



# Extension News Column

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**Re:** Regular CES column to run Tuesday, May 31, 2011, Our Town page  
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We've been barraged recently with natural disasters. Whether you are facing a tornado in Missouri or the sudden evacuation to escape a fire on Moose Mountain, a little preparation can make a huge difference in your long-term survivability in the case of a disaster. If disaster strikes your family or neighborhood, the most critical time of need is during the first 72 hours following the disaster. Community and governmental assistance may not be available during this period. A 72-hour emergency kit can be a lifesaver in these circumstances.

Begin with a backpack or a duffle bag. Your 72-hour kit should be easily portable and in good repair. Each person in the family should have a 72-hour kit in case you are separated when disaster strikes.

In making your emergency preparations, there are ten areas that need to be considered:

1. Food — Plan for a variety of food that can be prepared with minimal cooking. Dehydrated food is compact and light, but water is needed to reconstitute. Canned food is convenient, but is bulky and heavy. Good choices include dried fruits, nuts, jerky and granola bars. Don't forget to include a can opener and cooking utensils.
2. Water — An adult needs 2–3 quarts of water per day. So for my family of two, I would need at least 5 gallons of water for a three-day period. Though I have a 5-gallon container of water in my storage, it is too heavy to carry. So make sure that some of the water is in 1- or 2-liter sizes. Also, include some large clear plastic bags that can be used to collect water from dew, rain or snow. Make sure you have some water purification tablets as well.
3. Shelter and warmth — Regular sleeping bags, emergency “space” sleeping bags and blankets are great for keeping body heat in and wet weather out. Include a tent, ground cloth and a tarp for shelter.

4. Cooking — Fuel is probably the hardest thing to store safely. Charcoal is the safest source of fuel, but isn't always easy to use. It must be used outside for proper ventilation. Include Sterno or instant heat. If you have a wood-burning stove, make sure you have dry wood and a way to start the fire. Waterproof matches, fire starters, disposable lighters and compressed fuel tablets are all helpful.

5. Light — Pack a flashlight in your emergency kit. Store the batteries out of the flashlight to last longer. There are also hand-powered flashlights that need no batteries. There are many kinds and sizes of oil lamps that are available to have in our homes for when we lose electricity. Candles should also be included.

6. Communications — A whistle can be blown with less energy and heard farther than your voice. Also, a mirror is excellent for signaling for help. A radio with different possibilities for power (wind up, batteries, solar, etc.) is very important to know what is happening, where authorities are asking people to go and what to do.

7. Hygiene and sanitation — Include a comb, toothbrush, razor and shampoo. These simple items can really boost your feelings when things are in disarray. Bathroom needs and laundry needs are essential to keep down the spread of germs. Soap and hand sanitizers should be included.

8. First Aid — Basic items and a list of simple First Aid instructions should be included in every kit.

9. Clothing and personal items — Comfortable clothing is essential as well as extra socks, underwear and a jacket. For cold weather, include a hat and gloves. Other personal items such as feminine items, baby diapers, medications, toys, games, books, writing materials and a deck of cards will make you more comfortable and keep you busy in case of disaster.

10. Important papers and money — Have copies of all important papers (wills, birth certificates, bank account numbers, car registrations, and a list of friends and family addresses and phone numbers). Be sure to include some money in your kit, both small change and larger amounts.

Check your 72-hour emergency kit frequently. Keep it well stocked and rotate consumable supplies. There's a lot of information available on what goes in the kit, but it is important that it be personalized for your family. We have a handout here in the office to tell you what to include. Give us a call at 474-2450 and we'll be glad to send it to you. Take some time this week to gather a 72-hour emergency kit for your family.

**Roxie Rodgers Dinstel is a professor of extension on the Tanana District Extension Faculty. Questions or column requests can be e-mailed to her at [rrdinstel@alaska.edu](mailto:rrdinstel@alaska.edu) or by calling 907-474-2426. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.**