication Supply

When you're unable to return to normal life for a few weeks and you take a daily medication, you can run out of what you need. It's important to plan ahead to have at least an extra 30 day supply of medication as well as a copy of your prescription on hand.

With insurance company regulations, you may not be able to get your insurance to cover an extra supply. If you can afford it, it's a good idea to go ahead and pay out of pocket for the extra supply so that you can have it on hand.

Make sure to check expiration dates and use the stored medication before it expires, replacing it with a new refill. Store medication properly so that it stays at room temperature (or whatever temperature is required) and doesn't go bad before its time.

You should also think about nonprescription medications that you use regularly. It's a good idea to have a large stock of ibuprofen, acetaminophen, allergy medication, vitamins, supplements, and any other medicine you use at home.

Buying in bulk can help you to get a good price on these medicines and give you a good stock to keep with your food storage so that you're prepared if disaster occurs.

Communication

Most of us are heavily reliant upon cell phones for communication, but during a major disaster it's possible that those will no longer work. Other forms of communication such as land lines, email, and the postal service may also be unable to be used.

The best form of communication that you can rely on in a long term emergency is a Ham radio. Ham radio is also known as amateur radio. This is a type of radio that allows you to talk to people all over the world using special frequencies.

In order to use ham radio, you need to have a license to do so. You can look online for local ham radio classes where you can learn how to operate the radio and take the licensure test.

Once you have your license, you can invest in a ham radio itself. The cost is an average of about \$200. You can, of course, find some that cost much more. But with a basic radio you'll have what you need to communicate in a disaster.

This is a great way to find out what's going on not just where you are, but all over the world. It can alert you to what emergency personnel are doing and help you to coordinate efforts with others.

There's nothing worse in a disaster than being cut off from the rest of the world not knowing when it's safe to leave your home or what's going on outside your walls if you're stuck at home.

You'll feel secure knowing that you have a way to communicate and to get information even when other traditional forms of communication have failed. You should also talk to friend and family members about investing in this type of radio so that you have a network of people who can send and receive messages.

Protection and Security

When it comes to a long term situation, there are different kinds of needs in the area of protection and security. The type of disaster will determine what it is you need to be protected from.

For example, in the event of a nuclear or chemical attack you'll need to seal off your home – or at least an area of it – to keep toxins from getting into your home. This is called a “shelter in place”. You're not going anywhere, but you need to be protected.

This can also be necessary in the case of an epidemic of illness. You'll need to seal off areas of your home and keep away from outside people. You may also need masks to protect from disease if you need to leave your home for any reason.

When it comes to fighting disease, you need to have a specific kind of mask. Its rating should be N95. This type of mask is capable of protecting you from microscopic pathogens. But it's not perfect, so you need to make sure that you avoid contact if possible first.

For chemical and nuclear shelters, you'll need to use duct tape and thick plastic sheeting to seal off windows and doors of rooms in your home. It can be difficult to seal off the entire thing, so make sure that you plan ahead which room(s) you'll seal.

You especially want to make sure that you're not sealed off from sources of food. Make sure you have enough space marked off that your entire family can fit comfortably for a long period of time. Keep all of your disaster supplies in that area.

Security is a different story. During a disaster you see many people doing good things. However, many people use this as an opportunity to take advantage of others. During an emergency you're likely to see looting occur and people will try to take what doesn't belong to them.

Especially if you have a large supply of stored food, medications, and other survival items you could be a target for dubious people interested in taking what you own. You need to make sure you do the following so that you can have the best security in your home possible:

- Secure all doors with deadbolt locks (preferably double sided key locks)
- Add intruder alarms to all doors and windows that will alert you if someone enters your home
- Double check all possible entrances and make sure they're secured

This is a bare minimum of what you need to do. But you can take it further. Some people choose to board up windows to prevent glass from being broken by an intruder. In addition, you can choose to add pepper spray, mace, Tasers, or firearms to your supply list.

If you choose to use these items, you need to make sure that you participate in training for you and for anyone living in your home so that they know how to use it properly. Weapons and ammunition should also be stored so that young children can't get to them.

It's also a good idea to take a self-defense or marital arts class in order to improve your personal alertness and safety. All of these things together add up to a safer home in the event of a natural disaster.

Helping Special Populations

When you're preparing for disaster, it's important to consider any special needs of people in your household. The most common special populations include children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Children

We've addressed working with children several times in this guide. It's important that you educate your child about disasters and what could happen without instilling fear. It's helpful to show your child that you're actually taking action and that if something goes wrong, there's a plan.

With kids it's extremely important to practice drills over and over again so that they know what to do without having to think too much about it. If they know what to do, they won't panic in an emergency.

You also need to take into consideration special supplies you need for babies and children such as child carriers, small backpacks, diapers, and comfort items. While adults can usually handle boredom, kids have a tough time with it. Make sure you pack items such as favorite toys, puzzles, and a stuffed animal to cuddle.

Talk to children about all the types of helpers that work to help make things safe during a disaster such as doctors, firefighters, utility workers, police, paramedics, and volunteers. Focus on the good rather than the bad things going on around you.

In a disaster it's important to give your child a job to do. It may be carrying her own items, helping to prepare meals, or helping to clean up. Kids with a purpose feel positive and confident.

It's also important to provide as much structure as possible. For example, do your best to develop a meal schedule and a rest schedule so your child will know what to expect even in a serious circumstance.

After you've found safety, make sure that you talk with your child about his or her feelings. You may need to enlist the help of a counselor to help process what's happened and recover from any post-traumatic stress.

Seniors

For seniors, you'll need to make some special considerations. First, many seniors may live alone. If you're a senior living alone, you need to make sure you have several people designated to check in on you in a disaster or emergency.

Make sure to plan ahead and give your keys to someone who can enter and check on you. Also make sure that whoever has agreed to come to you during an emergency will know where you keep your emergency supplies.

It's especially important that you have an emergency kit that contains all of your important documents such as health conditions, medications, or any other special needs. You should also create an evacuation plan and make sure that is with your documents.

In an emergency, your telephone may not work. You need to work with your friends or family to come up with a way to communicate should you not be able to call. For example, using a CB radio or ham radio.

You should also look for people that you can check on during an emergency. When you have a mutual relationship with a network of people you'll be safer in a disaster. If you go out of town, make sure and let people know so that they won't come to your home.

People with Disabilities

For people who have disabilities, it's important to plan ahead for issues such as hearing problems or limited mobility. There are many different types of disabilities, so it's not possible to develop a generic disaster plan that will meet every need.

Instead, it's important for you to develop a plan tailored to your specific needs. If you have a disability, it's important to meet with any caregivers to discuss an emergency plan. Some questions to answer include:

- How will I get around if there is debris in the area?
- Who will help me with personal needs such as bathing?
- If my water service is no longer working, who can help me get access to water? Or how can I do it myself?
- Do you need to have a special vehicle to be transported in an evacuation?
- Who can help you to get food and prepare meals in an emergency?
- Where will you go during an evacuation?
- Do you have emergency supplies for any service animals or pets that live with you?

It's important to speak with family, friends, or other caregivers about what to do in an emergency. Similar to seniors, you need to have people designated to check on you and to help with any limitations you may have.

You should also have a contact that is out of the area and can be reached should communication in your local area be a problem. And you should share your emergency plan with local friends and family as well.

Make sure you know which escape routes are the best for you. If necessary install ramps so that you can exit the building safely and quickly.

If You're a Caregiver

If you care for someone who is ill or has a disability, it's important to take into consideration special needs. Initially, your disaster plan isn't going to be much different. You'll still need to gather supplies and have an emergency kit.

You'll need to also have a kit for the person you care for and make sure that it has any special supplies they may need. For example, you may need incontinence supplies or special medications.

When you're caring for someone else in a disaster, it's a good idea to enlist the help of others. Make sure you have friends and family members or even neighbors who will be ready to help you if needed.

Together you can make a disaster plan. You'll need to consider what to do if you need to evacuate quickly. As mobility is often a problem when someone needs care, you'll need to plan escape routes that will work for you and make sure you keep pathways clear.

Be specific about what you need from each person you talk to. For example, during a tornado you may need a neighbor to come over and help you move to a safer location in your home. During a hurricane evacuation you may need help moving to a vehicle or a place to stay that can accommodate both you and the person to whom you're giving care.

You may also have heavy equipment that needs to be carried and transported to a new location. Make sure you have a few people on your team that can help you to move heavy items.

As a caregiver, it's easy to become isolated and feel like you have to do everything on your own. But the truth is you can ask for help and in the case of a natural disaster you'll need to ask for help in order to stay safe.

You'll also need to make sure you have a list of all medications being taken by your loved one and that you have a plan for receiving special treatment such as dialysis or chemotherapy should it be needed. Talk with your local physician for resources on how to do this.

Make sure you have all of your loved one's medical records in one place and that you can grab them in an emergency. Keep them in a watertight container so they won't be destroyed during a natural disaster.

If you have a loved one who lives in an assisted living facility or nursing home, talk with the staff to discuss their emergency plan. Make sure you know what to do to get in communication with them.

The Red Cross provides valuable resources for developing a disaster plan in special situations. Most of their resources are free or very inexpensive and go into great detail about dealing with disabilities in an emergency. You can use them to make a specific plan to fit any disability or situation.

Preparing for Disaster on a Budget

You can't turn on the news or open a newspaper without talk about the depressed economy. For most people that means tightening their budget and making due without some luxuries.

If you're barely making ends meet, the idea of having to buy a lot of disaster supplies can be daunting. But you really can be more prepared on a budget. With a few simple tips you can make your dollar stretch a bit further.

First, make sure that you gather all the supplies you already have in your home. For example, most people already have matches, flashlights, and some first aid supplies. You probably don't need to start totally from scratch. You also may have backpacks that aren't being used.

Go through your home and gather all the things you already have from the checklists found earlier in this guide. Then mark those off of your list and focus on adding the things you don't have.

Don't feel like you have to have everything at once. Focus first on your 72 hour kit. Make the determination that you'll spend \$5 a week on it until you have one for each member of the family. If there's a larger item, save that five dollars until you have enough to get what you need.

If \$5 is too much, change it to \$2 or whatever amount works for you. It may not sound like much, but every dollar adds up.

Look for items to go on sale that you need for your kit. Watch your local sale papers and look for coupons for items that you need. Take advantage of clearance items that help you complete your kit.

Check local dollar stores for items as well. There are many items you can find in those stores such as emergency ponchos and blankets, whistles, flashlights, and first aid items. They may not be of the highest quality, but they will do until you can replace them with something better.

If you have a bigger chunk of money to spend, you can purchase many supplies in bulk. You'll get a cheaper price per unit on things when you buy a lot at once. Warehouse stores are great resources for items that you can add to your kit such as canned soups, meats, and granola bars.

Stay organized and inventory what you have and what you still need so that you'll always be prepared when you find something you need at a great price.

You can also just pick up an extra can of something here or there when you go shopping. For example, if you're already buying a can of tuna, sneak another one in the cart for your emergency kit. Your grocery bill won't be much higher and you'll be a little closer to your goal.

When you purchase a new package of toilet paper, take out one roll and add it to your emergency supplies. When you get a new box of trash bags, take out one bag and put it in your emergency kit. You'll hardly notice one missing, but they'll add up quickly.

You can also buy things seasonally. For example, can food tends to be the least expensive during the winter months around the holidays. Backpacks are often the least expensive at the start of the school year. Once the school supply rush is over, they go on clearance for less than half of their original price.

It's also a good idea to talk to friends and see if you can arrange a swap or barter for items you need. For example, you may have a lot of batteries and your friend may have an extra flashlight. You can make a trade and both have what you need for your kit.

Once you have your 72 hour emergency kit ready to go, you can begin to work on more long-term food storage. This is the time to create the two week menu and make a list of what you need to prepare all of it.

Then you can just follow the same process of adding a few items at a time until you have all that you need. Once you have two weeks' worth of food, you can repeat the menu and gather supplies until you have four weeks' worth of food.

Storage is also an area where you can end up feeling overwhelmed by cost. But there are many economical options that you can use. For example, 2 liter soda bottles make great storage containers for water, but they also are great for storing dry goods.

When you finish a bottle of soda, clean it out with a disinfecting solution, let it completely dry, and then use it to store water, beans, rice, or pasta.

You may also want to can some of your own food. If you have a vegetable garden or fruit trees you may want to can some of your extra harvest. While storing items in glass jars isn't ideal for some disasters, you can do it safely.

For example, if you can in glass jars you should return them to the box that the jars came in. The partitions and cardboard will cushion the jars from impact. The box will also protect the food from light that can cause the food to discolor.

Many people garden as a way to raise healthy produce inexpensively. You can certainly use this food for part of your food storage that can be used during an emergency or disaster.

You can also look for used items to buy. Look in your local community on craigslist or in thrift stores for items that will work for your survival needs. You might find a used camp stove for a fraction of the cost of a brand new one. You can also pick up tents, sleeping bags, lanterns, and other used items.

Also take advantage of company freebies. Many companies will send free samples to your mailbox when you fill out interest cards online. These can make up your toiletry kit and won't cost you anything but a few moments of time.

Once you get started, you can feel good that you're taking steps toward planning and preparing for a disaster or other type of emergency.

Anything you do to prepare is going to be better than doing nothing to prepare. Even if you only have a week's supply of food you'll be better off than most of the population who doesn't have anything stored for an emergency.

Preparation for an emergency isn't always at the top of a person's to do list, but it's something you shouldn't let get pushed aside. There are too many stories of people in the news who weren't prepared for an earthquake, hurricane, or other emergency and lost their lives.

You don't want to be one of the sad stories on the news. Instead, you can be an example of how to be prepared and survive even under near impossible circumstances.