

Safety Site
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Recreational Safety takes Responsibility and Control
The "Go Bag"

The "Who, what, when, where & why" of "Go Bags"

-but not in that order

What – Part I

What is a "go bag"?

A "go bag" is a pre-prepared bag with the essentials for surviving for two or three days, if not longer. And that means surviving by using nothing but what is in your "go bag". It is created well before you need it and left where you can literally grab the "bag" and "go". It should be kept as light as possible and very comfortable to wear for long periods of time.

Why

Why would anyone need a "go bag"?

Everyone needs a "go bag" in case a situation arises that you will be away from your home (and supplies) for a number of days.

Sadly, history has given us several examples: the wildfires in the Oakland Hills, Santa Rosa and Maui; smoke from such fires: the Camp Fire affecting Chico and all of northern California; toxic fumes from train derailments: East Palestine, Ohio and Dunsmuir, CA. Locally think of the Kinder Morgan petroleum facility, the rail lines through town and Sierra Chemical. The third 100-year flood of the Truckee River, in my 30 years here, might not affect your house but might shut down power, water supplies, travel, etc. Nevada is the fourth most earthquake active state in the country, CA is number two. Weather in general. We all remember last winter, it could have easily taken out Highway 80 and the rail lines, shutting off supplies. Remember the toilet paper shortage during covid? Imagine no supplies coming over the hill.

Who

Who should build a "go bag"?

As Stated before, everyone should have a "go bag". In fact, each individual should have a "go bag" as opposed to one bag for the house or family. What if you separate? Each person has their own car. Each person has their own needs. You don't share clothes. You don't share medications. You each need your own food and water supply.

When

When should someone build a "go bag"?

If you wait for the emergency to arrive, you waited too long. When the Sheriff is banging on your door to evacuate, you will not have time to build a bag. Build your "go bag" today. Always check it, add to it, replace things that might go bad.

Although you will not have time to build a "go bag" with the Sheriff at your door, you might have time to grab your "go bag" and a few items from your home. At one training experience I had with the fire department, we were told to envision ourselves at our front door and we had two minutes to write down what we wanted to save from our home before it burned to the ground. We were given ten minutes to make that 2-minute list. This was training for us because, as some firefighters were working to put out the fire, if there were enough people on scene, we were tasked with removing valuables from the home to prevent fire, smoke and/or water damage to those items.

What it boiled down to was grabbing things that were irreplaceable: photographs, documents, memorabilia, etc. I'm not saying to stage those items at your front door, but sit down with the family and talk about what that list might include, maybe even write it down and pin it to the outside of your "go bag", in case you have time to grab some things.

Where

Where should you keep your "go bag"?

This article is a follow up to my 'Winter Car Travel' talk. So, one place to keep your "go bag" is in your car, especially during winter. Maybe in the garage, so it's easy to throw in your car and go. By the front door, in the closet. Keep it/them handy. Remember, you might have more than one.

What – Part II

What should you put in your "go bag"?

This is the 'Sixty-Four Thousand Dollar Question'. (And I know most of you know that reference.) If you thought my 'Winter Car Travel' list was long, you wouldn't like my "go bag" contents list. Let's keep it simple: clothing (all seasons), medications, documents, glasses, shoes, hats, gloves, cash, food, water. Again, a bag for each person; a bag for each car. If you really want a detailed list, a simple Google search will provide you with more than you could ever review and more than you could ever carry.

What I did not include in that list was a firearm. Don't get me wrong, I am pro-second amendment but this is not the time and a "go bag" is not the place. Think about where you might be headed: an evacuation zone, run by the Red Cross and the Sheriff's department; most government facilities don't allow firearms. Maybe you're traveling to California to stay with relatives; basically, NV allows firearms in vehicles, CA does not. Think about the weight. The first move is to throw your "go bag" in your car but further down the road, you might need to walk with that "go bag" on your back. Firearms and ammunition are very heavy.

Start small and basic: comfortable back-pack with: underwear, socks, medication (prescription and over-the-counter), old prescription glasses, old reading glasses, jacket, hat, batteries, old driver's license or old passport, cash, toiletries, N95 masks, water, snacks. Okay, that doesn't even seem small once I typed it out, but it's what you need.