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Welcome to your fourth SurviveInPlace™ lesson!

Remember, it's a self-paced course, so you can complete it in 12 weeks or stretch it out longer once you've received the lessons.

Last week, we covered:

1. Reviewing local threats and choke points.
2. **Assessing your Urban Survival Skills/Weaknesses.**
3. Assessing your current stockpile.

I'd love to hear how your exercises from last week went for you. Please let me know by emailing me at david@surviveinplace.com.

In this week's lesson, we're going to cover a core survival item: 72 hour kits. Depending on where you live, you may have heard them called bugout bags, GO (get out) bags, blizzard kits, emergency response kits, or any of a number of other names. If you've got your basic inventory of survival supplies from last week handy, you'll be able to complete much of the process of creating or upgrading your 72 hour kit with the essentials in a matter of an hour or less.

Purpose of the 72 hour kit

72 hour kits are primarily designed to help you survive a broad range of emergencies for 72 hours away from your home or other sources of shelter and supplies. The purist assumption is that you won't have anything other than the 72 hour kit and items that you acquire. This could be because you are stuck on the side of a road, because you had to abandon your car away from civilization, or because you had to leave your house and were only able to grab one thing. It could also be because a storm or chemical/biological event stranded you at your office overnight or longer.

There are also dozens of secondary uses for 72 hour kits. Over the years, I've used my 72 hour kits for many practical reasons besides "emergencies" such as:

- Being at a trailhead and someone "needs" toilet paper.
- Having a runny nose and nothing to wipe it with.
- When I can't stop to eat, but have low blood sugar.
- I cut my hand changing a tire and needed to clean/bandage it.
- I decided to spend the night at a friend's house & wanted to brush my teeth.
- I couldn't get home because of a blizzard.
- Car broke down & I wanted food/water while waiting for a tow.
- We ran out of diapers in our diaper bag.
- Being at a picnic with charcoal, lighter fluid, and no matches.

Again, I want to stress that emergency preparedness doesn't have to be all doom & gloom and I encourage you to thoroughly address situations that are more likely to happen (like a short-term regional natural disaster or a simple accident) before you get concerned about stocking your 72 hour kit with items for long term civil breakdown or an economic collapse.

There are literally hundreds of items that you would want in your 72 hour kit if you were preparing to get dropped into a Mad Max scenario, but we're going to focus on developing solid basics today. We'll also talk about optional items that you'll want to consider in your 72 hour kit.

I want to start right off by saying that there is NO perfect 72 hour kit. Why? Because the perfect 72 hour kit would have to meet AT LEAST the following criteria:

1. Inexpensive

2. Lightweight
3. Small
4. Handle natural/man made emergencies in 4 seasons
5. Allow for young children, the elderly, guests, sick, or injured people
6. Contain 3 days worth of shelter, water, fire, food, security, tools, comfort items, medical items, & clothing. (A gallon of water weighs 8.3 pounds)

As you can see, “perfect” is not a reality. Fortunately, “great” is.

72 hour kits are very personal items and you are going to have to make the final decision as to what you put in yours, but I’m going to give you some general guidelines to help you.

Logistics:

You’re going to have to make some decisions about what kind of 72 hour kit(s) you are going to have. How much weight can you carry? How much are you willing to spend? How many people are you going to prepare for? How much room do you have in your car? How many kits are you going to have? What disaster is most likely to affect you?

In fact, let’s answer those questions right now:

How much can you carry?	
How many kits are you going to have? (1 per car + house + office?)	
How much are you willing to spend?	
How many people are you preparing for?	
How much room do you have?	
What disaster is most likely to affect you?	

Depending on where you work, you may want a 72 hour kit in your office in addition to your car. This is especially the case if you work in a highrise building above the 4th floor or if you commute/ride to work.

Even if you work from home, you're probably going to want to have multiple 72 hour kits. As an example, we have purchased several one-size-fits-all 72 hour kits for testing purposes, but three of our kits are primary ones. We have one in each vehicle and one in the house. The ones in the cars are designed to support two adults and our toddler for 3 days and the one in the house is designed to support all 3 of us at a higher standard of comfort for 3+ days and has room to add last minute items. The car ones are small (2400 cubic inches...like a school bookbag) and the house one is a full size 7000 cubic inch internal frame camping backpack.

We actually use our big 72 hour kit every time we go camping. In addition to knowing that everything in it works and that I know how to use it, this serves as a great way to rotate items and always know that everything in it is ready for immediate use.

Although there are several configurations available for 72 hour kits, including a 5 gallon bucket, duffel bag, box, (we have ALL of them), a sweatshirt sewn shut, etc., I suggest using a backpack or having one available for the simple reason that they're easier to carry.

A good rule is to cover all of the essential items initially and then expand out from there. In other words, unless you find an incredible sale, make sure you have basic shelter, water, fire, and food covered before you get a GPS or Chem/Bio/Nuke items.

You also want to make sure that you know how to use everything in your kit, THAT IT WORKS, and that your body can survive on it. One of the 72 hour kits that we bought had a multi-tool in it already. As I was going through the kit, everything was awesome...solid stuff. I almost passed up the multi-tool thinking that it would be as good as everything else, but fortunately I didn't.

To begin with, I couldn't get the darn thing open without pulling my finger nail away from my skin. That was enough to toss it, but I also quickly found out that the metal was soft and completely worthless for any task other than holding paper.

So make sure that you try everything that you might trust your life to.

I'm going to break down 72 hour kits into essentials, basics, recommended items & optional items so that you can go at whatever pace your budget allows. This is the order in which you want to stock your kits:

1. Essentials in your home 72 hour kit.
2. Essentials in your car 72 hour kits.
3. Basics in your home kit.
4. Basics in your car kits.
5. Recommended items in your home kit.
6. Recommended items in your car kits.

Essential items:

The Essentials are going to cover one of the 4 tenants of survival, which are Shelter, Water, Fire, & Food. You should have most of these items on hand to put in your 72 hour kit already, even if they're VERY basic.

Shelter is anything that will protect you from the elements, including heat, cold, wind, rain, and sun. The items that will work as shelter will depend on where you are, the season, your budget, the number/age of people you're preparing for and how much weight you can carry. Remember that this is a 72 hour solution, so you can use a space blanket, poncho, bivy sack, tarp, a tent, heavy plastic, or contractor grade garbage bags and duct tape.

We consider our car our primary shelter when we're away from home, but carry space blankets, ponchos, and a tube tent in our car kits in case we need to abandon it. In our home kit, we also carry a space blanket & poncho, but have a heavier tarp, & nicer tent.

Water can be difficult to find or make drinkable in an emergency situation, especially in urban areas. You've got a few options for your 72 hour kit:

Method	Weight	Cost	Pros	Cons
Carry it	8 lbs per gallon	A few dollars	Time/convenient	Weight/space
Chlorine drops	A few ounces	pennies	Cheap/light	Finding water/taste/time
Boil	Depends on your system	Pennies	simple /warms the body	Finding water /uses fuel/ time
Tablets	A few ounces	A few Dollars	Light/cheap/no fuel	Finding Water/ Taste/time
Filter	Around a pound	Up to \$200	Fast / taste	Finding water/can clog/must keep parts separate
Exotics (miox or UV)	A few ounces	Around \$100-\$200	Fast / taste / light	Takes batteries / can break

These are all going to have varying levels of effectiveness depending on how much sediment is in the water, and what you're trying to get out of the water. Your purification is going to be different depending on whether your water has bacteria, viruses, salts, herbicides, pesticides, fuel, oil, acids, bases, or other urban contaminants.

As a general rule, the more cloudy and smelly the water is, the more careful you need to be before drinking it. If you have the time, it's a great idea to let water sit for an hour or more to let partles settle out and pre-filter your water with a t-shirt, hankerchief, or dedicated pre-filter to remove sediment.

We'll cover some really cool methods of getting salts, oil, and other urban contaminants out of water in a future lesson. For now, we're going to focus on the main water contaminants that you face on a daily basis, which are viruses and bacteria. This would be applicable for non-contaminated stream water and contaminated tap water after a disaster.

Again, we take a different approach for our car kit and our home kit. Our car kits have boxed water (which hasn't broken for us in freezing single digit weather), Katadyn purification tablets, and the ability to boil.

Our home kit also has boxed water, but has nicer filters, including a Sawyer inline filter (rated for 1MM gallons and a GREAT filter), a Katadyn inline carbon filter, purification tabs, a Katadyn base camp filter, and gear to boil water easily. The only reason we carry so many is because, with the exception of the actual water, they're all small and light, and have specific purposes.

If I could only carry one (besides boiling), it would be the Sawyer inline filter. Using two bladders (1 clean & 1 dirty), you can set up a gravity system that's fast, simple, and effective, or you can use it in-line with your current hydration pack. In addition, they come with a faucet adapter so that you can filter water from hydrants, hotel faucets, hoses, and any other pressurized source.

What water filtration/purification system(s) are you going to use?

Fire is the next most important item for survival. We carry the same items both in our car kits and our home kit, "waterproof" matches, 2 lighters, and a flint/magnesium stick. ALWAYS have a backup for matches, even "waterproof" or "survival" matches. I can't over-emphasize the importance of carrying simple lighters. They light hundreds of fires, dry off quickly and if you get a "torch" style one, it's even windproof. They're small and cheap enough that it's silly not to carry a spare or two.

Fire has many benefits in a survival situation, including heat, light, comfort, cooking, purification, signaling, and mental health. Even a fire that is

ineffective as far as heating can “warm the spirits” and make a cold night more bearable.

We also carry a 100 hour candle for light instead of wax candles. Why? Wax candles melt in a hot car in the summer.

Although they’re not really fire, I’m going to include flashlights in this section. I am a very big fan of the newer BRIGHT LED lights that run on AA and AAA batteries. They’re light, last a LONG time, and some even have multiple brightness settings. Surefires are my favorite, but they’re expensive and use non-standard batteries. You can usually buy packs of two non-tactical LED lights at warehouse stores for \$10-\$20, including batteries.

We keep batteries in our flashlights that are in the front seat area, but we keep the batteries separate in our 72 hour kits so that the light won’t get turned on and use up the batteries. It also protects the light from a corroding battery.

If you’re concerned about not having immediate access to light in your 72 hour kit, you can put a small light stick or a keychain light on the outside or in a pocket where you can find it immediately.

Finally, we keep a shakable flashlight in our kit. When you get a shakable flashlight, make sure to use it somewhat roughly for a few days to make sure that it won’t fall apart. We’ve got a few of these lights, all from China, but some hold up very well and others literally fall apart. The one piece of advice I can give you on selecting one is that, in general, the lights that feel more solid have performed well than the ones that felt “cheap.”

What fire/light tools are you going to put in your 72 hour kit?

Food is the next item to have in your 72 hour kit. You not only want to have enough calories, but you also want to make sure that your system can handle what you’re giving it and that you’re getting minerals (especially electrolytes), and vitamins.

We carry several 1200 calorie bars, Cliff bars, and candy in our car. We've got the same in our home pack, and we also have a couple of freeze dried meals and 2 cans of food that I change out from time to time. (and a can opener)

Keep in mind that freeze-dried meals are light, but require water, fuel cooking, time, and are expensive. We like several kinds of freeze-dried/dehydrated meals, including Mountain House, Backpackers Pantry, and Natural High.

Another benefit of these meals is that you can "cook" in the package without getting a pot dirty. Simply boil your water, pour it into the package, and let it sit until the food is rehydrated and ready to eat.

We've also found the Costco 275 meal Bucket to be a good source of freeze-dried meals. It's \$85 for 275 meals. The meals come in separate packages and each package has 5 servings. My wife and I can fill up on 1/2 of a package at a cost of 77 cents regularly and will use an entire package (\$1.44) or add canned meat if we've been hiking/exercising a lot.

Canned foods are going to have water in them and many are pre-cooked. The extra water counts towards your daily water intake, so don't look it as "extra" weight. In addition, you can cook canned food IN the can and not have any cleanup.

Our home 72 hour kit always has at least one of our camp stoves in it. We have an esbit solid fuel stove, a Primus Omnifuel stove, a Primus EtaPower stove, and a Jetboil system. They're all great, but I'd suggest the Jetboil personal cooking system for its simplicity, versatility, weight, and size.

We also carry meal replacement shakes in our car. Try to get ones that have REAL sugar in them as opposed to artificial sweeteners like sucralose, splenda, saccharin, or nutrasweet.

What are you going to carry for food?

One other essential item is to have 1-2 weeks of any medications that you must have to survive. Why so much? Because in the event of an emergency, you can make your supplies stretch and can likely find additional food/water, but specific medication will be very hard to find.

So, these are the essentials for your bare-bones 72 hour kit(s): Shelter, Water, Fire, Food. They're the absolute basics for survival, and you're going to want to get these items in your house kit and car kit(s) as soon as possible. Once you've accomplished this, we'll move on to the basics.

Basic items:

The basic items in your kit are going to include items for first aid, medical, hygiene, security, and tools.

First Aid: I suggest getting ANY medium sized soft sided first aid kit with bandages as a base. You can get a great basic kit from REI or online for \$20-\$30 and customize it as necessary. Make sure to check with your local EMT supply store to see what basic kits they sell. I've found them to be 20-30% cheaper than the chain stores. If you don't know where your local EMT store is, ask a fireman or EMT.

Make sure that you know how to use everything in your kit. It's worth it to get a few extra of everything so that you know what everything is. You might find that the "bargain" band-aids that you bought don't stick at all, or that you need more practice putting butterfly bandages on someone while wearing gloves.

I'm a wilderness EMT and have added a few other items to all of my kits over the years:

Item	Number to Buy	Date put in kits
Electrolyte tablets/powder		
Benadryl		
Decongestant		
Immodium Anti Diareal		

Superglue (I prefer Crazy Glue, but you can buy Superglue in bulk for CHEAP)		
Maxi Pads for women AND for pressure dressings		
Butterfly Bandages		
Nitrile gloves (rotate yearly if you're in a hot climate)		
Dentemp for making temporary dental repairs		
Moleskin		
Burn pads		

Tools:

You're going to want a couple of good solid knives and a multi-tool as a minimum. I recommend having both a locking foldable knife (Kershaw, MOD, and CRKT are my favorite folders) and a fixed blade knife like the USMC KaBar knives. Make sure and get a "full tang" blade. Full tang means that the knife is made of one solid piece of metal from tip to tail. Just to make sure I'm clear on this, I absolutely do not recommend getting a knife with a screw off tip for survival items.

On the multi tools, try to get one that has the tools that you use most often and make sure to try it out so that you know you can open/close it easily and safely.

If you have any car-specific tools for battery cables, belt clamps, allen/star bits, etc., you want to include them in your kit. Also, make sure that you know how to use your jack and that you have the tools necessary to change your tires. I mention the jack because many new cars have PATHETIC jacks that you should either completely replace or you may need to carry a metal/wood base in your car to use underneath it on soft surfaces.

If you're going to do any off-road driving or driving in deep snow, you should also carry a shovel with you.

Another broad application "tool" you can carry with you is duct tape. You can use it to make some car repairs, fix shoes, cover wounds, help in making a shelter, sealing your car, and dozens of other uses.

Finally, make sure you have a pair of heavy leather gloves.

We have smaller hatchets in our 72 hour kits, but they really aren't practical to use when you need to cut big wood for a fire.

If you anticipate using your home kit for camping, it may be worth it to put a good camp saw in your home kit. I carry a SaberCut saw. It is basically a chainsaw blade with handles at both ends. It's not EASY to cut through a tree with it, but it is the best compact solution I've found.

Security: I don't suggest keeping a firearm in your 72 hour kit, because of the cost and because it won't be secured in your vehicle. There is also a risk that if a State of Emergency is declared that your weapons will be taken. Some items that you can keep in your kit that you can easily use as defensive weapons that are easy to hide and/or unlikely to be taken are pepper spray and a long choke chain.

Comfort/Medical: A couple of items that will be worth their weight in gold if you need them are toilet paper and MaxiPads. Some other comfort/medical items to consider:

Item	Number to Buy	Date put in kits
Toothbrushes		
Hand Sanitizer		
Baby Wipes >> If you can, buy in bulk from warehouse stores		
Spare Glasses >> \$10 glasses http://zennioptical.com		
Sting kit		

Epi-Kit for severe allergic reactions. Requires a prescription.		
Asthma Inhaler		
Diapers		
Socks		
Underwear		
Anything you're addicted to (Nicotine/caffiene)		

Once you have your kits stocked with these items, it's time to move on to the recommended items.

Recommended Items:

Item	Number to Buy	Date put in kits
Cord (550/551 paracord or parachute cord)		
N.95 mask (sold out in April 2009 for the swine flu scare. The REAL reason to carry them is for dust/debris after an explosion, earthquake, or building collapse.)		
Hatchet		
Extra Ammo for your primary weapon		
AM/FM/emergency radio receiver		
2 way radios		
Pen/pencil/paper		
Signal whistle		

Aluminum foil (for cooking, signaling, improvised cup, etc.)		
Handheld GPS		
Spare batteries		
Roll of Quarters		
Boonie cap		
Local map		
Compass		
Garbage bags		
Playing Cards / small book		
Deet		
Full change of clothes		
Peanut M&Ms		
Phone card		
Zip lock bags		

With the exception of spare clothes, all of the items up to this point will fit in a small backpack.

The list of optional items that you can include in your kit are endless. As a quick example, if you are in a cold climate and regularly wear dress shoes or heels, you're going to want to have a spare pair of shoes/boots in your car that you can change into if you need to.

Operational Security

Depending on what kind of bag you put your 72 hour kit in, it may look very appealing through a window or when you're loading your trunk at the grocery store.

In short, tactical looks valuable. If I see a high-speed Maxpedition bag in your car as I walk by, I'm going to think, "gun, ammo, knives, & cool kit!" Unfortunately, cool camping packs face the same problem

One option is to use a red/pink/orange bag with the intent of it looking like a teenage girl's book bag or an EMT/CERT bag. This has the downside of making the pack more visible if you are in an evasion situation, but it also makes you look less tactical.

Better yet, you can put your entire 72 hour kit (pack) into a garbage bag or a plastic container, slap a strip of duct tape on it and label it, "diapers" or "Stuff To Donate" with a magic marker. That way you can have the pack you want and still not make yourself a target.

If you aren't able to get your 72 hour kits completed this week, that is alright. The main thing is that you keep making progress. Make sure to go through the lists above and figure out which items you want to add to your kits and update your list of items to buy. Remember, this is a self-paced course, so it's great if you complete it in 12 weeks, but there's nothing wrong with completing it over 24 weeks.

I'd love to hear your feedback on this. Would you rather have less information and fewer exercises in each lesson, or is the pace good for you? Please email me at david@surviveinplace.com and let me know.

Make sure to head over to the resource page for this lesson at <http://urbansurvivalplan.com/588/lesson4/>, take a look at the resources for this lesson, and comment on what you thought about it.

God Bless,

David Morris
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