



Before Disaster Strikes: Preparing a Stay-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 “stay-bags” so that personnel are prepared to shelter-in-place in the event of a crisis. 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.

What is a Stay-Bag, and Why Would You Need One?

Emergencies are unpredictable, but you can still plan for them. Just like a go-bag, a stay-bag is a reserve of essential items you would need for up to a two-week period in case you need to stay put instead of flee. A stay-bag is prepared keeping in mind the possibility that you may have to shelter-in-place at your residence or place of work without power, water, or heat.

If you already have a go-bag at home, you have a head start, because many items are the same. However, stay-bags for sheltering-in-place, especially if you need to shelter in your place of work, will vary from your go-bag. Use a large bag, plastic bin, or other container to set aside essential items for 24 hours up to a two-week period. Your stay-bag should include food, water and other necessities like medicines, toilet paper, and blankets. Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply.

Climate-related disasters like hurricanes, fires and floods are becoming more common across the world. Climate scientists now say that weather emergencies will become the new normal, as global warming leads to stronger hurricanes, heavier rain, more tornadoes, and bigger wildfires (earthquakes, while not as causally related to climate change, are also a major concern). According to the World Disasters Report, the average number of climate-related disasters per decade has risen 35 percent since the 1990s. A stay-bag or go-bag keep you prepared in the event you lose access to power, resources, or need to flee.

Climate disasters are not the only reason why someone may need to shelter-in-place for an extended period of time, at their homes or place of work, until the outside environment stabilizes. Unrest and political violence may be a reason you and your family would shelter-in-place, perhaps without additional food, water, Internet access, and other supplies.

What Should I Have In My Stay-Bag?

The hardest part about creating a go- and stay-bag is getting started. U.S. Embassies, and some U.S. organizations, provide some essential supplies to their personnel to make personalizing their bag a little bit easier. The most important thing to remember when setting aside essential items is to personalize the list. Without a personalized bag, you will not have the supplies **you** need.

Below are some guidelines for packing your stay-bag.

- Large backpack
- Blanket (mylar thermal) or sleeping bag

- Air mattress (single or double)
- 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
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Nylon rope
- Notebook and pen/pencil
- Local maps, laminated building floor plan
- Hard hat, safety goggles

- 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

Here are a few additional tips to keep in mind when packing your bag from Ready.gov:

- Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers.
- Replace expired items as needed.
- Re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your family's needs change.

Your Milage May Vary: it's important to pack supplies that are relevant to the country and conditions you are in. If you are in an earthquake zone, you might consider packing work gloves and a dust mask. In flooding prone areas, you might consider rain gear, insect repellent, and a tarp.

You may also want to use this list as a guideline for preparing a supply bin at a rally-house or external shelter-in-place location. For this kind of kit, a more extensive supply list may be warranted. This could include a medium-sized axe, bungee cord, mini lantern, crowbar, 48 liters of drinkable water, stretcher, hammer, hard hat, jerry cans, large sealable plastic baggies, soap bar, spare batteries for radio, tent, tissue paper, tourniquet, trash bag, rolled gauze, athletic tape, trauma sheer, gauze, cervical collar, etc.

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](#)

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