



# Before Disaster Strikes: Preparing a Go-Bag

## Summary

Emergency preparedness has become a critical consideration for OSAC members traveling overseas. Development of a safety- and security-minded culture is essential to an organization. U.S. Embassies as well as U.S. companies encourage personnel to pack “go-bags” so that personnel are prepared to move quickly in a crisis and don’t put themselves in danger by delaying their response. Although development of emergency preparedness plans generally falls on senior-level staff, adherence to and compliance with these plans often falls on the layman who may travel to security “hotspots” or be faced with the fallout from a national disaster.

## Why Would You Need a Go-Bag?

A disaster supply kit, known as a “go-bag,” is necessary when preparing for an emergency. Basic services (gas, electricity, sewage, and potable water) may not be available for prolonged periods. A go-bag should contain equipment to sustain outages, and needs to be prepared and readily available. It should contain enough cash, non-perishable food, water, first aid supplies (including prescription medications), sanitation materials (hand sanitizers, bleach, toilet paper, etc.), and other supplies and tools to last at least 72 hours. Copies of personal identification documents (driver’s license, passports, visa) are also essential, in the event a traveler is unable to access the originals.

OSAC members must identify a realistic, comprehensive approach for how their management and employees would prepare for and respond to crises. While there is no uniform emergency-preparedness strategy that adequately fits the needs of all organizations in all circumstances, security professionals can prepare their support staff and travelers by clearly articulating emergency communication plans, the employee’s role during a crisis, and the preparations they need to make in advance.

U.S. Embassies, as well as many U.S. private sector organizations, encourage their personnel to pack go-bags so that they are prepared to leave their homes quickly with essential supplies in the event of a crisis. Many companies give travelers a small card with emergency contacts, including the corporate crisis management team, travel agents, and medical evacuation providers, to carry in a wallet or bag in case of emergency. It is also beneficial to put strategy into practice through crisis management exercises.

The 2015 Nepal earthquake is an example of a situation in which go-bags were essential and is a pertinent example of a sudden crisis that may occur again in the near future. On April 25, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake [shook](#) Kathmandu and surrounding areas in Nepal. The earthquake, aftershocks, and subsequent landslides contributed to the [deaths](#) of over 8,900 people, with over 21,800 injured, and many unaccounted for. Evacuations were difficult due to constant power outages, widespread road damage, and flight delays and cancellations. Furthermore, the Nepalese government did not have a coordinated evacuation strategy for foreign nationals.

The medium- to long-term risks that develop after an initial disaster are another reason to prepare a thorough supply of materials to protect personnel for multiple days after a disaster strikes. After the earthquake, Nepal experienced its annual monsoon season, driving heightened sanitation and disease concerns because of collapsed infrastructure.

The Nepalese government, OSAC members, and independent travelers could have benefited from improved natural-disaster contingency plans and preparations. As OSAC members – many from U.S.

academic institutions – rushed to evacuate their students and personnel, a lack of telecommunications capabilities hindered timely roll-calls and evacuation strategies.

In countries prone to natural disasters and where the public infrastructure is underdeveloped, OSAC members should consider encouraging personnel to prepared go-bags, and having secondary means of communication available to travelers in the event that the Internet and telephone lines become inoperable (satellite phones are one option, as long as they are legal in the country of residence).

OSAC members may consider having a go-bag list translated into a local language for locally employed staff and their families. Go-bag preparation may be all the more important for local staff and their families, who may not live in residences with the same security precautions as foreign staff. OSAC members may also consider purchasing emergency evacuation insurance to evacuate personnel.

## What Should I Have In My Go-Bag?

Below are some suggested components of a Go-Bag for your residence. U.S. Embassies, and some U.S. organizations, provide some essential supplies to their personnel to make personalizing a Go-Bag a little bit easier.

The most important thing to remember when packing your Go-Bag is to personalize it. Without a personalized bag, you will not have the supplies **you** need. For example, will you need contacts and contact solution? Diapers for children? EpiPens? Consider everything you would require to live for multiple days without access to your usual amenities.

- Large backpack
- Blanket (mylar thermal) and sleeping bag
- Tarpaulin
- Comfortable shoes
- Copy of important documents in waterproof, portable container
  - Proof of citizenship, visa
  - Passport, identity card, drivers license
  - Bank account records
  - Marriage certificate, academic certificates, school records
  - Insurance, land ownership
  - Power of attorney & will
  - Household effects inventory
  - Medical prescriptions, medical and dental records, immunization records, etc.
- ATM and credit cards, multiple currencies, checkbook
- Card of Emergency Contact numbers (laminated)

- Comfortable and functional clothing
- Daily use tools
  - Multifunction pocket knife
  - Scissors
  - Needle and thread
  - Matches in a waterproof container
  - Can opener, etc.
- Light, high energy food, readymade and non-perishable with plastic utensils
- Nylon rope
- Notebook and pen/pencil
- Waterbottle, 1 Liter filled, plus any additional bottled water
- Crank torch / headlamp
- Batteries, Solar Power bank charger, chargers for electronics
- First Aid Kit
  - First Aid Booklet
  - Family Medication
  - Dust Mask, N95 x 5
  - Ointment, Antiseptic
  - Bugspray with DEET
  - Over-the-counter medications (pain relievers, anti-diarrhea, antacids, laxatives, allergy, cold medicines, electrolyte powder, vitamins)
- Child requirements (e.g. infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, rash cream)
- Personal hygiene and supplies
  - Toilet paper
  - Soap
  - Toothbrush/toothpaste
  - Sanitary pads
  - Towels

- Prescribed eyeglasses
- Work Gloves
- Lighter and butane
- Rain Poncho
- Hand Sanitizer
- Industrial Grade Snaplite Sticks, 12 HR Duration x 5
- Water Treatment Tablets/Liquid
- Whistle
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Entertainment items

## Additional Information

For more information on Emergency Preparedness, contact [OSAC's Regional Analysis team](#).

- OSAC Report: [The Importance of Being Prepared](#)
- OSAC Report: [Crisis Preparedness](#)
- OSAC Report: [Guide to U.S. Government-Assisted Evacuations](#)

---

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or any affiliated organization(s). Nor have these opinions been approved or sanctioned by these organizations. This product is unclassified based on the definitions in E.O. 12958. OSAC's full disclaimer and copyright policy is available on our site at [OSAC.gov/About/Disclaimer](#).