

In light of recent disasters such as the Southern California wildfires and those in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida and Tennessee in the wake of Hurricane Helene, I think it's a good opportunity to talk about GO KITS. After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared with a Go Kit and a Stay Kit can make all the difference in ensuring the safety and well-being of yourself and your loved ones. Your life and the life of your family may depend on it. We as Emergency Managers and Public Health Preparedness Coordinators do our best to provide resources when disaster strikes. Yet we need our citizens ready and prepared in order to build resilient communities. Be it a natural or man-made disaster, you may be required at a moment's notice to evacuate or shelter in place at your home, workplace or school. Wherever and whatever it may be, Go Kits and Stay Kits could be the difference!

Through the years we have set up shelters during blizzards, floods, tornadoes, power outages and active assailant incidents. We have encountered some challenging situations to resolve, such as persons traveling through Minnesota on I-90 in a blizzard wearing flip flops and shorts, travelers with pets not having enough pet food, families without enough formula for their child, a transplant recipient who expected to be home in a week and ended up stranded at our shelter for an extra three days and was without essential transplant medications. Things like this are not scheduled. Being prepared provides peace of mind no matter what happens. Having an emergency kit is a vital tool to ensure things are available to protect yourself and your loved ones during a disaster. Below is a list of items that we feel are essential.

Go/Stay Kits

Prescription medications and glasses

Infant formula and diapers

Pet food, water and supplies for your pet

Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, Identification and bank account records in a portable waterproof container

Complete change of clothing including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. (Coats hats, gloves) if in cold weather climate.

Feminine supplies, personal hygiene items and hand sanitizer

Paper and pencils/pens

Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

Dust masks

Cell phone with chargers

Flashlight (extra batteries)

Toiletry items (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant)

Cash and change

The above items are at a minimum what's needed for a go kit.

What about a Basic Disaster Supply Kit?

Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation).

Food (at least a several days supply of non-perishable food with manual can opener).

Battery powered radio

Flashlight

First aid kit

Extra batteries

Whistle (to signal for help)

Plastic sheeting, scissors and duct tape (to shelter in place).

Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties

Sleeping bags or warm blanket for each person

Matches in waterproof container

Paper cups, plates paper towels and plastic utensils

Start small-you don't have to buy everything all at once. Tailor your kit to your specific situation-if you have a pet, include pet food in your kit. And remember that it is important to maintain your kit so it's ready when needed.

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