

72-Hour Emergency Preparedness Guide

Your Complete Family Survival Plan

Executive Summary

This guide provides a comprehensive, step-by-step framework for preparing your family to survive the first 72 hours of any emergency—earthquake, flood, fire, storm, or civil disruption. FEMA and Red Cross data show that 72 hours is the critical window before professional help arrives. Most families are unprepared. This guide changes that.

Part 1: The 72-Hour Mindset

Why 72 Hours?

Emergency response systems are designed to reach you within 72 hours under normal disaster conditions. In major events (Hurricane Katrina, Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023), the window was 5-7 days. Your 72-hour kit is the difference between waiting and surviving.

The Three Phases of the First 72 Hours

Phase	Time	Focus
Immediate	0-2 hours	Safety, shelter, injury assessment
Stabilization	2-24 hours	Water, communication, power
Extended	24-72 hours	Food, sanitation, signaling, plan execution

Part 2: Water (Your #1 Priority)

Minimum Requirements

- **1 gallon per person per day** (drinking + sanitation)
- **3-day supply**: 3 gallons per person
- **Family of 4**: 12 gallons minimum

Water Sources in Your Home

Source	Safe?	Treatment Needed
Water heater tank	✓ After flushing sediment	Boil or filter
Toilet tank (not bowl)	⚠ If no chemical cleaners	Filter + boil
Ice cubes	✓	Thaw and treat
Pool water	✗ Chemical	Emergency only, filter heavily
Rainwater	✓	Filter + boil or purification tablets

Water Purification Methods

1. **Boiling**: Bring to rolling boil for 1 minute (3 minutes above 6,500ft/2,000m)
 2. **Purification tablets**: Chlorine dioxide or iodine (follow package directions)
 3. **Filters**: Look for pore size ≤ 0.5 microns (remove bacteria + protozoa)
 4. **Household bleach**: 8 drops per gallon (unscented, 5-6% chlorine), wait 30 minutes
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Part 3: Food (Sustain Without Power)

What to Store

Food Type	Examples	Shelf Life	Calories/100g
Canned goods	Beans, vegetables, soups	2-5 years	70-200
Canned meat	Chicken, tuna, SPAM	2-5 years	150-250
Energy bars	Granola, protein, emergency	1-5 years	350-500

Food Type	Examples	Shelf Life	Calories/100g
Dried fruit	Raisins, apricots, dates	6-12 months	250-300
Nuts	Almonds, peanuts, walnuts	6-12 months	550-650
Crackers	Saltines, whole wheat	6-9 months	400-500
Peanut butter	Any brand	6-9 months	588
MREs	Military-style meals	5-10 years	300-400/meal

72-Hour Ration Plan for One Person

- **Day 1:** 3 energy bars + 2 cans of food + water
- **Day 2:** 2 cans of food + nuts/dried fruit + water
- **Day 3:** Remaining supplies + MREs if available

Total calories needed: ~2,000/day per adult

Part 4: Shelter & Warmth

Immediate Shelter Assessment

1. **Stay or go?** If structure is damaged (cracks, leaning, gas smell) → evacuate
2. **Safe zones:** Doorways, under sturdy tables, interior rooms away from windows
3. **Danger zones:** Elevators, glass doors, exterior walls, near heavy furniture

Temperature Management

Condition	Solution
Cold (below 50°F/10°C)	Layered clothing, emergency blankets, shared body heat
Hot (above 90°F/32°C)	Shade, damp cloth on neck/wrists, minimal movement
Wet	Remove wet clothes immediately, use dry layers
Wind	Windbreaks (tarps, vehicles, walls) — wind chill is deadly

Emergency Blanket Usage

- Mylar blankets reflect 80% of body heat
 - Place between inner and outer clothing layers (not against skin)
 - Use multiple blankets for severe cold
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Part 5: Communication

Without Power or Cell Service

Method	Range	Reliability
Hand-crank radio (NOAA/AM/FM)	Regional	✓ High
Whistle (3 blasts = distress signal)	100-300m	✓ High
Two-way radios (FRS/GMRS)	1-5 miles	⚠ Line of sight
Ham radio (with license)	Global	✓ Very high
Visual signals (mirror, flares)	1-10 miles	⚠ Weather dependent

Emergency Contact Plan

1. Designate an out-of-area contact (local lines may be down)
 2. Write down all phone numbers (don't rely on a charged phone)
 3. Establish a meeting point outside your home
 4. Secondary meeting point outside your neighborhood
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Part 6: First Aid & Medical

Minimum First Aid Kit

Item	Quantity	Use
Adhesive bandages (assorted)	25	Minor cuts
Sterile gauze pads (4x4")	10	Wound dressing

Item	Quantity	Use
Medical tape	1 roll	Securing dressings
Antiseptic wipes	20	Wound cleaning
Antibiotic ointment	2 tubes	Infection prevention
Pain reliever (ibuprofen/ acetaminophen)	30 doses	Pain/fever
Antihistamine (Benadryl)	10 doses	Allergic reactions
Anti-diarrheal (loperamide)	10 doses	Digestive emergencies
Scissors	1 pair	Cutting tape/clothing
Tweezers	1	Splinter removal
Nitrile gloves	5 pairs	Protection
CPR mask	1	Rescue breathing
Tourniquet	1	Severe bleeding (use only as last resort)
SAM splint	1	Fracture stabilization

Life-Saving Sequence (MARCH)

1. **M**assive hemorrhage control → Apply tourniquet or pressure dressing
 2. **A**irway management → Head-tilt, chin-lift; clear obstructions
 3. **R**espirations → Check breathing; rescue breathing if needed
 4. **C**irculation → Check pulse; treat for shock
 5. **H**ypothermia/Hypothermia prevention → Warm, dry, cover
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Part 7: Essential Gear Checklist

Core Survival Kit (Can fit in a backpack)

Category	Item	Priority
Light	Hand-crank flashlight (multi-function)	★★★★
Radio	Hand-crank emergency radio (AM/FM/NOAA)	★★★★
Water	Water purification tablets (30)	★★★★
Water	Collapsible water container (2L+)	★★★★
Tool	Multi-tool (pliers, knife, screwdriver, saw)	★★★★
Tool	Whistle (high-frequency)	★★★★
Shelter	Emergency blanket (mylar, 2+)	★★★★
Shelter	50ft para-cord	★★★☆☆
Food	Emergency energy bars (3,000 cal)	★★★★
Fire	Waterproof matches + lighter	★★★☆☆
First aid	Compact first aid kit	★★★★
Sanitation	Hand sanitizer + wet wipes	★★★☆☆
Documents	Waterproof bag with ID copies	★★★★
Money	Cash (\$50-100 in small bills)	★★★☆☆
Light	Headlamp (hands-free)	★★★☆☆
Power	Portable power bank (10,000mAh+)	★★★☆☆
Signaling	Signal mirror	★★☆☆☆

Family Add-ons

Item	For
Infant formula + diapers	Babies
Prescription medications (2-week supply)	Anyone on meds
Pet food + leash + vaccination records	Pets
Senior-specific items (hearing aid batteries, etc.)	Elderly
Glasses/contact lenses + solution	Vision-dependent

Part 8: Scenario-Specific Plans

Earthquake

DO	DON'T
Drop, Cover, and Hold On	Run outside during shaking
Stay under sturdy furniture until shaking stops	Use elevators
Check for gas leaks after	Light matches/candles if gas smell is present
Prepare for aftershocks	Re-enter damaged buildings

Flood

DO	DON'T
Move to highest floor or roof	Walk through moving water (6" can knock you over)
Turn off electricity at main breaker	Touch electrical equipment if wet
Evacuate when authorities order	Drive through flooded roads (1ft can sweep a car)

Fire (Wildfire or Structural)

DO	DON'T
Stay low to ground (smoke rises)	Use elevators
Feel doors before opening (hot = fire on other side)	Break windows (may feed fire oxygen)
Have two escape routes planned	Stop to collect belongings
Once out, stay out	Re-enter for any reason

Power Outage (Extended)

DO	DON'T
Keep refrigerator/freezer closed (48h sealed)	Open fridge repeatedly
Use flashlights, not candles	Use gas stoves for heating (CO poisoning)
Unplug sensitive electronics	Run generator indoors
Layer clothing for warmth	Use charcoal indoors

Part 9: Documentation & Paperwork

Documents to Protect (Store in waterproof bag)

Document	Why
ID / Passport	Identification for shelters, aid
Insurance policies (health, home, auto)	Claims processing
Medical records + prescriptions	Continuity of care
Emergency contact list	Backup communication
Family photo (for reunification)	Separated family members

Document	Why
Cash (small bills)	When card systems are down
Property deeds/titles	Proof of ownership
Birth certificates + marriage license	Official purposes

Home Inventory

- Take photos of every room
 - Store inventory on cloud + USB drive in go-bag
 - Update annually
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Part 10: Sanitation & Hygiene

When Water Is Limited

Task	Water Needed	Alternative
Hand washing	1 gallon	Hand sanitizer (60%+ alcohol)
Toilet	1-2 gallons/flush	Plastic bag in bucket (double-bag waste)
Dish washing	2 gallons	Paper plates (no washing needed)
Bathing	2-5 gallons	Wet wipes + sponge bath

Improvised Toilet (5-gallon bucket method)

1. Line bucket with heavy-duty trash bag
 2. Add small amount of kitty litter or sawdust (absorbs liquid + odor)
 3. Use, then add more litter on top
 4. Seal bag tightly after each use
 5. Replace bag when 1/3 full
 6. Store waste bags in sealed container away from living area
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Appendix A: Printable Checklists

Go-Bag Checklist (One bag per person)

- 3L water
- 3-day food supply
- First aid kit
- Flashlight + extra batteries
- Hand-crank radio
- Multi-tool
- Whistle
- Emergency blanket
- Change of clothes
- Rain poncho
- Waterproof matches
- Portable charger + cables
- Important documents (waterproof bag)
- Cash (\$50-100)
- Prescription medication (14 days)
- N95 masks (5)
- Hand sanitizer
- Wet wipes
- Pen + notepad
- Emergency contact info (written)

Home Emergency Supplies

- Water: 3+ gallons per person
- Canned food: 3+ days per person
- Manual can opener
- First aid kit (comprehensive)
- Fire extinguisher
- Flashlights (one per room)
- Extra batteries
- Hand-crank NOAA radio

- Power bank
 - Cash reserve
 - Prescription medication + OTC medicine
 - Pet supplies
 - Baby supplies (if applicable)
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Appendix B: Emergency Contacts Template

Contact	Name	Phone	Alternative
Out-of-area contact			
Local emergency	-	911 (US) / 110 (CN) / 112 (EU)	
Nearest hospital			
Police non-emergency			
Poison control	-	1-800-222-1222 (US)	
Utility company			
Insurance agent			
Neighbor			
Family member 1			
Family member 2			

Disclaimer: This guide provides general preparedness information. Adapt all recommendations to your specific location, climate, and circumstances. Regularly review and update your supplies every 6 months. In any emergency, follow the instructions of local authorities first.
