

Chris Outdoors

The 3-Tier Mobile Emergency Kits System

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Oct 2025 Update

Introduction

These are recommendations for types of items you may want to include in your mobile emergency kits.

Depending on your unique situation, skills, and experience, you may not benefit from all of the items listed, customize them to fit your needs.

The best items to include can vary depending on where you live, your environment, and the kinds of emergencies most likely in your region.

These lists are meant as a starting point to help you think through your own preparedness plan and kits and adapt them to your circumstances.

You can explore some of my recommended gear items here:

www.chrisoutdoors.ca/gear-books-more

Disclaimer

These lists are starting suggestions for building mobile emergency kits and do not guarantee safety or specific outcomes. Anyone using this list as a guide is responsible for doing their own research, assessing their unique needs, and learning to use all equipment safely and legally. The lists are not exhaustive and may omit items suited to certain climates or circumstances.

Note on Brand Recommendations

The brands mentioned in this guide are personal recommendations based on field testing, long-term reliability, and real-world use.

They are not sponsorships or paid endorsements. Always choose gear that best fits your own needs, skills, and budget.

Understanding the Tiers

This guide focuses on a 3-Tier Emergency Kit System for situations when you're away from home.

Each tier builds upon the previous one, adding tools, comfort, and redundancy as you move from everyday situations to more complex emergencies.

- **EDC – Everyday Carry:** small, multifunctional items you keep on you at all times.
- **Grab & Go / Get-Home / Bug-Out Bag:** a backpack kit designed to keep you alive and functional for several days or more, with options to improvise across different scenarios.
- **Vehicle Kit:** larger or backup items that support your Grab-and-Go kit during travel or vehicle-based emergencies.

Getting Started – Building Your Kits

Below, you'll find suggestions for gear you may want to include in each tier of your emergency kit system.

These lists cover essential categories to help ensure your basic needs are met:

- **Shelter** – protection from the elements and hazards
- **Water** – drinking, sanitation, and hygiene
- **Fire** – heat, light, and energy
- **Food**
- **Communications**
- **Tools**
- **First Aid, Sanitation & Hygiene**
- **Security & Personal Safety**
- **Finances**
- **Entertainment & Mental Well-being**
- **Storage** - where will you store gear
- **Travel** - getting from point A to B & how you will transport gear

The best items for you will depend on your skills, health, region, and travel habits. Remember: these are starting points, not strict checklists. Use them to guide your thinking and build systems that fit your reality.

Tier 1 – Everyday Carry (EDC)

These are items that, by habit, you have on you all the time. If caught off-guard away from home or your other emergency kits, they are your first line of preparedness.

Because these items are always with you, they should also be multifunctional and valuable in daily life, for example, a flashlight or multitool that's useful every day but critical in a disaster.

Tier 1 Checklist – The Everyday Carry Kit

Shelter

- Adequate clothing for the seasonal weather. Don't just plan for the weather when you leave your home — always anticipate it getting worse and dress accordingly. Ask yourself: if you had to sleep outside or navigate a disaster, would your clothing be supportive or a liability?

Water

- Stainless-steel water bottle or coffee mug (can be used to boil water to purify it if needed).

Fire

- Lighter — even if you don't smoke; fire = heat, light, and life in survival.

Food

- Food is optional in an everyday carry unless you have a medical condition such as diabetes. Tip: keep emergency food nearby in your Grab-and-Go bag or vehicle.

Additional EDC Items

- Prescription medications
- Multitool — Leatherman Wave (recommended brand)
- Cash and loose change
- Emergency/weather apps on your phone
- Portable phone charger
- Flashlight — Fenix PD36R (recommended brand)
- Paracord bracelet (approx. 20 ft of cord)
- Memorized emergency contacts
- Situational awareness routines

Tier 2 – Grab & Go / Get Home / Bug-Out Bag

Sometimes called a “Bug-Out Bag (BOB)” or “Get Home Bag,” this is a mobile kit — ideally in a sturdy backpack — that covers your basic needs across all essential categories.

With only this kit, you should have confidence that you can sustain yourself for several days or more if you:

- Must leave your home on short notice and don’t know when you’ll return
- Need to travel during a disaster to check on someone
- Are forced to abandon your vehicle during gridlock or evacuation
- Need to respond to an unexpected emergency or breakdown
- Must camp overnight or shelter temporarily away from home

Tier 2 Checklist – Grab & Go Kit

Shelter

- Bivvy bag and/or emergency blanket
- Tarp
- Hand and foot warmers (for cold climates)
- Rain poncho
- Wool hat and base-layer clothing (top, bottoms, socks — vacuum-sealed for compact storage)
- Heavy-duty leather work gloves

Water

- 2-litre stainless-steel water bottle
- Stainless-steel mug
- Water-purification tablets (taped to bottle) or filtration device (Brand Recommendations: Grayl, LifeStraw, Berkey)

Fire / Light / Heat

- Lighter (in waterproof container) and waterproof matches
- Fire starter (cotton balls in Vaseline or store-bought starter)
- Hand-crank flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries, or lithium-ion rechargeable flashlight with USB charge option
- Slow-burning or beeswax candles

Food

Think in categories: quick sugars for fast energy and fats/proteins for sustained energy and warmth (1 500–2 500 calories/day).

- Energy bars
- Datrex emergency rations
- Chocolate bars

- Nuts and/or jerky
- Creamed coconut (small brick)
- A few tablespoons each of salt and sugar (useful for restoring electrolytes when dehydrated)

Tools (Including Finances, Travel & Storage)

- A sturdy backpack to hold everything (consider waterproofing options)
- Local road maps and compass
- Extra garbage bags and Ziplock bags (many uses)
- Multitool (Leatherman Wave recommended) or small tool set (pliers, screwdriver, etc.)
- Can opener (if not included on multitool)
- 30 ft or more of strong nylon rope or 550 paracord
- Small roll of utility tape (Gorilla Tape recommended)
- Small mirror (for signalling, inspection, or tick checks)
- \$20–\$200 in small bills and coins
- Foldable handsaw (Silky recommended)
- Fixed-blade outdoors knife (Mora Clipper recommended)
- Extra pair of socks (in waterproof bag)
- Blister care (moleskin, tape)
- Small sewing kit (strong upholstery thread, mix of needle sizes, a few buttons)

First Aid, Medications & Hygiene

- Standard basic first-aid kit
- Advanced first-aid or wilderness first-aid guidebook
- Advanced first-aid items according to training (e.g., trauma and severe bleed kit, tourniquet, CPR face mask, personal medications, etc.)
- Tick removal kit
- Rubber gloves
- N95 masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Spare eyeglasses or contact lenses
- Sunscreen and lip balm
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Soap
- Wet wipes or small cloth for washing
- Toilet paper (in Ziplock bag)
- Extra prescription medication (ask for a one-week + supply if possible)
- Feminine hygiene products

Communications

- Pencil and notebook (waterproof if possible)
- Portable USB phone charger
- USB drive with relevant documents and printed copies in a waterproof bag
- Hand-crank or battery radio with NOAA weather band & AM/FM
- Important emergency papers (e.g., insurance, identification documents)
- Copy of family communications plan with a list of important numbers (family, friends, emergency contacts, local hotels, etc.)

Don't rely on your phone — it may not be available when you need these numbers.

- Whistle for calling for help

Security & Safety

- N95 mask (for medical settings or crowded shelters)
- Rubber gloves
- Leather work gloves
- Safety glasses
- Bug spray and mosquito jacket (where applicable)
- Personal self-defense tool (according to local laws, training, and comfort)
- Tactical flashlight (from your EDC kit)

Entertainment & Mental Well-Being

- Earplugs and eye cover (for sleep)
- Pain relief medications
- Deck of cards, small games, or crosswords
- Kids' books or spiritual items (if appropriate)
- Favorite treats (coffee, tea, chocolate, etc.)
- Photos of family members

Advanced Grab & Go Additions

These optional upgrades provide more versatility and long-term comfort. Choose based on your training, region, and risk profile.

- Ferro rod and cotton-ball fire starter
- Fixed-blade knife and hacksaw blade
- 50 ft or more of paracord and additional fine line (bank line or other nylon cord)
- 18–20 gauge wire (for repairs or snare wire)
- Carabiners
- Solar charging panels
- Super glue
- Coffee filters (for filtering murky water before mechanical filtration)
- Portable stove and fuel
- Extra batteries
- Water key (Sillcock 4-way key)
- Knife sharpener
- Small crowbar or pry bar
- Collapsible water container for carrying water
- Portable perimeter alarm system using a trip wire
- GPS unit for navigation and emergency satellite communications (Brand Recommendation: Garmin with InReach)

Tier 3 – Vehicle Kit

This kit builds on your Grab-and-Go Bag with additional tools and supplies specific to vehicle travel. It includes bulkier items that are too large to carry on foot and gives you options to adjust your gear before leaving your vehicle. Some items are repeated from the Grab & Go kit — having backups in both is ideal whenever possible.

Tier 3 Checklist – Vehicle Kit

Shelter & Warmth

- Wool blanket or sleeping bag
- Reflective emergency bivy blanket
- Rain poncho
- Seasonal clothing (e.g., wool hat, mitts, warm socks, sweater)
- Hand and foot warmers (for cold climates)

Water

- Full stainless-steel water bottle and/or emergency water sachets
- Additional water cache for drinking

Fire & Light

- Matches and lighter in waterproof container
- Candles (beeswax preferred) — store in glass mason jars for fire safety
- Additional flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries
- Road flares

Food

- Non-melting, high-fat and carb foods (e.g., energy bars, jerky, nuts, canned fish, creamed coconut, emergency rations)
- Can opener (if using canned goods)

Navigation & Communication

- Road map (with back roads) and compass
- Pencil and notepad
- Cell phone charger

Tools & Vehicle Maintenance

- Jumper cables, car jack, lug wrench, and spare tire
- Basic tool set (pliers, screwdriver, adjustable wrench, crowbar)
- 1 L extra oil and radiator fluid
- Work gloves
- Shovel and window scraper (for winter)
- Spare car keys (hidden outside vehicle)
- Car escape tool (keep beside driver's seat)

Safety & Visibility

- High-visibility safety vest
- Ice cleats for travel during an ice storm
- Half or full face respirator with N100 and/or CBRNE filter

Use in case of exposure to toxic air such as a fire, highway accident with smoke, or chemical spill.

Closing Thoughts

Preparedness isn't about fear — it's about capability and peace of mind.

Start small, build gradually, and focus on practical skills and tools that fit your lifestyle and environment.

Remember our framework for building preparedness systems over time: it's rarely practical to put all of this together at once.

Prioritize each kit by category and break it into achievable goals:

- **Short-term:** What can you assemble in the next few weeks?
- **Mid-term:** What can you build or purchase over the next year?
- **Long-term:** What would you like to acquire or refine in the next few years?

Consistency is key — small, steady actions compound over time like interest.

Your 3-Tier Mobile Kit System ensures that wherever you go, you're never far from the essentials.

Working Guide & Next Steps

Use this section to plan, personalize, and track your progress as you build or refine your kits.

1. Gear Additions

What gear would you like to include that isn't listed in this document?

2. Short-Term Actions (Next Few Weeks)

What can you acquire, organize, or test right away?

3. Medium-Term Actions (Next Few Months to a Year)

What gear or systems can you realistically add or upgrade in the next phase?

4. Long-Term Goals (1 Year and Beyond)

What would you like to acquire, refine, or train in over the long term?

Remember: building resilience isn't just about having the right tools — it's about knowing how to use them, and being mentally and emotionally ready for whatever comes your way.