When Disaster Strikes

By Jessica Bennett

Preparing for winter is a task we have all started to under take. Winterizing outdoor faucets, insulating pipes, covering windows and drafts in doors, and getting chimney’s cleaned are on the to-do lists. There are many rumors of what this winter is going to bring, but the reality is that no one really knows. We spend a lot of time preparing our home for winter and the possible snow, rain, ice that may come our way. However, we often forget to prepare ourselves. Every home should have a 72-hour emergency kit with drinking water and food. These are simple to put together and could save you a lot in the event of a major emergency.

A 72- hour home emergency kit is recommended because most incidents don’t last more than three days and those that do usually have outside help that arrives around day three to four. This kit should include basic necessities, water, and food at least, but may also need to include medications or infant and pet necessities as well. Your kit should include: a flashlight or two with spare batteries, candles and waterproof matches or lighters, space blankets, whistle or signaling mirror, first aid kit, a manual can opener, battery or hand crank radio (extra batteries!), plastic sheeting and duct tape, dust masks, at least one spare set of clothes per person, jackets, bleach and an eye dropper, spare bedding, and something to keep you entertained. You should have one gallon of water per person per day. If you run out of safe water, you can treat other water by adding 16 drops of bleach to one gallon of water. Make sure to use regular household bleach; not bleach that is color safe, scented, or has additives. Good food to keep in your kit includes granola bars, canned fruits and vegetables, peanut butter, protein bars, nuts, crackers, canned or dried meats, non-perishable cheese or milk, and dry cereal. You can have virtually anything you want as long as it’s non-perishable and shouldn’t require you to heat it up in order to be safe to eat. Foods with high water content and low salt content are the best choices.

Make sure to check your kit every six months. A good way to remember is by setting it up to turn your clocks forward or backward, change the battery in your smoke detectors, and check your emergency kits all on the same day. Then you don’t need additional alarms or reminders. Make sure to update food items, replace water, and ensure spare clothes still fit. For more information you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or the fire department website at [www.cascadelocksfire.com](http://www.cascadelocksfire.com). If you or a neighbor will need assistance during a prolonged emergency due to being on home oxygen, refrigerated medications, or physical impairment, please contact the fire department or city hall so we know how to best help long before an emergency.