

For coastal residents, hurricane season means one thing: constantly checking radar for storms. When disaster strikes, you want to be ready. But, as we learned from mega-storm Hurricane Sandy and her predecessor Hurricane Irene, it's not just a coastal issue. Government agencies and the Natural Resources Defense Council recommend having a "go" bag ready so that at a moment's notice you can throw it in the car and hit the evacuation routes.

Whether you choose to keep this bag prepped and ready to go at a moment's notice or plan to pack it up at the sign of a storm watch, make sure your "go" bag is stocked with these disaster essentials. Here are some of the most important items to keep in your bag, according to the NRDC.

A Water-Proof Bag:



Your bag should be large enough to fit all of these essentials and durable enough that it can weather a storm — literally. Look for a large duffel bag that is water proof and has pockets for organizing all of the little details you don't want to be without when you need to hit the road.

Important Documents:



Come rain or shine, you definitely don't want your important documents (think: birth certificates, passports and the like) to be lost, or worse, destroyed. Keep them protected by making sure they're always together

Evacuation Routes:



It's important to make sure you have an evacuation plan the whole family is aware of, *and* that it is clearly marked on some maps kept safely inside your "go" bag.

Cell Phones & Chargers:



If your family gets separated or is split up between multiple vehicles, having cell phones will make keeping track of each other easy. In your "go" bag, store extra chargers so you don't have to worry about losing

Petty Cash:



Should the power go out all across town and card-readers stop working, you want to have between \$50 and \$100 in small bills at the ready. Keep the cash in a labeled envelope so you can access it easily.

Keys:



The last thing you want to be doing when you're fleeing a storm is hunting for your spare keys. Keep an extra set of car and house keys in your "go" bag so you don't run around the house in full panic.

Food & Water:



Hopefully you won't go long periods of time without access to food and water, but it's better to be prepared than to not have it when you need it. Pack several bottles of water (a general guideline is two gallons per per-

Can Opener:



Since canned foods don't need refrigeration, they're often a go-to for food in emergency situations. Don't be caught without a means to open them — be equipped with a hand crank can opener (you'll be glad you packed it when the electricity goes out on your electric can opener).

Pet Food & Bowls:



Just as you should plan to have food and water for your family members, don't forget to pack provisions for your pets!

First Aid Kit:



Including a first-aid kit in your "go" bag almost goes without saying, but we'll say it anyway: pack a first-aid kit and don't forget to have extra medication for anyone in your family that requires it. And while you're at it, the first-aid kit is a good place to keep a list of all family medications (including dosage) and the reason for taking it, just in case you have a medical emergency and need to tell a doctor.

Medications:



Pack at least a seven-day supply of any necessary medications when you evacuate, the Red Cross recommends. If your pets take medication, be sure to include some in your "go" bag as well.

Flashlight:



When the power goes out and it's dark out, you'll be reaching for a flashlight. With advancements in light bulb technology, go for an LED bulb, which lasts longer than traditional lights.

Battery-Powered Radio:



In the age of smartphones and tablets, a battery-powered radio may seem archaic, but it's still on many "go" bag lists as a must-have item (along with extra batteries!), including this one from the NRDC.

Extra Batteries:



Speaking of batteries, it is worth mentioning to have several extra sets either in the first aid kit if there's room, or in a small plastic container with a snap-on lid in your waterproof bag.

Fresh Clothes:



Should you be evacuated for several days, you'll want a fresh set of clothes to change into. Have a set packed for each member of the family; they'll come in handy should you need them.

Toiletries:



If you're going to be spending a few days together as a family in the same vehicle, deodorant is a must. Be sure your bag is prepped with personal hygiene supplies for everyone.