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Are You READY For the Next DISASTER?

By

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Insurance Roundup

Your Emergency Kit

Tornado, Fire, Flood, Earthquake or human perversity,

DISASTER can strike at any time.

By

[Lin Stone](#)

Kansas has its tornadoes, California has its earthquakes, The Coasts have hurricanes, and fires can strike anywhere at any time. What kind of disaster are YOU likely to face? Only about 100 people die from tornadoes each year. More likely to cause you personal grief are straight-line winds, lightningflooding, fires, or even rioting. Just remember that Statistics don't count for a hill of beans when disaster happens to you. Some disasters will simply make travel impossible or difficult for a period of time. Other disasters might trap us in our own homes. These kinds of disaster can be prepared for with certain essentials, containers of water, perhaps an alternate way of cooking --like an outside barbecue, more blankets or a way to open the window. A first aid kit can do wonders to boost your self-confidence. But some disasters can make home the last place we want to be.

When ANY disaster makes us leave home we should have our bag , already packed and ready to pick up on our way out the door to the safest refuge available for the kind of disaster threatening us.



Isn't that always the same place?

No. One place of refuge seldom fits the needs of a dozen different disasters.

If a flood is more likely in your area you need to know where the closest high ground is in relation to your home. In the event a tornado comes swirling your way then your place of refuge might be a hole in the ground, the cellar, your closet or a cavity in a rock -depending on where you live.

For a forest fire or prairie fire your place of refuge will probably look totally different and provide totally different resources. Earthquakes may send you in a different direction altogether. An ice storm could send you shivering for more cover, and a heat wave leave you gasping for more air. The act of planning ahead includes KNOWING what kind of disaster you might expect -- and don't automatically rule out earthquake until you talk to the authorities in your area.

Why do we need to plan ahead?

Well, let me ask a question that throws thousands of families out of kilter: What are you going to do with your pets? In a real evacuation like happened in New Orleans they even force families apart for reasons unknown, do you really think they'll let you take a pet cat, dog, iguana or tiger along? Oh no. You'd better be planning ahead. Plan ahead for your family, your home and for your pets.

I know it is hard to imagine a disaster happening in OUR area. It's hard even when we know for a fact that disaster has already struck our area several times.

We humans tend to expect things to go on as they have for the last six months.

When we turn on the faucet we expect water to gush out.

When we turn on the lights we expect the room to be illuminated.

"That's the way it's always been."

Right up to the last minute, most of us are seldom ready for these sudden disruptions. So it does make sense to deliberately prepare a plan of action for disasters as best you can with places of refuge, insurance, fire drills, and emergency kits.

Updated information is essential because much of what we learned just a few years ago just ain't so no mo. For example, not so long ago motorists were advised to get under an overpass when tornadoes approach. That haven of refuge has proven to be the unsafest place to be hiding. So, seek out the latest information available.

The first place I'd suggest you begin looking for information about potential disasters in your area is your minister. Time and again it has been demonstrated that churches are on the scenes before the government is ready to work in almost any emergency. Only when they are shut out of the action do the churches take a backseat. Pentecost, Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, LDS, et al., these people know how to deal with suffering and don't mind suffering a little bit to serve a lot. Then there are big companies like At&T that have equipment ready for those organizations able to provide willing hands.

By the way, do you have your essential documents (like birth certificates and renter's insurance papers) in a fireproof box ready to go with you when an emergency happens? The box should be conveniently kept where it is easily grabbed for quick removal.

Perhaps the safest place to store those important documents which must be kept at home is inside your freezer which is already insulated. A good Baggie should keep the other odors out.

More important than a plan of action to take when a disaster strikes is a plan of action for dealing with the aftermath. For example, suppose members of the family are scattered away from home when an earthquake comes through. How do they get hold of each other? As the big tornado in Oklahoma taught us, it is easier to call out of state than it is to call next door. If your family has a friend or family member in another state members in the disaster area can plan to call them in order to learn about each other.

Plan for the Worst Pray for the Best

Your Basic Kit

A battery powered radio, a crank type flashlight or at least one with a supply of extra batteries, An instructional manual on Emergency Preparedness, a Fire Extinguisher, water to drink, chlorine bleach, sleeping bags and blankets with pillows if you like that sort of thing, moisture proof matches or butane lighters. Candles are a good source of light and you can cook over them if need be. Have a fresh supply of any daily medications your doctor deems essential to your good health.

Food, for those who want to keep eating until help arrives: Take your choice of tuna, sardines (yuk) corned beef, Spam, K-rations, C-rations, peanut butter, lots of canned juices and the more juice the merrier, raisins, prunes, dried fruits (being sure to eat slowly and consume water heartily) crackers, fruit cocktail, powdered milk, self-rising flour which has been stored more than 24 hours in a freezer to kill those pesky weevil eggs, and any other canned item you love. How much food should you have in your kit? As much as you believe you will need for three days, then double it. One family in Oklahoma had a good storm shelter, but were trapped inside it for 5 days because a tree fell against the door.

Don't forget your need for **a mechanical can opener**. A Swiss Army Knife can provide many tools.

Stress Foods to include:

Sugar cookies, sweetened cereals, good old hard candy like stores put on sale after the Christmas season is over.

Stress Busters you can use:

For the children: Coloring book and crayons.

A spare Palm Game with extra batteries wouldn't hurt. A children's song book might save the day.

For adults: Scriptures, books & needlework -- cards?

Your SANITATION KIT

Most of us don't even think about the subject but it will quickly become one of your uppermost concerns during the aftermath. Yours should consist of at least a plastic bucket, soap, plastic bags and ties, Toilet paper & paper towels, disinfectant and at least an improvised toilet seat, feminine hygienic needs, paper cups, plates, plastic utensils, can opener & utility knife, stick deodorant.

That deodorant stick can do wonders at keeping pesky mosquitoes at bay, and doctoring up scratches. Nor is other makeup a luxury in your emergency kit. Lipstick can protect lips, rouge can protect the skin. Fingernail polish can do wonders at keeping fingernails intact.

Besides all that, let a woman keep up her good looks and she ready to face any emergency.

In the deserts of Arizona I would think nothing at all of going out into the desert for three days with absolutely nothing on me. When I was young I'd even gain weight on the trip. Send me out for three days into a big patch of Arkansas wood and I'd come back (maybe) scarred, battered and starved.

The point is, what YOU know about your environment of refuge largely determines what all else should go into your kit.

Put everything together in one box or package so you will know where it is.

Many families I know put the whole kit into a rolling trash can, which is conveniently placed where it will only be grabbed in an emergency. I keep mine on a heavy duty hand truck, and I have a BIG red wagon ready to carry anything else I can take at that awful moment of departure.

Make sure your family knows where to find your emergency kit if an emergency should ever happen while you are absent.

Put a **standard first aid kit** in the kit at home, preferably somewhere close to the fire extinguisher. Just in case you ever get stranded on the road, keep a smaller roadside emergency kit in your vehicle, **along with extra blankets** preferably wool or one of those space blankets, one or more flashlights and batteries. Having reflectors and/or flares wouldn't hurt a bit.

Your first aid kit should be supplemented with a first aid manual or a scout handbook. Add aromatic spirits of ammonia and water purification tablets, table salt, baking soda, matches or butane lighter, aspirin, eye drops, safety pins, adhesive or paper tape. Bandage materials should include Telfa pads 4" X 4" □Triangle bandage 37" X 37" X52". Splint aids can include popsicle sticks, shingles or thin board. If you run out when you need it, use a heavy newspaper and strong string..

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F I R E ! Please note: because of broken gas lines, etc. I was warned about advising people to include matches and candles in their emergency kit. Well, that is occasionally true enough right after the disruptive forces of nature have made hash out of your world. However, you really should keep the matches and lighters handy in case you are ISOLATED for any indefinite period of time, using them only after the hazard of gas explosions has passed.

You know as well as I do that the one thing you don't put in your emergency Kit is the very first thing you will need out of it.

How will you know what that item is?

Get together with your church or circle of friends and have a 72 hour kit party. Pick a three day weekend and ACTUALLY LIVE as if a disaster had happened.

No phones, no lights, no water, no nearby grocery store and no friends dropping in with a car full of goodies.

Keep a diary of what you found most useful, what you found yourself wishing you had, and backup tools that would have been really nice for your self-confidence.

Compare notes only after the party is over.

Another test to know how good YOUR emergency kit will work is to respond to the need for help from someone else. When a tornado hit here just 20 miles away we spent half an hour getting the equipment ready that we might need at a friend's house that had been virtually destroyed. Then all the way there we wondered if we had forgotten anything.

Once we arrived, first on the scene, the ONE thing I had not expected to find was my friend in shock and unable to coordinate the help coming his way. I have dealt with shock many times, but had I expected it with this strong man?

No!

However, shock is the most natural reaction in the world when half your house is ripped away and six inch balls of hail have kept you penned up in the basement for hours.

There are two dominant responses to finding a friend in shock at a disaster site.

One is to take over the project for them, since they can't. Two is to strive to MAKE them realize how important it is for them to make the big decisions right NOW. One small faction will offer consolation, saying, "Now, Now," and "There, There!"

It has been my experience that reassuring words do nothing to appease shock. The best recourse I have ever discovered is to begin,

anywhere,

but preferably on small scale and unimportant matters to invite small actions and tiny decisions. "Here, you take the broom and I'll take the shovel, and we'll get some of this cleared out of the way before others show up. "Which way should we sweep it?"

If they aren't ready to start, reassure them and wait a while to try again.

Little by little the friend comes out of shock and little by little, normalcy will return.

You also need to be aware that those very people who spring immediately into action when danger threatens may go into shock later. Any one of us can be absolutely shattered by questions like, "What if ?" Then too there is the glucose level to be considered before, during and after disaster strikes. Insulin and adrenalin are very much alike in composition and a spike in one may cause a sharp drop in the other.

One last note:

Except in life-threatening situations, Make sure your friend has called [the insurance company](#) before any major repair work is undertaken.

Lin Stone is an author , writer and photographer. Lin's home page is at <http://www.talewins.com/StoneSoup.htm> where he keeps stirring up more good things for the soul.

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Thank you.

Lin Stone