

PREPARING YOUR OWN PERSONAL EVACUATION KIT/BUG-OUT BAG

by Geoffrey

One need only look at recent events around the world to see the variety, and the ferocity, of natural disasters: Forest fires and floods forcing evacuation of homes and businesses; earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornadoes levelling entire neighborhoods. Those disasters caused by humans tend not to be as violent in nature, but they can be just as deadly as natural disasters. . .and just as unpredictable.

Those who are preparing for such disasters usually do so by resorting to the standard means of stockpiling food and water in their homes. Some go so far as to buy commercially available "72-hour Kits" or they assemble similar kits themselves to keep in their home or vehicles.

Home or auto kits are fine, but what if, due to the severity or nature of the disaster, you must leave your home or vehicle? Do you wish to deliver yourself into the helping hands of the government or a relief agency? The problem with many such kits is that they are often too small and are incomplete to adequately support

You may have to resort to taking only what you can put together in a very short time (5 minutes or less) and carry with you. Roads may be impassible for vehicles, so you may be forced to walk out. It is for this reason that the backpack-sized Personal Evacuation Kit (PEK) must be considered the basis for all emergency preparedness plans. Smaller, so-called 72-hour kits, you should relegate to a last-ditch contingency plan as they offer only a bare minimum of support and once that's gone. . .you're on your own. And I cannot allow myself the luxury of depending

upon the government to

By putting together a comprehensive kit for each member of your family/group, each person needs only to grab one or two things when the time to evacuate comes. This ability to obtain your survival gear in a very short time could, quite literally, be a lifesaver. In the San Francisco Earthquake, the government forbade it's citizens entry into their own homes because of safety factors. Eventually, they did allow some to carefully scramble into the ruins for 5 or 10 minutes to get a few things.

In this article I will try to cover the most basic comprehensive assembly of supplies and equipment that a survivalist should have. . .The Personal Evacuation Kit (PEK). The goal of the PEK is two-fold:

1. It should provide the wearer with enough equipment and supplies to sustain the wearer for a MINIMUM of 72 hours with no external support except water.
2. It should also include the proper tools necessary to aid the user in providing for themselves in case relief continues to be unavailable after 72 hours.

When assembling your kit you must keep in mind that you are preparing for the worst scenario you can imagine. You must expect no access to food, clothing, shelter, potable water, or money resources. You may be reduced to the most basic means of transportation. . .your feet. Therefore, the equipment and supplies in the PEK should closely imitate those carried by backpackers on extended trips. Luckily, backpacking technology has advanced to the point where reliable sturdy equipment is available. Much of this

equipment can be used by survivalists in assembling a PEK.

A PEK is to be designed and assembled for every member in a family or group. It is to be designed in such a way that it can be used alone or in conjunction with other kits without a loss of efficiency in either mode.

By necessity, the equipment should be durable and lightweight. All equipment should be tested as soon as possible after procurement to establish in the user's mind that it does work and will do so under stressful situations.

## Water

Without water, the body cannot live. A minimum of 1 gallon a day is needed for the body to function properly. Water is necessary, but it is also very heavy. A gallon of water weighs over 8 1/3 lbs. To carry a three day supply of water would mean that you'd have to carry 25 lbs of water in addition to your other equipment. Needless to say, this is a very unappealing prospect, unless absolutely nec

Supply: In my own PEK, I have 3 CANTEENS. I have a pair of one quart canteens and a single two-quart canteen. This allows me to carry a one day's supply of water with me. Sitting next to my completed PEK, I have a full GALLON OF DISTILLED WATER ready to go. One of the first things I would do is to fill my canteens and then discard the jug. This is in case my water pipes are broken, there is no water pressure and/or I am unable to find

a water source immediately. Another suggestion would be to obtain a gallon of the Coast-Guard MRE-type sealed water rations and store them inside your PEK.

Purification: Unfortunately, A quality WATER FILTER and iodine or chlorine WATER PURIFICATION TABLETS should be on your PEK list. I prefer the PUR Scout water filter for it's size, ease of operation and cost. Make sure that you have enough filter elements to filter 100 gallons of water, minimum. To extend the service life of your filter, never filter icy cold water or water that is extremely dirty. Rather, let the water stand and the sediment settle before filtering, or find another, cleaner source. Include a separate toothbrush to clean the filter element when it gets dirty, as well. Also, check the water to see if there is any obvious petroleum contamination by looking for the tell-tale rainbow effect that oil has on water. In earthquakes or any violent disaster, gas tanks may rupture and contaminate the water supply. A water purifier will not eliminate the petroleum.

Carry 5 LARGE, PLASTIC, NON-BIODEGRADABLE TRASHBAGS in your PEK to be used as solar- or transpiration stills in case you have difficulty locating an acceptable water source.

## Food

Supply: The PEK should include meals meeting or exceeding a total of 2000 calories a day for a minimum of 72 hours. There are basically two types of meals that are best suited for our needs. The first is military Meals, Ready to Eat (MRE's). MRE's can provide you with a convenient meal that needs no

preparation and can be eaten directly from the foil pouch hot or cold. MRE's also give you the option of carrying a smaller number of the meals as each complete meal provides approximately 1000 calories. This means that you can carry 6 MRE's and meet the 72 hour requirement for food supplies OR 9 MEALS and extend the food supply to over 4 days. Two meals will have enough separate components to stretch out into three meals, so you won't have to worry about missing one.

The second type of meals are Freeze-dried/dehydrated foods. The biggest advantage to this type of meal is the weight reduction. Nine freeze-dried meals in foil pouches weigh less than half of the same number of MRE's. But with the loss in weight comes the additional duty of preparation. These meals cannot be eaten without first being reconstituted. Some meals, depending upon the manufacturer, require the use of hot water increasing your prep time. Another drawback is that most dehydrated meals do not contain enough calories in each component to come near the 2000 calorie mark without eating 3 or 4 separate items per meal.

My preference is for the MRE's even though they do have their drawbacks. The first of which is their weight. Each meal weighs between 1 and 1 1/2 pounds making a 3 day supply weigh between 6 and 9 lbs. The second drawback is that while it is true that they can be stored for five or more years, the storage must be under the right conditions. Fluctuating or extreme temperatures can affect the shelf-life of MRE's. It is best to keep them in a cool place year-round to ensure their stability. An MRE will not last longer than a month in the hot trunk of a car in the summer.

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If you are going to keep even a small "72-hour kit" with meals in your vehicle, I suggest that you use the Freeze-dried/dehydrated meals rather than MRE's as they are less effected by temperature extremes and changes.

Your kit should include equipment for food procurement in case you are unable to locate support after your supplies run out. An assortment of SNARES and a compact FISHING KIT containing BOBBERS, SINKERS, FISHING LINE, HOOKS and a small GILL NET (approx. 3 feet by 12 feet) should be prepared. I highly recommend a TAKEDOWN .22 RIFLE such as an AR-7 Explorer and 100 ROUNDS OF .22 AMMO as an addition to the E/K. Another option is to carry SHOTSHELLS for the handgun which you will carry for defense, if any. Shotshells are loaded with small pellets rather than a bullet (similar to a shotgun shell) and can be used to kill birds, snakes and various other small critters to help supplement your food supplies. They are available in .22 LR, .38/.357, 9mm and .45 ACP.

A MULTI-FUEL STOVE, FUEL and FUEL CONTAINER as well as a backpacker's COOKING KIT and UTENSILS should be acquired to prepare any food you are able to procure. Include a minimum of 100 waterproof matches and an emergency firestarting tool such as a Gerber Strike Force or G. I. magnesium firestarter.

Unless you camp a lot, the fuel might become "stale" and unusable in as little as six months. If you purchase a stove which can use automotive gasoline (or yellow-gas) you can store the fuel for as long as 5 years with the addition of a few drops of a compound call Sta-Bil available at most hardware and automotive stores.

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After food and water, Shelter must be considered. Your clothing is the first layer of shelter and something that must be as thought out as other areas. You will need at least TWO SETS OF GOOD, STURDY CLOTHING appropriate for the current climate. This includes: pants, shirt, t-shirt, underwear, socks, hat, and leather gloves. Military BDU's are an excellent choice for emergency clothing and are very inexpensive for the service they will give you. However, be aware that camouflage clothes, in some circumstances, may not be desirable because they may actually draw attention to you rather than hide you. It is for this reason that in my PEK, the pants are military-style, six-pocket BDU pants in Blue, grey or khaki while the shirts are tuck-in, long sleeve cotton twill for durability. Shirt and T-shirt colors are also dark blue, grey, olive or a similar color which will not draw attention. Buy your clothing large to accommodate both unexpected weight gain and extra clothing if you live in an area where the winters are cold. For protection from the rain days, a RAIN JACKET AND PANTS are necessary.

Your footgear should be TWO GOOD PAIR OF BOOTS. I prefer military specification combat boots, mainly because I have put literally thousands of miles in them and are comfortable wearing them. They give excellent ankle support and can stand up to much abuse. Tins of LEATHER POLISH and MINK OIL or SNO-SEAL as well as a POLISH APPLICATOR and SHOE BRUSH should be included for boot maintenance.

For cold weather, a HEAVY COAT along the lines of a military field jacket with liner and perhaps field pants with liner should be included. Also, two pairs of THERMAL UNDERWEAR, preferably of

polypropylene or similar material, a WOOL STOCKING CAP, WOOL SOCKS, two pair of COLD WEATHER GLOVES, and replacing the regular boots with INSULATED BOOTS would be good. For those areas where extreme cold (temperatures under -20 fahrenheit) special clothing should be included as well.

To make things easier, I keep the cold weather gear in a separate, smaller module which can be quickly attached/detached from the main kit. This proves handier than unpacking the summer gear and repacking the Kit when the seasons change.

In a situation that forces you to leave your home, you will need some form of shelter. A basic shelter can be made from two army ponchoes. While I spent many a night in such a shelter, I can tell you that they weren't always comfortable or restful. For the longest time I relied on this setup for my PEK shelter needs until I finally broke down and bought a TENT large enough for me and my equipment. The tent is both lighter and much more effective in the shelter role. It is also much sturdier under extreme weather conditions than the poncho shelter.

A SLEEPING BAG is one of the most important items of your PEK. You should get one as soon as you can. I suggest getting a two-piece sleeping bag system that can be adapted to changing climates. These systems usually consist of two sleeping bags, one light for use in warmer temperatures, the other heavier for colder temperatures. Slip one inside the other and these two bags can be used for extreme cold weather conditions.

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For insulation from the ground, a closed cell foam or self-inflating GROUND PAD should be used. Ground pads which need to be manually inflated should be avoided as they can be rendered useless if punctured and seldom offer any significant insulative or weight reducing values over the two aforementioned types. Bring along a repair kit for any type of inflating groundpad.

You will also want to include a few basic tools in your kit. A MULTI-FUNCTION POCKET TOOL such as a Swiss Army Knife, Leatherman's Tool or the Gerber Multipliers will allow you to carry tools such as a Phillips screwdriver, knife, file, pliers, can/bottle opener, etc. all in a package small enough to fit in your pocket. A LOCKBLADE POCKETKNIFE with a blade approximately three inches long and a SHEATH KNIFE with a blade shorter than 7 inches are recommended, as well. While it may seem like overkill, I can guarantee you that you will find a need for all three knives if you carry them. You will need some form of KNIFE SHARPENER to keep the blades sharp.

Another tool which will prove worth it's weight is a COMPACT SHOVEL like the Cold Steel Spetsnaz shovel, a WWII military folding shovel or the more recent military-issue tri-fold shovel. A shovel can be used in all seasons for many tasks other than simply digging. Sharpen one edge and you can chop down a small tree. In the case of the two folding shovels, the blades can be locked at a 90-degree angle to the handles and used as an improvised swing rake to clear vegetation prior to bedding down for the night.

Other necessary items are a MAP AND COMPASS, a SMALL FLASHLIGHT with a minimum of

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EIGHT ALKALINE BATTERIES, a SPACE BLANKET, at least one roll of TOILET PAPER in a ziplock bag, at least three EIGHT-HOUR CANDLES and no less than 50 feet of military-specification 550 PARACHUTE CORD.

A First Aid Kit is a very important part of the PEK. A small kit with items such as various BANDAGES and BANDAIDS, STERILE PADS, ASPIRIN, ANTI-DIARRHEAL TABLETS, DECONGESTANT, ANTIBIOTIC SALVE, CLOTH TAPE, ACE BANDAGES, any needed PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES and a comprehensive FIRST AID MANUAL should be put together. Take a first aid course to acquaint yourself with basic techniques. Complete an Emergency Medical Technician course for more advanced life-saving techniques and I can guarantee that you won't be sorry.

I cannot stress enough the importance of first aid knowledge for anyone preparing for a disaster. You will not acquire the necessary skills by buying a book and reading it. You must get out and attend a class or seek some form of formal education from qualified professionals

A hygiene kit is necessary, too. Include a bar of SOAP, a TOOTHBRUSH and TOOTHPASTE, a polished stainless steel MIRROR, guys be sure to bring SHAVING CREAM and RAZORS, women include TAMPONS or SANITARY NAPKINS. Include at least one medium-sized TOWEL.

A small repair kit to maintain your clothing and equipment is highly recommended. This can consist of a roll of CLOTH DUCT TAPE, a HAND AWL with spools of NYLON AND WAXED THREAD, PATCHES of cloth/material to match your equipment, tubes of EPOXY and GOOP or a similar

rubber-type glue, and  
various NEEDLES and THREADS.

Quite literally, volumes have been written on the topic of defense. I am not going to delve too deeply into this area other than to say that in most situations, it would be wise to bring the equipment necessary to protect yourself and your companions. In many cases the minimum requirement may prove to be a concealable handgun with which you are familiar and have practiced until you are comfortable with it's recoil and can hit that at which you aim. Other non-lethal defensive devices can be substituted if you are uncomfortable with firearms. If, however, you do include a firearm in your bug-out kit, a complete FIREARMS CLEANING KIT will be necessary.

You, of course, need something in which to pack the complete Evacuation Kit. While just about any large duffel bag will do in a pinch, I recommend packing everything in an internal frame backpack in all but the hottest climes. An internal frame pack is better suited for carrying loads over uneven terrain such as is found off regular trails or in the rubble caused by downed buildings. An external frame backpack will carry heavier loads more comfortably, but the load tends to slide and shift when climbing over things or engaging in any strenuous activity.

It is highly recommended that before you put together your home or automobile survival kit, you assemble your PEK. The PEK cannot, nor is it intended to, replace what you store at home. It is merely the first, and most adaptable, kit you should assemble. The equipment in the PEK

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can be used under all  
circumstances. Even if a disastrous situation doesn't necessitate evacuation,  
all the equipment in the PEK can be  
used in the home, making the PEK extremely adaptable.