

Emergency Comfort Kit

Restoring Post-Disaster Normalcy

Disaster preparedness measures include a variety of 'emergency kits' designed to meet primary health and safety needs. Once emergency physiological needs are met, psychological needs must be addressed to ensure an expedited and lasting recovery. This "emergency comfort kit" guide identifies a variety of considerations and recommendations addressing these "comfort" needs.



The Importance of Comfort

Disaster preparedness focuses on the top priorities of immediate human health and safety needs and there are numerous recommended "kits" for specific emergencies. The main types include:

- + **Emergency Medical Kits** for First Aid
- + **First Responder Kits** for emergency assistance and rescue
- + **Survival & Rescue Kits** for extended periods of self-reliance

For disasters with extended recovery times exceeding the intent of these kits, there is a need for materials that provide familiar comforts, love/belonging, and self-esteem. Meeting these needs will:

- + expedite post-disaster recovery
- + provide the foundation for community regeneration
- + restore normalcy

What is Meaningful?

The contents of traditional emergency kits may be fairly standard, but a "comfort kit" must be highly individualized containing items that speak to personal, social and cultural preferences.



Comfort Foods

There is a strong social bond associated with sharing meals and a deep psychological connection with "comfort food." Consider a few of these common comfort foods for your kit:



- + candy / chocolate
- + dried fruit & nuts
- + tea & coffee

Identity and Self-Esteem

Disasters often isolate individuals from their social and environmental networks. These individuals may also perceive themselves and be treated as "survivors" or "victims" with high levels of stress and loss of personal



identity. The comfort kit should include some item or items that evoke a sense of individual identity.

- + personal grooming items such as shampoo, soap, toothbrush & toothpaste
- + soft compact blanket
- + personal hygiene products



Hope and Inspiration: Family, Friends & Pets

Many disasters separate family members for long periods and/or result in the loss of loved ones. Personal items providing emotional connections with family and friends are crucial in providing stress-relief and personal recovery during difficult times. Most im-

portant is a re-affirmative message for loved ones. Some items may include:

- + photographs of family & friends
- + pet comfort items
- + a letter of “love & hope” from a family member

Books, Games & Toys

Many disasters result in the loss of daily routines such as work and school. The introduction of large amounts of inactivity contributes to depression and stress. Books, games and toys for both children and adults are essential to psychological well-being and many emergency kits recommend a deck of playing cards. For example, dominos provided some of this relief activity in post-disaster Haiti. Items you might consider for this kit include:

- + favorite book, coloring book & crayons
- + hobby, craft, music items
- + toys, games & playing cards



Our future may present more frequent, more intense and newer types of disasters. Preparedness must consider not only the materials that make life possible, but the personal items that make life meaningful.



Emergency Kit References

American Red Cross (ARC)
“Get a kit. Make a plan. Be informed”

www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/dskit.asp

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)
www.citizencorps.gov/cert

Emergency Kit
www.emergencykit.org/

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/supplykit.shtm

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/prepare/supply_kit.shtml

Ready America
www.ready.gov/america/getakit/

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