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TOOLS FOR SURVIVAL

A Guide to Emergency Preparedness



A Coast Products Resource

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Introduction

The Earth is roiling. Tsunamis and hurricanes pound the shores. The ground beneath us shifts and grinds. Volcanoes simmer. Every year, news headlines scream fresh disaster as earthquakes, storms and eruptions wrack the planet, claiming thousands of lives. And each new headline brings us face to face with the looming question from which most of us recoil.

Are you ready?

Barely more than a decade in, the twenty-first century is already fraught with apocalypse anxiety. Heralded by dire predictions of global technological collapse, “Y2K” dawned on an apprehensive audience that traded its champagne and confetti for water jugs and dry-food stores, bunkering down to await the worst.

The worst never came, but not even two years later, a stunned world watched New York’s World Trade Center fall to terrorists, igniting new panic. Since then, the rate and scale of disasters worldwide has seemed to escalate – from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans to the earthquake-tsunami combo in Japan – as we march inexorably toward 2012, the latest deadline for the end of the world.

“It’s the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine...”

— R.E.M.



The object of fear varies, from natural disaster to terrorist attack, from nuclear Armageddon to the belief that civilization will ultimately collapse under its own weight. But the underlying realization is the same: The time for languishing amongst our modern conveniences is past.

Whether or not you buy into the doom and gloom, there's no denying that Americans are growing uncomfortably aware of how far from self-reliance they are. Food comes from grocery stores, heat from flipping a switch, water from a faucet. But what happens if we lose the infrastructure that supports these luxuries? Most people have neither the supplies nor the skills to survive on their own.

Emergency preparedness has become a watchword in many communities, where residents are encouraged to assemble home survival kits and formulate disaster response plans. Some are taking it even farther, simplifying

their lives and learning to homestead or live “off the grid,” with the goal of becoming fully self-reliant. Calling themselves “preppers,” these survivalists are gathering online to help each other prepare for whatever may be coming.

“I had an epiphany: Bad times lay ahead.”

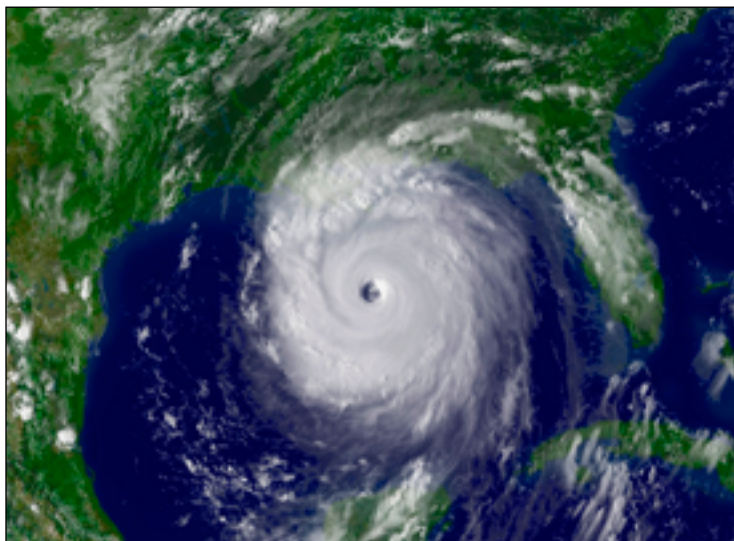
“In May of last year, I had an epiphany: Bad times lay ahead,” [one prepper writes](#). “I’ve come to realize that the only way to insulate one’s self from the collapse ... is to prepare for self-reliant living.”

On the preparedness spectrum, most people fall somewhere between apathy and survivalism. This book aims to help concerned individuals leave apathy behind and begin arming themselves with essential supplies and skills. In its pages, you’ll find the information you need to assemble a basic home survival kit.

Are you ready to get prepared?

Gathering Your Emergency Supplies

Hurricane Katrina flayed the coast of Louisiana with wind and rain in 2005, bursting the local levee system and submerging New Orleans in floodwater. The storm cleared, but the emergency was far from over. Electricity was knocked out, water systems were contaminated and perishable food supplies, well, perished. Many survivors spent days without food or water.



NOAA PHOTO OF
HURRICANE KATRINA

The end of the world may or may not be nigh, but the possibility of an emergency disrupting basic food, water and power systems is all too real. A well-planned home survival kit should include all of the basics your family would need to survive during that time.

Government officials assure us that in most emergencies, survivors should only need to last for a few days before help or rescue arrives. The [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA) recommends stockpiling enough supplies to last everyone in your household for **at least three days**. Other organizations suggest aiming higher. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) urges families to consider creating an emergency store that would last **two weeks**, even though it's unlikely an emergency would cut off food and water supplies for that long.

What to Include In Your Emergency Kit

It's impossible to anticipate every contingency. Even the best-laid emergency plans can get turned on their heads during a disaster. Regardless of what happens, preparing a survival kit will give you an edge you wouldn't otherwise have had.

Creating a disaster kit may seem like an intimidating task, but it's easier to manage if you tackle it over time.

Begin buying a few extra items for your stockpile each time you go to the grocery store. Even dedicating \$5-10 of your grocery bill each month can make a surprising dent. Compiling your kit over time will also allow you to take advantage of sales and coupons.

Tailor your kit to your family's needs. If you have infants, elderly, or someone with a medical condition, you'll need extra water, medical supplies and specialized foods. If you have pets, you'll need supplies for them, as well. Choose foods your family eats, and include a few items to help keep spirits up in a disaster. Your mental condition is as important to your survival as your physical condition.

Basic Home Survival Kit

- Water and food
- Flashlight
- Matches in airtight container
- Medical supplies
- Sanitation and hygiene items
- Extra clothing
- Battery-powered radio
- Sleeping bags and warm blankets
- Cooking and eating utensils
- Extra batteries
- Fire extinguisher
- Emergency whistle
- Cash and coins
- Copies of ID and credit cards
- Baby supplies or other special needs

Essential #1: Water

Water is so easily available to us most of the time, we don't think twice about using it. After all, 70 percent of our planet is covered with water. It falls from the sky and wells up from the ground. Yet only a tiny fraction of that water is safe to drink; the rest contains salt, microbes or other contaminants that can make you sick.

How Much Water Should I Store?

Basic rule of thumb:

- 1 gallon a day per person.
- 1 gallon a day per pet.
- Each person should drink 4 quarts of water a day.

Add extra if:

- You have children or a nursing mother with you.
- You have ill family members.
- You live in a very hot climate.

When public water supplies are shut off or contaminated, drinking water becomes scarce very quickly.

Although a typical American uses 80-100 gallons of water per day, most of it goes toward flushing the toilet, taking showers and other household tasks. Survival experts recommend stockpiling **a gallon of water per person per day** – half to drink, and the rest for sanitation and any other needs. Don't forget to include a gallon per day for each of your pets, too.

In addition to your stored water, you may want to include a means for treating any water you may find, just in case the emergency outlasts your supplies. Water purification tablets or drops are available at most sporting goods stores, as are filtration systems that treat water from natural sources, such as lakes and streams. Never drink floodwater or water that has floating material, an odor or a dark color.

Preparing Your Water for Storage

When storing water for an emergency, it's important to keep it free of contamination. Any bacteria in the container can multiply over long months in storage and ruin your supply. For that reason, emergency water must be tightly sealed in a sterile container.

The safest source of stored water is commercially bottled water that is still sealed in its original container.

Alternatively, you can store water in food-grade-quality containers such as soda bottles or commercially available containers made for storing water, but these must be sanitized first:

1. **Wash** with dish soap.
2. **Sanitize** by swishing with a bleach solution (one teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach to a quart of water).
3. **Rinse** thoroughly with clean water.
4. **Fill** your containers with tap water – if you use a well, the water will need to be treated – and avoid touching the inside of the lid when you seal it up.

What Can I Store My Water In?

Safest

- Commercially bottled water sealed in original container.

Acceptable

- Food-grade-quality containers made for storing water.
- Reused plastic soda or water bottles.

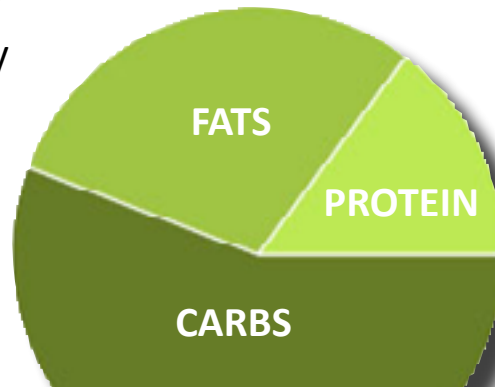
Avoid

- Cardboard containers.
- Glass or other breakables.
- Jugs that have held milk or fruit juice.
- Containers that can't be sealed tightly.
- Commercial water past expiration date.

Essential #2: Food

Food does more than simply keep the body alive. It soothes our emotions, helps families bond and gives us a tangible connection to the Earth. Food also makes us feel comforted, cared for and psychologically sustained.

In an emergency situation, the foods you have available can have a surprising impact on your state of mind. Your food stores should not only contain enough calories to keep your family alive, but it should include enough diversity to keep everyone feeling as nourished as possible. Choose items your family would normally eat, and add in some treats or comfort foods to help keep everyone's spirits up.



Keep it simple. That said, you also want to keep your survival menu simple, with non-perishable items that require minimal preparation. Whenever possible, choose ready-to-eat foods that don't have to be cooked.

Focus on the Big Three. The human body requires three basic nutritional elements: proteins, fats and carbohydrates. A healthy diet consists of around 55% carbohydrates, 30% fats and 15% protein. Most protein sources will also include fat, so focus on carbs and protein.

Carbohydrates

- Canned fruits, vegetables
- Dried fruits
- Crackers
- Whole-grain cereal

Protein

- Canned meat (tuna, SPAM)
- Dried whole eggs
- Powdered or canned milk
- Nuts and dried beans

Fats

- Canola, sunflower and olive oils
- Most protein sources

Food Stockpiling Tips

While you don't want to be planning three-course emergency meals, you do want to put some careful thought into what foods will go into your survival kit. A few things to keep in mind:

Pay attention to packaging. The more compact and lightweight your food items are, the easier they'll be to store and take with you in case you need to evacuate. Try to stick with plastic or metal containers, which are lighter than glass and won't break. Foil pouches of tuna and other preserved meats are also handy, as they're lightweight and easy to open.

Avoid excessive thirst. Consider how your food rations will affect your water supply. Foods that make you thirsty – those that are salty or high in fat or protein – will cause you to drink more. Whenever possible, choose salt-free crackers, whole-grain cereals and canned foods that have a high liquid content, as these can help you stave off dehydration. It's also best to choose foods that don't require water for preparation.

Plan for special diets. Take into account any food allergies and special dietary needs when planning your survival kit. Babies, toddlers and nursing mothers may need special foods or formula. Anyone who is sick or elderly may need canned soups, juices or dietetic foods. And don't forget about your pets!

Do Include:

- Canned foods with high liquid content.
- Ready-to-eat foods that don't require refrigeration, cooking or water.
- High-energy food bars.
- Basic pantry staples (sugar, salt, etc.)
- Vitamin, mineral and protein supplements.
- A manual can opener.

Don't Include:

- Salty foods that make you thirsty.
- Swollen, dented or corroded cans.
- Foods that require special preparation.

Essential #3: Warmth

After water and food, warmth is the next essential requirement for survival. In fact, a person can freeze to death more quickly than he or she can starve to death. Your kit should include multiple means for staying warm, including:

Blankets. Pack at least one sleeping bag or warm blanket per person. You may want to add more if you have any sick or elderly family members. It's also a good idea to throw in some survival blankets, which reflect your body heat back to you and are made for staying warm in the wilderness.

Clothes to Pack

- Warm coat
- Long pants
- Long-sleeve shirt
- Sturdy shoes
- Hat, scarf and mittens

Clothes. Each family member should have one complete change of warm clothes, including shoes. It's a good idea to include rain gear, such as ponchos and waterproof shoes, as well. Clothes that become wet can accelerate hypothermia as the water evaporates. If you have growing children, you'll need to keep your clothing supplies updated with current sizes.

Fire. Make sure you have the means to build a fire. Most families use matches in a waterproof container – don't forget to include the striker from the box. A genuine flint and steel is another good choice, as it can last you indefinitely, but you should practice with it beforehand. Include a hatchet, survival knife or some other means for cutting kindling.

Essential #4: Sanitation and Medical Supplies

Once you've got the basics for survival in place, staying healthy should be your next big concern. Poor sanitation can make you sick, which will only compound your problems in a survival situation. You should also be prepared to handle any illnesses or injuries that may arise, at least until you can get medical help.



Keep It clean. Washing your hands before you eat is especially important during an emergency. With water in potentially short supply, hand wipes and hand sanitizer can be a godsend. Household bleach is another useful item for purifying water and sanitizing your living area.

Anticipate medical needs. There's no need to reproduce your entire medicine cabinet, but you should have some basics available. At minimum, include a first aid kit and any prescription and non-prescription drugs you use regularly. Those who use inhalers, contacts, glasses, hearing aids or feminine products will also need extra supplies.

What to Pack

- Hand wipes or sanitizer
- Toilet paper
- Liquid chlorine bleach
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Lip balm
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit
- Prescription meds
- Non-prescription meds
- Special needs

Essential #5: Light

Just like food, having a steady light source available offers psychological as well as practical benefits. Light makes us feel safe and helps stave off panic. It also prevents us from stumbling around in the dark and injuring ourselves.

Every home emergency kit should include several lighting options. It's a good idea to have a source of area light, which gives a central glow around which your family can gather, as well as individual flashlights for each person.

There are many different types of emergency lights available, from regular flashlights to propane lanterns. Many experts, however, are increasingly recommending LED lights for both home and wilderness emergencies. LED lanterns and flashlights are preferred because they're more energy-efficient than other types of bulbs, which means the bulbs and batteries last far

longer. They're also more durable – LED flashlights have no filaments in the bulbs, so they're less prone to breaking during storage or transport.

POWER CHIP
TACTICAL LED
FLASHLIGHT

Why Choose LED Flashlights?

- **Energy efficient:** longer battery life
- **Brighter beam:** father-reaching light
- **Burn cooler:** no risk of fire
- **Durable:** no glass or filament to break

4-C EMERGENCY
AREA LIGHT



RVIVAL

Types of Emergency Lighting

Just as we layer our homes with multiple lighting options, so should you include a variety of light sources in your survival kit. The more LED lights you have available, the less chance you'll have of ending up in the dark should one of them fail.



G40 LED FLASHLIGHT

What to Look for in an LED Lantern

- Dimmer switch or efficiency setting
- Red or flashing emergency signal setting
- Multiple LEDs for brighter light
- At least 50 hours of battery life
- Durable casing

Lanterns

The most practical area lighting for a disaster kit is an [emergency LED lantern](#).



Emergency lanterns are made to withstand rough treatment, and they often come with special features such as dimmer switches to prolong battery life and red or flashing light settings to signal for help.

Flashlights

Flashlights come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from tiny LED lights



you can carry on a keychain to [tactical LED flashlights](#) that can double as a baton. Every family member should have his or her own personal flashlight or headlamp for getting around in the dark.

Headlamps

LED headlamps have an elastic band that's usually worn over the head or hat.



They're favored by outdoorsmen because they leave your hands free to cook, chop wood or do other work. Look for [LED headlamps](#) with multiple brightness settings to avoid blinding each other.

Essential #6: Survival Knife

If an emergency lasts for more than a few days, a survival knife can quickly become one of the most important items in your disaster kit. When the rest of your supplies run out, this essential tool can help keep you alive. It can be used to kill and skin game, forage for food, chop kindling for the fire, and defend your family and supplies against outside threats.

When choosing a hunting knife or survival knife, look for a rugged model that can withstand some abuse.

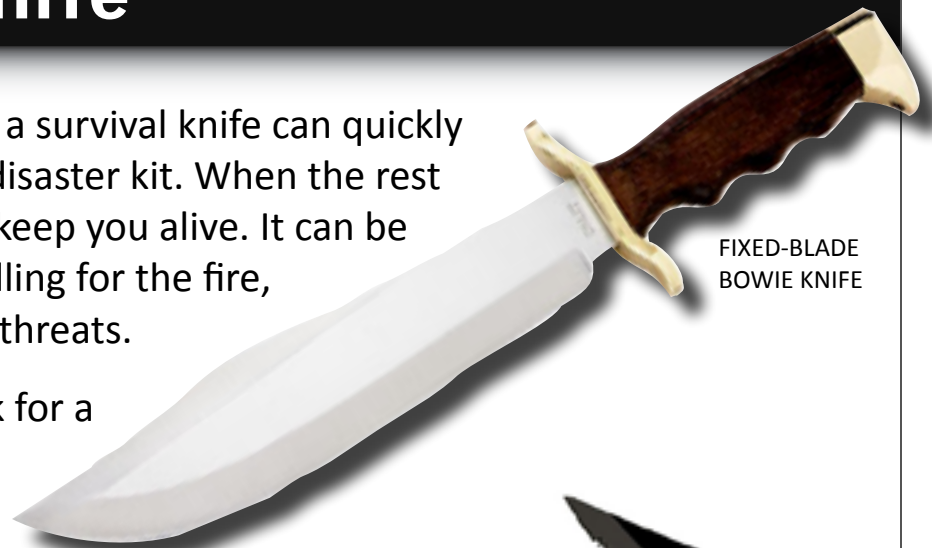
Caring for Your Survival Knife

- Never store in a leather sheath.
- Store in a cool, dry location.
- Oil the blade to prevent rust.
- Always keep it sharpened.

Folding vs. Fixed Blade

Sporting knives come in two basic types. A folding knife, or pocket knife, folds in on itself so it can be safely carried in a pocket, whereas a fixed blade is permanently affixed in an open position. Fixed-blade knives have no moving parts and are generally stronger and larger than folding knives.

Most survival experts recommend including both: a fixed-blade knife for heavy cutting, and a folding knife for basic utility. When choosing a folding knife, consider a multi-tool that also includes pliers, screwdrivers, a saw blade and other useful features.



FIXED-BLADE
BOWIE KNIFE



LOCKBACK
FOLDING KNIFE



POCKET
PLIERS
MULTI-TOOL

What to Look for in a Survival Knife

You never know how you might need to use your survival knife until it happens. That's why it's important to choose a knife that's not only strong enough for the tasks it was created to perform, but rugged enough to withstand some abuse. A high-quality survival knife doesn't need a lot of bells and whistles; instead, look for characteristics that indicate a well-built knife.

Blade type: There are two main types of knife blades: carbon steel and stainless steel. In general, stainless steel is more resistant to rust but can also be more brittle and difficult to sharpen. Carbon steel, on the other hand, can carry an extremely sharp edge and is tougher when used for chopping, but it will need more maintenance in order to prevent rust.

Handle weight: One of the most important indicators of a quality survival knife is the weight of the handle. A heavy handle indicates strength and durability, whereas a light or hollow handle gives away the knife's weakness. Avoid gimmicky knives that contain a mini "survival kit" in the handle.



GRANDPA
BRANDS STAG
BONE BOWIE

Tang size: Another point to consider is the size of the tang. On a fixed-blade survival knife, the tang is the part of the blade that extends into the handle. The fuller the tang, the stronger the knife will be. Avoid knives with a narrow tang, as these are more likely to snap or separate from the handle.

Storing Your Home Survival Kit

Now that you've assembled your emergency supplies, the next question is what to do with them. Depending on how large your family is, your survival kit can become unwieldy pretty quickly. The key is to keep everything labeled, organized and safe from damage during storage.

What to Put in a Bug Out Bag

- At least one gallon of water
- Water purification tablets
- Three-day supply of food
- LED flashlight, extra batteries
- First aid kit and hygiene items
- Waterproof matches
- Survival knife or multi-tool
- Warm clothes and shoes
- Essential medical supplies
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Necessary cooking utensils

Keep it together. Whether you're sheltering at home or evacuating to a safe location, you may need to reach your disaster kit quickly. Place items into sealed plastic bags and pack everything into easy-to-carry containers, such as covered trash cans, duffle bags or backpacks. Label the containers clearly, and store them in a cool, dry place that's easily accessible.

Consider Bug Out Bags. Some families create "bug out bags" or "go bags" for each member of the family. These are individual 72-hour survival kits that each person can grab quickly in an evacuation. If the family becomes separated, bug out bags ensure each member will have the supplies necessary to survive for at least a few days. Place the items into backpacks, label each one with the family member's name and store it in a place he or she knows and can easily reach.

Maintaining Your Kit

- Write storage dates on all containers.
- Replace water every six months.
- Replace food every 6-12 months, depending on items.
- Monitor expiration dates.
- Store devices with batteries removed.
- Test devices once a year.

Get Ready

In a disaster, a 72-hour emergency kit can help you get by during those first few days of confusion. However, compiling your kit is only the first step toward preparation. It's also important to learn about the types of disasters that are likely to occur in your community and understand how to respond to each type.

Make a plan. Once you have the tools for survival available, create a family disaster plan to make sure everyone knows how to use them effectively. Discuss how your family will react in different scenarios, including how you will escape if needed and how you will communicate with each other if you become separated. Read up on disaster response issues such as how to manage sanitation and ration food. Plan how you will ensure your family's safety in a survival situation.

Think long term. Even if you don't ascribe to the idea of a cataclysmic event that would completely change life as we know it, it's a good idea to at least consider the possibility that you may need

Formulating a Family Disaster Plan

- Choose two meeting places: one outside your home, and one outside your neighborhood.
- Determine the best safe spots and escape routes in your home.
- Choose an out-of-state family contact with whom everyone will check in.
- Show everyone in the family how to turn off the utilities.
- Practice your plan.

to survive on your own for longer than your supplies last. The longer the disaster goes on, the greater the chances you will need to rely on your own survival skills. The more you educate yourself and your family, the better off you'll be.

Emergency planning may seem an overwhelming chore, but it's something everyone can help with. Get the whole family involved in compiling and maintaining your emergency kit and formulating your disaster response plan. Above all, take it one step at a time. Emergency preparedness doesn't happen overnight.

Online Resources

[Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)

Read FEMA's comprehensive guide, *Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness*.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Learn about emergency preparedness, sheltering in place and maintaining a healthy state of mind at the CDC website.

[Red Cross](#)

Learn how to get in touch with your local Red Cross chapter in case of a disaster. The site also includes a registry to help you connect with loved ones during an emergency.

[Top Survival Sites](#)

Discover a wealth of information about "prepping," or preparing for self-reliant living, at this list of the most popular survival websites.

[U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)

The Department of Homeland Security offers 30 tips for disaster preparedness.

[Get Emergency Prepared](#)

Find general emergency preparedness information.

[The Weather Channel](#)

Find out more about preparing your home and family for severe weather on The Weather Channel's website.

[National Hurricane Survival Initiative](#)

Read about how to protect your home and loved ones during a hurricane.

[Disability Preparedness](#)

Learn about emergency preparedness for people with disabilities.

Tools for Survival

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