

GETTING STARTED · GUIDE 01

The 72-Hour Checklist

Three days. That's your starting target. Here's exactly what you need — and what it costs — to get there.

The goal is simple: not need outside help for 72 hours so that emergency services can reach the people who need it most. Check off each item as you acquire it. Budget range shown for each.

■ WATER

The non-negotiable. Everything else comes second.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 gallon per person per day × 3 days
Household of 2 = 6 gallons. Household of 4 = 12 gallons. Include pets. | \$0–\$6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean storage containers
Food-grade plastic jugs or rinsed 2-liter soda bottles. Avoid milk jugs — they degrade. | \$0–\$5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water purification backup
Unscented liquid bleach (8 drops/gallon, wait 30 min) or purification tablets. | \$1–\$4 |

PRACTICAL TIP

Your water heater holds 30–80 gallons of clean water. Close the shutoff valve before pressure drops in an emergency to keep it uncontaminated.

■ FOOD

Eat what you know. Store what you eat.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> 3-day supply of non-perishable food
Canned beans, soup, tuna, peanut butter, crackers, oats, granola bars, dried fruit. | \$10–\$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manual can opener
Electric openers fail without power. A \$3 manual opener may be your most important prep purchase. | \$2–\$5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Account for dietary needs
Allergies, infant formula, diabetic options, pet food. Prepare for your actual household. | Varies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utensils and paper plates
When water is scarce, minimize dishwashing. A small stack of disposables earns its space. | \$1–\$3 |

■ LIGHT & POWER

You don't need a generator. You need a plan.

- **Flashlight with extra batteries** \$1–\$8
More reliable than candles. Dollar stores carry functional LED flashlights — grab two.
- **Battery-powered or hand-crank radio** \$10–\$25
When cell towers fail, a NOAA weather radio is your link to official emergency information.
- **Portable phone battery bank** \$10–\$20
Keep one charged in your kit. Even a small power bank buys multiple phone charges.

PRACTICAL TIP

Free right now: charge your phone to 100% and make sure your car has at least half a tank of gas. These cost nothing and solve two of the most common early-emergency problems.

■ DOCUMENTS

Paper copies. Waterproof bag. Done.

- **Copies of critical documents** \$0
ID, insurance cards, Social Security card, lease/mortgage, medication list. Copies, not originals.
- **Waterproof storage** \$0–\$3
A heavy-duty zip-lock bag works. A small waterproof document pouch is even better.
- **Written contact list** \$0
Phone numbers on paper. Most people can't recall a single number from memory — solve this now.
- **Small amount of cash in small bills** \$20–\$40
Card readers fail when power fails. \$20–\$40 in fives and ones gives you real options.

■ HEALTH & SAFETY

Basic coverage. Not a field hospital.

- **Basic first aid kit** \$5–\$15
Bandages, antiseptic, gauze, tape, pain reliever, antacids, antihistamine. Dollar stores carry starter kits.
- **7-day supply of prescription medications** Varies
Ask your doctor or pharmacist about an early refill before an anticipated event. Most will accommodate.
- **Glasses, contacts, or hearing aid batteries** Varies
Accessibility needs are preparedness needs. These are often overlooked and hard to replace in a disaster.

PRACTICAL TIP

Look up your nearest emergency shelter now — not during a storm. Note if it is pet-friendly. Add the address to your written contact list.

■ SANITATION

Often overlooked. Always needed.

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|---|----------------|
| ■ Hand sanitizer and soap | \$1–\$3 |
| Disease spreads faster in disrupted conditions. Clean hands are a simple, high-impact health measure. | |
| ■ Heavy-duty garbage bags | \$3–\$6 |
| Emergency sanitation, waterproofing, covering broken windows. Contractor bags earn their space. | |
| ■ Feminine hygiene or diapers as needed | Varies |
| Prepare for the actual people in your household. These are non-negotiable for many families. | |

The Rotating Pantry Method:

Instead of buying separate "emergency food" that expires and gets thrown out, keep a deeper stock of what you already eat. Use oldest items first, replace as you go. No waste. Always prepared.

Official Sources: ready.gov/kit · redcross.org · cdc.gov · weather.gov/hwr