

BUILD A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

A disaster supplies kit is simply a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency. Try to assemble your kit well in advance of an emergency. You may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You will probably not have time to search for the supplies you need or shop for them.

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least 72 hours. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours or it might take days.

Additionally, basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones may be cut off for days or even a week, or longer. Your supplies kit should contain items to help you manage during these outages.

Basic Disaster Supplies Kit

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Kit Storage Locations

Be Prepared For Emergencies While Traveling

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Since you do not know where you will be when an emergency occurs, prepare supplies for home, work and vehicles.

Home

Your disaster supplies kit should contain essential food, water and supplies for at least three days.

Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.

Additionally, you may want to consider having supplies for sheltering for up to two weeks.

Get more information on building a disaster supplies kit.

Work

You need to be prepared to shelter at work for at least 24 hours. Make sure you have food and water and other necessities like medicines in your kit. Also, be sure to have comfortable walking shoes at your workplace in case an evacuation requires walking long distances.

Your kit should also be in one container and ready to “grab and go” in case you are evacuated from your workplace.

Get more information on building a workplace disaster supplies kit.

Vehicle

In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car. This kit should include:

- Jumper cables
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid kit and necessary medications in case you are away from home for a prolonged time
- Food items containing protein such as nuts and energy bars; canned fruit and a portable can opener
- Water for each person and pet in your car
- AM/FM radio to listen to traffic reports and emergency messages
- Cat litter or sand for better tire traction
- Shovel
- Ice scraper
- Warm clothes, gloves, hat, sturdy boots, jacket and an extra change of clothes
- Blankets or sleeping bags

Also consider:

- A fully-charged cell phone and phone charger
- Flares or reflective triangle
- Baby formula and diapers if you have a small child

Be prepared for an emergency by keeping your gas tank full and if you find yourself stranded, be safe and stay in your car, put on your flashers, call for help and wait until it arrives.

More and more people are making their homes in woodland settings – in or near forests, rural areas, or remote mountain sites. There, homeowners enjoy the beauty of the environment but face the very real danger of wildfire.

Every year across our Nation, some homes survive – while many others do not – after a major wildfire. Those that survive almost always do so because their owners had prepared for the eventuality of fire, which is an inescapable force of nature in fire-prone wildland areas. Said in another way – if it’s predictable, it’s preventable!

Wildfires often begin unnoticed. They spread quickly, igniting brush, trees, and homes. Reduce your risk by preparing now – before wildfire strikes. Meet with your family to decide what to do and where to go if wildfires threaten your area. Follow the steps listed below to protect your family, home, and property.

Practice Wildfire Safety

People start most wildfires – find out how you can promote and practice wildfire safety.

- Contact your local fire department, health department, or forestry office for information on fire laws.
- Make sure that fire vehicles can get to your home. Clearly mark all driveway entrances and display your name and address.
- Report hazardous conditions that could cause a wildfire.
- Teach children about fire safety. Keep matches out of their reach.
- Post fire emergency telephone numbers.
- Ensure adequate accessibility by large fire vehicles to your property.
- Plan several escape routes away from your home – by car and by foot.
- Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood could work together after a wildfire. Make a list of your neighbors' skills such as medical or technical. Consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs such as elderly or disabled persons. Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.

Before Wildfire Threatens

Design and landscape your home with wildfire safety in mind. Select materials and plants that can help contain fire rather than fuel it. Use fire-resistant or noncombustible materials on the roof and exterior structure of the dwelling, or treat wood or combustible material used in roofs, siding, decking, or trim with fire-retardant chemicals evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory. Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees. For example, hardwood trees are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus or fir trees.

Your best resource for proper planning is www.firewise.org which has outstanding information used daily by residents, property owners, fire departments, community planners, builders, public policy officials, water authorities, architects and others to assure safety from fire – it really works. Firewise workshops are offered for free all across the Nation in communities large and small and free Firewise materials can be obtained easily by anyone interested.

Create a 30- to 100-foot safety zone around your home

Within this area, you can take steps to reduce potential exposure to flames and radiant heat. Homes built in pine forests should have a minimum safety zone of 100 feet. If your home sits on a steep slope, standard protective measures may not suffice. Contact your local fire department or forestry office for additional information.

- Rake leaves, dead limbs and twigs. Clear all flammable vegetation.
- Remove leaves and rubbish from under structures.
- Thin a 15-foot space between tree crowns, and remove limbs within 15 feet of the ground.
- Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Prune tree branches and shrubs within 15 feet of a stovepipe or chimney outlet.
- Ask the power company to clear branches from powerlines.
- Remove vines from the walls of the home.
- Mow grass regularly.
- Clear a 10-foot area around propane tanks and the barbecue. Place a screen over the grill – use nonflammable material with mesh no coarser than one-quarter inch.
- Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish at an approved site. Follow local burning regulations.
- Place stove, fireplace and grill ashes in a metal bucket, soak in water for 2 days; then bury the cold ashes in mineral soil.

- Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety cans. Place cans in a safe location away from the base of buildings.
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home. Clear combustible material within 20 feet. Use only wood-burning devices evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory.
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy and also prepare/update a list of your home's contents.

Protect your home

- Regularly clean roof and gutters.
- Inspect chimneys at least twice a year. Clean them at least once a year. Keep the dampers in good working order. Equip chimneys and stovepipes with a spark arrester that meets the requirements of National Fire Protection Association Standard 211. (Contact your local fire department for exact specifications.)
- Use 1/8-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas, and the home itself. Also, screen openings to floors, roof and attic.
- Install a dual-sensor smoke alarm on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms; test monthly and change the batteries at least once each year.
- Teach each family member how to use a fire extinguisher (ABC type) and show them where it's kept.
- Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, axe, handsaw or chain saw, bucket and shovel.
- Keep a ladder that will reach the roof.
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes.

Plan your water needs

- Identify and maintain an adequate outside water source such as a small pond, cistern, well, swimming pool, or hydrant.
- Have a garden hose that is long enough to reach any area of the home and other structures on the property.
- Install freeze-proof exterior water outlets on at least two sides of the home and near other structures on the property. Install additional outlets at least 50 feet from the home.
- Consider obtaining a portable gasoline powered pump in case electrical power is cut off.

When Wildfire Threatens

If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information. Follow the instructions of local officials.

- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Confine pets to one room. Make plans to care for your pets in case you must evacuate.
- Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home outside the threatened area.

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately

- Wear protective clothing – sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves, and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Lock your home.
- Tell someone when you left and where you are going.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

If you're sure you have time, take steps to protect your home

Inside:

- Close windows, vents, doors, blinds, or noncombustible window coverings and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
- Shut off all utilities if possible, including bottled gas.
- Open fireplace damper. Close fireplace screens.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.

Outside:

- Seal attic and ground vents with precut noncombustible coverings.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Connect the garden hose to outside taps.
- Set up a portable gasoline-powered pump.
- Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near aboveground fuel tanks. Wetting the roof may help if it is shake-shingled.
- Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of the home.
- Gather fire tools.

Emergency Supplies

When wildfire threatens, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit with items you may need if advised to evacuate. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffle bags, or trash containers.

Include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash, or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of eye-glasses.
- Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Assemble a smaller version of your kit to keep in the trunk of your car.

Create a Family Disaster Plan

Wildfire and other types of disasters – hurricane, flood, tornado, earthquake, hazardous materials spill, winter storm – can strike quickly and without warning. You can cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together. Meet with your family to create a disaster plan. To get started:

Contact your local Emergency Management Agency or your local American Red Cross chapter

- Find out about the hazards in your community.
- Ask how you would be warned.
- Find out how to prepare for each type of disaster.

Meet with your family

- Discuss the types of disasters that could occur.
- Explain how to prepare and respond to each type of disaster.
- Discuss where to go and what to bring if advised to evacuate.
- Practice what you have discussed.

Plan how your family will stay in contact if separated by disaster

- Pick two meeting places:
 - 1.a place a safe distance from your home in case of a home fire.
 - 2.a place outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Choose an out-of-state friend as a “check-in contact” for everyone to call.

Complete these steps

- Post emergency telephone numbers by every phone.
- Show responsible family members how and when to shut off water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- Contact your local fire department to learn about home fire hazards.
- Learn first aid and CPR. Contact your local American Red Cross chapter for information and training.

Practice and review these steps!