

Shelter-in-Place Buckets

There are so many ways to prepare for a disaster, and different kinds of emergency buckets, go-bags or “bug-out bags,” disaster preparation and supplies. In this case, I wanted to create disaster buckets as gifts for family for some of the most likely disasters to hit Alaska, especially the region we’re in (Southcentral):

- 1) **Earthquakes.** Alaska has an average of 1,000 earthquakes A MONTH. The vast majority of them are too small to feel, but we still have hundreds of magnitude 4 and higher quakes a year. The absolute guarantee in Alaska is that we will experience numerous damaging earthquakes in a lifetime. Earthquakes are just part of Alaskan life, and we need to prepare for them.
- 2) **Volcanic eruption.** There are roughly 40 active volcanoes in Alaska (I have read this is also 80, but I don’t understand the determination for what makes it active. Let’s just say “a whole bunch.”) In my lifetime, there have been a couple volcanic eruptions with ash fall in Southcentral. There will be more. Ash fall is the most likely disaster to prepare for with volcanoes in Alaska.
- 3) **Tsunami.** While Anchorage/Mat-Su are unlikely to experience a tsunami that will cause harm, due to our location on the coast, it’s not zero percent. What’s more, a tsunami is not only very likely elsewhere in Alaska (including very close to us,) but numerous tsunamis have happened in the lifetime of just my parents – a few deadly.

So with those in mind, I wanted to imagine what would really be needed in the home in case of one of these emergencies. And because I couldn’t just outfit them in everything needed, I decided to create “shelter-in-place emergency buckets.”

This bucket is created with a few assumptions:

- 1) That the house will be safe to stay in, with no gas leaks, water pipes broken, structural problems, etc.
- 2) That there are other emergency supplies in the house, including food, a larger first aid kit, sources of heat (including blankets,) etc.
- 3) These are things you wouldn’t store for daily/regular use, or things you want to ensure you have in case of an emergency.

115-hour candles (2)

Both light and heat

Tea lights (65)

Something like 26 tea lights is roughly the same amount of heat as a small space heater. But there are ways to make it more of a radiant heat with flower pots (same amount of heat, a slower dispersal, but a little more directed toward people versus straight up.)

One of the more memorable “emergency use” moments for me was when the heat and electricity was out for several days in an apartment I shared with two roommates. We heated and conserved heat in several ways:

- 1) We all slept in the living room, and put a blanket up to block out the hallway and the rest of the apartment. That way we were only needing to heat the living room and

kitchen area.

2) We had candles up around the room. In our case, just cheap candles we found at the grocery store.

3) We wore layers, including tighter clothes underneath baggier clothes. We also slept under multiple blankets.

4) We covered some of our windows and big glass door to the patio with sheets and blankets. In that our apartment we didn't have the most heat efficient windows.

In the end, we were ROASTING. We were so hot we all threw off our blankets in the middle of the night! It was actually impressive what we were able to do with some candles and combining body heat indoors in a smaller area. I now always have a large supply of candles on hand!

Folding Water Jug

If a boil-water advisory is on, you can boil lots of water at once and this is a handy place to store it so you're not boiling it all as needed. And if water is not flowing inside, you can use it to carry water.

5-Gallon Buckets

The containers themselves are very useful in an emergency. I enclosed instructions for several of them, including tools to make them. Just a few:

1) Turn one, or both, into a toilet. This would be for a longer-term time when water is out but the house is still safe. If they're needed for this, it's ideal to use one for urine and one for bowel movements.

2) Washing machine. With water and power out, washing clothes becomes a pain, but all the more important to keep sanitary. You can cut a hole in the top and use an agitating tool (clean toilet scrubber, clean plunger, etc.) to make something more efficient than finding some rocks to bang the clothes against!

3) Water carrying or storage, if water is out.

Small Garbage Bags (50)

Many uses! If the water is out, you can use these for lining your toilet and disposing of your waste. You can also do the same if you turn a 5-gallon bucket into a toilet. If volcanic ash is headed your way, these are good to wrap over electronics, or cut into rectangles, tape together, and tape over windows and doors to seal them against the ash. If you're in a really long term emergency and have totally run out of diapers, you can use these along with cloth underwear as diapers. Not ideal but better than everything getting everywhere!

Drop Cloths (2)

If there's an ash cloud, you can seal the doors, or at least all but one door and just use one door

in an out to minimize what might come in. You can also tape or pin them up outside your main door to make an arctic entry for ash, removing ash-covered clothes and such before coming indoors.

Hand Sanitizer

A hand pump and refill. If water is out, you will want to use this instead of water as much as you can. It's even more effective against germs, but won't use up water you have to gather and/or boil.

Cord

Plenty of uses. Hang up your clothes to dry if you're out of power. Use to help create an arctic entry to prevent ash coming into the house. If power and heat are out, you can use it to create a smaller area for candles or such to heat.

Matches (200)

These will last longer in storage than a lighter.

Notepads, Pens, Pencils, Permanent Marker

As a writer, this is just a must. But there are actual strategic needs for old-school communication in an emergency. My former-Army husband approved of this and I learned something - a pen was considered part of his uniform. There's even a little pocket for it. So if it's good enough for the Army, it's good enough for your emergency kit. Also, because this writer says so.

Cards (playing cards and Uno)

This may seem a trivial thing but keeping you or others mentally engaged can be a very real thing! If you don't have power, and you're conserving things like phone usage and such, or if you need to take this to an emergency location, have a few things you can be distracted by. Whether it's you, kiddos, or a group, long-term emergencies can also just get boring. If I'm staying in the house, I have enough books to last a lifetime. But I also want something to do with others, and if I'm grabbing the kit to head to a shelter or something.

Toys

I got a few distractions specifically for my nephew, which will hopefully work for the next few years. I got two cheap and small cars to play with, some Play-Doh, and some bubbles. I also got some crayons and paper. He's too young for crayons and paper now, and really even the Play-Doh and bubbles, but as the kit is meant to sit for a few years before checking it over, I wanted some things that he could still potentially find interesting at age 2, 3, even school age. While if you're staying in the house, there's likely plenty of toys and such already there. But including a few serves a purpose for a few reasons. If staying in the house, there's something to be said for novelty when talking about distracting kids. Playing with a "new" toy can make it more distracting than the same old things. And second, if the bucket is being grabbed to head to a shelter or someone else's house, you'll know you have at least a few things.

Diapers

I got these for my nephew, as he's not quite a year old. I got the largest size available (6) as I

figured it would be easier to tape a too-large size on him (or anyone else who might need them) than a too-small size. Room to grow into.

I also got some fabric diapers. In a true, long-term disaster situation, these can be used with liners much more easily than finding a bunch of new diapers. But you can also create your own liners if it's really long-term.

Scissors and Utility knife

I have about 5 million pairs of scissors SOMEWHERE in the house, but can never find one. So there's a pair you know for sure. And amongst other things, the utility knife can be used to create the bucket toilet.

Folding Knife

Untold ways a pocket knife may be useful in an emergency, from medical use, to food, to environmental safety.

Bleach

Besides a cleaning agent, bleach can be used to purify water. It has to be used in VERY small amounts, so to me it's a last resort and I included instructions for how much.

Masking Tape

Amongst other things, if there's an ash cloud you can tape up window seals and such without harming the paint. If there are cracks in the windows you can tape over them before they get too big.

Duct Tape

What CAN'T you do with duct tape? Tape up things to seal rooms, make an arctic entry, seal things (cracks, pipes).

Face mask - If an ash cloud is headed your way, a must. Also handy to deal with a lot of debris.

Eye shields/goggles - also a must if an ash cloud is headed toward you, and works for cleaning up debris.

Baby wipes - Good for babies, but also for cleaning up adults! Especially useful if water isn't working. Can be used to clean up light ash indoors.

Hand/foot heaters - These are a bit more last resort when heat is out, as unless you have a limitless supply, they only last so long and then you're out. But useful when you're needing to stay outside for a longer period (gathering wood, water, walking somewhere.) Or if it's that dire and you're freezing, and can't get help. Or even if you're just cold but relatively confident you will have heat back soon.

Sewing kit - I mainly included this for stitches (I know! But think serious wounds and no immediate emergency care available.) But a cheap sewing kit, including needles, thread,

buttons, and a little pair of scissors, can also help repair things when ensuring clothes and blankets and such are in good repair is of utmost importance. Say you've got a great winter jacket but it was torn in the initial quake? It would be good to both have the supplies to repair it, and to know how to do at least a basic stitch.

Emergency blankets (3) - If heat is out, these can be a very important layer when trying to sleep. We don't have ideal blankets for cold weather (I once decided to camp with a quilt. It was a dumb idea.) I would include one of these blankets under my quilt. And if you are caught in a car or something in the cold, these are literally life-saving.

Pantyhose - Incredibly useful when it comes to ash fall. Put it over the air intake on your car so you don't clog up your engine. Put it over any outside vents in your house (although you should seal anything you don't absolutely need, and not use things like the dryer.) You can even use one as a mask, if need be.

Flashlight and batteries - One of the most basic needs in an emergency.

Radio and batteries - Important if there's no power. I got different ones for each of us. I got Joe and I a hand crank one with renewable batteries, and the family ones that take AA batteries.

First Aid Kit

I bought a very cheap travel first aid kit for less than \$5, and then bulked it up. I tried to include things that could perform double duty, like sanitary pads that double as large-wound pads.

Band-aids - Different sizes. Both flexible fabric kind and waterproof kind.

Neosporin - The kit had a few small packets but I added an additional full-size tube. A cut that is no big deal in a regular situation can turn deadly when medical care is difficult to be to. Warring against infection for even minor cuts becomes a priority.

Alcohol and alcohol swabs - The kit includes a few swabs but I added a bottle. The bottle is more about very serious wounds when medical care isn't coming soon, and should be used to sterilize what you're using on the wound, such as tweezers, needles, etc., not the wound itself. Use hydrogen peroxide or other disinfectants better for flesh wounds before you use alcohol.

Sanitary pads

Besides the obvious, these are very useful for larger wounds. If you've run out of diapers, these can be rigged to serve the same purpose.

Hydrogen peroxide - After you've hopefully cleaned the wound with soap and water, and taken out any debris with tweezers sterilized with alcohol, hydrogen peroxide can be used to clean the wound before bandaging.

Vinyl/Latex Gloves (50)

For first aid, or for clean-up.

Bar of soap

Besides normal cleaning of hands, this can double as shampoo, laundry soap, and dish soap. If water is out or on a boil-water notice, try and reserve soap for when you have large debris on the hands or more intense dirt. For after the bathroom and before cooking and such, try to use the hand sanitizer first to conserve water.

Medical tape – Both waterproof and cloth is ideal.

Large, Medium and Small gauze pads – Individually wrapped/sterilized.

Medical scissors - in a pinch, the regular scissors also work, but these can be sterilized and used solely for medical needs. If you're in an ongoing disaster

Tweezers - especially useful in a situation where there's been a lot of broken glass, and you need to get it out of your skin, hair, pet's skin, etc.

Medicine and Aids

What I included was meant to be a supplement for an already well-stocked medicine cabinet, keeping in mind you could still grab this kit to evacuate.

- *Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and Ibuprofen (Advil)* - they're both useful pain relievers. Doctors often suggest they both be used for serious pain because they don't counteract each other and can treat different sources of the pain/problem. But both can also irritate the stomach in different ways. I personally am not supposed to use NSAIDs (Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen) and pregnant women and children should be careful with them.
 - Tylenol - doesn't reduce swelling, best for pain and fever
 - Advil (NSAID) - reduces swelling, best for trauma
- *Tums* - stomach upset
- *Claritin* - a lot of debris can kick up allergies
- *Dramamine* - plenty of people felt seriously motion sickness not only with the initial earthquake, but with the never-ending aftershocks. Two of the Bedard boys deal with motion sickness as it is, so I loaded up on these. If you aren't used to taking Dramamine, it is best to take it at least 30 minutes before the motion-filled activity. Because you can't predict the earthquake of course, just remember that if you take it while motion is still happening (like with aftershocks), it could take a long time to really start helping. Things like ginger, drinking lots of water, and anti-nausea medicine can also help.
- *DreamWater* - I already deal with sleep issues, and have been an insomniac since I was a kid. A disaster situation can compound anyone's problem (and more recently discovered, endless aftershocks!) DreamWater is a product I

already use pretty frequently because it helps me get to sleep. It's made with a lot of natural ingredients, including melatonin, and isn't habit forming. So even if it doesn't get you to sleep, it can help settle nerves. You might include other sleep aids like melatonin, or more heavy-duty aids if you need them and/or are prescribed them. Again, this is meant to supplement what you already have, but in case you have to evacuate, or are just low, this will get you through a few days.

- *Advil PM* - Did I mention I have sleeping problems? But if you're injured as well, even a small injury, pain won't help sleeping. Something like this will help with both pain and sleep.
- *Immodium and/or Pepto* – An emergency is a terrible time to have diarrhea, or really any stomach problems. Besides being inconvenient, it can quickly turn into a serious contagious health problem if normal plumbing is not working.
- *Saline* - If a volcano has gone off, or you have been in a place with a lot of debris, you may have a lot of gunk in your eyes. I included a travel size bottle of saline solution to help flush it out. You can use water, but this is a lot gentler, and the bottle is easier to get over your eyes to flush.