

Additional Possibilities for Your Grab-N-Go Kit

The following list was compiled at the first Mutual Aid Communicator exercise in October 2006. Many thanks to all the hams that shared their great ideas that helped build this list.

Please note that several brand names and sources are listed. These are by no means endorsements of the products or the vendors selling the product – they are listed solely as an aid for quickly locating the item. You should check out and evaluate each item and include it in your kit only if it meets your needs. Your mileage may vary.

Antennas:

A small “Hershey” style antenna – this is a small mag-mount with a very strong magnet. The antenna can be rolled up for storage, but over time it will lose its ability to stand up straight. One idea is to use a straw or small piece of tubing to help hold it vertical.

Any form of an external antenna is better than trying to use your radio with a rubber duck or aftermarket whip antenna inside the car.

Roll-up J-pole, string and something throwable. The idea is to throw the object with string attached over something high (such as a street light), then use the string to hoist the J-pole for additional height. CAUTION: look out for high voltage wires overhead before throwing.

Batteries and power

- Some radios have a battery configuration option (alkaline/NiCad/etc). If yours does, make sure it is set correctly. In some cases this tells the radio not to charge the batteries (in the case of alkalines which might explode or fail)
- Get enough battery rechargers to recharge all batteries at one time. This is helpful if you are sleeping – you don’t have to get up and change batteries in the middle of the night. Also have enough power cords so you can plug them all in and still have one outlet available.
- Label batteries and document purchase date, used dates, recharge dates. A Post-It will work
- Batteries of America <www.batteriesamerica.com/hamradio.htm> has “extended” batteries for some radios. These typically are larger batteries than the originals, but also last longer.
- Use a solar panel for trickle charging batteries while on the shelf. Available at Fry’s and possibly others (no specific size or specifications given)
- Costco and Fry’s both carry various forms of “portable power”. This usually includes a 7Ah-20Ah battery, built-in recharger, sometimes jumper cables, sometimes 12 and 110 volt output. Cost usually runs under \$100.
- Use a Powerpanel for easy distribution of 12V power. Advertised in QST and available at HRO.
- Have some clamp-on style car battery terminals/connectors – these are the ones that clamp on the battery posts (some newer car batteries have side-mount connectors, so this might not apply). This allows you to remove the battery from the car and still be able to connect to it.
- You can purchase battery holders that hold D-cell batteries from Radio Shack. Wire them together to make a 12 volt power source – it will last a long time.
- Try to standardize on a battery size. This way you can minimize the number and types of batteries you have to carry.
- Anderson Powerpoles are the standard connector type for 12V. But also carry adapters to handle other connection types such as cigarette lighters, etc.

Additional Possibilities for Your Grab-N-Go Kit

Lights, lights and more lights

- Attach small keychain style LED light to each bag in your kit. This way you always have a light available to find the bigger flashlight.
- Use LED flashlights exclusively. They use much less power and last longer.
- Use crank-type flashlights and forget the batteries. Available at Costco, Fry's and most other places.
- Somewhere Out West <www.somewhereoutwest.net> carries "Streamlight" lights – low power and bright.
- Lowes carries Mini-Mag LED lights with 3 white LEDs. Apparently a new product from Mag-Lite.
- Carry a few Glo-Sticks in your kit.
- Use a "headlamp" typically used by hikers. Allows both hands to be free.

Food Supplies / First Aid

- Earthshakes in Burlingame <www.earthshakes.com> carries emergency kits and long life food supplies. Also available are "heater meals" – meals with a self-contained heat source.
- Long Life Foods <www.longlifefood.com> also carries individual meals
- Heater Meals <www.heatermeals.com> carries a variety of self-heating meals.

Miscellaneous Ideas

- Copy and laminate important documents (license info, DSW cards, cheat sheets, etc). Inks in inkjet-type printers are not 100% waterproof. Laser printed copies tend to rub off as well.
- Maps – Thomas Guide maps are the recommended standard and are used by police and fire. Costco carries the Santa Clara/San Mateo book and the Metro Bay Area book which covers east bay as well. You do not need to buy a new set every year – the numbering scheme stays the same year to year. The Metro map has an offer in it for a CD that will allow you to print your own custom maps.
- Add some paperweights to your kit. Keeps papers in place when working outdoors.
- Use a cookie sheet or pizza pan as a ground plane for mag mount antennas.
- Tape – electrical, duct, and blue painter's tape. The blue tape is useful for holding signs and is easily removed.
- Keep your gear in multiple kits – one for radios and cabling, one for clothing, one for supplies, etc. That way you can grab a subset of kits if you don't need them all.
- Create a check list of what is in your kit and where to find it when it isn't in your kit. Most of us use parts of our Go-kits daily, such as headsets. A checklist showing where to find the item can be useful.
- Carry a compass and some means to start a fire.
- Storage – use clear Tupperware-like containers so you can see what's inside without having to open everything.
- Storage – use mesh bags to store items – can easily see what's inside. Can usually find these at dollar stores.
- Add extra baggies and a garbage bag to your kit.
- FRS Radio – put a couple of FRS radios in your kit with extra batteries. If you need to chase down an official, you can send a runner with one of the radios. Also, served agencies sometimes use FRS radios within their group.

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- Ear plugs for sleeping with snorers.
- Small digital camera for recording what's going on around you.
- Reading material to read during "down time."
- Auto wipes or baby wipes for cleaning.
- Throw in a blanket for warmth. You can throw it across your lap while sitting.
- Don't forget the utensils for your mess kit.
- Velcro straps – use Velcro-type straps to hold things together. Available at OSH and others.
- Toolkits – almost too many suggestions to list.
 - Add a soldering iron and enough tools to build cables on the fly.
 - OSH has a jeweler-type of screwdrivers (small blade), but with bigger handles.
 - Carry a Leatherman – combo knife/wrench/pliers/cutters
 - Screw drivers, knives, wrenches, hammers, cutters...you get the idea.
- First Aid kits – again many suggestions. Tailor to your needs.
- First Aid book – "Where there is No Doctor" – available at Hesperian Foundation in Palo Alto, and possibly other stores as well. A good addition for anything you need to know medical-wise.
- Cases – Pelican makes several varieties of waterproof cases – available at Frys and Somewhere Out West. Another source for cases is the Orion telescope store on Deanza Blvd in Cupertino.
- A wheelie or small luggage cart to carry your items and save your back.
- The caps/dust covers for cigarette adapters (the female end) usually fall off and get lost. Use a wine cork as a replacement – it almost fits perfectly into the socket, keeping it clean. Enjoy the wine first.
- Conterra <www.conterra-inc.com> carries small fanny packs suitable for carrying small items such as an HT and a 7Ah battery. Also carries other emergency-related gear.
- Don't forget about the Red Cross – they carry disaster kits, first aid kits, training, etc.
- A roll of yellow "Caution" tape to mark out your area and keep others out.

Vendors

This is a summarized list of some of the vendors listed elsewhere in these pages. The obvious ones aren't listed. This is not an endorsement of the company or any of their products and services that they offer. They are listed here simply because others have used them in the past and have been satisfied. Your mileage may vary.

Batteries of America <www.batteriesamerica.com/hamradio.htm> (web only) - batteries
Somewhere Out West <www.somewhereoutwest.net> Mt. View – public safety/emergency prep items
Earthshakes <www.earthshakes.com> in Burlingame – earthquake survival kits and supplies
Long Life Foods <www.longlifefood.com> (web only) – foods with long shelf life times
Heater Meals <www.heatermeals.com> (web only) – Pre-packaged meals that are self-heating
Conterra <www.conterra-inc.com> (web only) – various emergency prep items
Red Cross <www.paarc.org> (Palo Alto/North County) and <www.scv-redcross.org/openrosters/view_homepage.asp?orgkey=1463> (Central/South County) - disaster kits and more