

Bluestem Breezes
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“What to Grab When There is Smoke in Your Nostrils, a Howling in Your Ears or Water to Your Ankles”

While I can't take claim to that creative title, I can promise you this column is packed with critical information related to that catchy heading. Please, read on...

Each year, I seem to find it ever more important to share with the general public the importance of preparing for unexpected events. Several years back, I wrote this column to help you with emergency preparedness as it relates to your vehicle and traveling. Then, post-Harveyville Tornado, I included information for home preparedness ahead of severe weather.

This year, I will still include those previously mentioned details, but I want you to think outside the box...literally. Preparedness for any type of emergency requires more than just packing a box of essentials.

I invite you to visit www.extension.org/disasters. This website contains information from EDEN, the Extension Disaster Education Network. Since it is a national group, they do cover disasters we are less likely to face (hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.). However, they have extensive information regarding flooding, tornadoes, agrosecurity (this deserves more attention than most of us realize), and snow/ice preparedness. There are also resources that we might not ever consider - money management is a huge concern.

In your internet search engine, type “Recovery After Disaster: The Family Financial Toolkit”. This is an excellent tool for all of us to use! It's available on the EDEN website, as well as monthly webinars you may find advantageous. A recent webinar, for example, was titled “What to Grab When There is Smoke in Your Nostrils, a Howling in Your Ears or Water to Your Ankles”. Check it out for yourself!

Ok, we're just about ready to cover the items you can pack in those waterproof boxes. But, before we pack the box, look around you. Yes, right now. Do you have an inventory of your household goods? What if you have to begin replacing them next week? All of them. Are you prepared?

K-State also has helpful information as you prepare your household (www.ksre.ksu.edu). Here are three main points to consider: prepare a household inventory, review your insurance coverage, and create a grab-and-go box. Now, we're ready for the information I have shared in the past.

In the late winter to early spring time, I always keep a tub with extra clothes, water, snacks, toothbrushes, pictures, and important documents. After February 28th, 2012, our one tub has expanded to two tubs and two backpacks. Moreover, I still haven't unpacked my tornado stash from last spring! One's experiences can indeed impact the rest of their life (and their spouse's!).

Another type of emergency preparedness activity involves preparing for vehicle-based emergencies. Winter is upon us folks!

My hope is that each vehicle you and your loved ones ride in this year is equipped with some sort of emergency-ready items. I always assumed emergency kits were for times when you were trapped in your own vehicle. Actually, emergency kits are very beneficial for other vehicles and citizens as well.

FEMA suggests a vehicle emergency kit entail “food, water, first aid supplies, flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies”. For the winter months, let’s also throw in a blanket or two, extra outerwear, and gloves. The most I see my ski pants is in the back of my vehicle, and that’s a good thing!

I grew up hearing if you have duct tape and bailing wire, you can fix anything in an emergency. Well, I don’t know that those are what my vehicle is stocked with, but I suppose they can’t hurt anything either.

Living in a rural area, I would now suggest everyone own their own pair of pliers. And, know how to use them!! In this area, if an accident would happen it would surely involve a fence at some point. In an emergency situation, we were in need of pliers and it took at least a half a dozen vehicles to find pliers. I never thought I’d see the day.

We also need to emphasize warming items: blankets, coats, coveralls, gloves, towels. These are multi-purpose items that can come in handy for you and others.

For these upcoming cold months, keep your vehicle full of gas. Whether in an accident or a power-outage, gas is important to have on hand.

Did you know there are flashlights that blink for times of emergency? For high school graduation, my mom bought me this flashlight that can blink (for flashing down vehicles), and has sharp points for breaking windows. I thought for many years she had wasted her money, but once again, Mom was right.

As a responsible driver or passenger, be aware of your surroundings. Always be on the look-out for deer, icy road conditions, and accidents. If someone is waving some strange blinking light at you, please stop. If you cannot stop, use that cell phone you’re carrying and call 911.

I hope each of you reading this article take it to heart, and are prepared in future times of need. The websites www.fema.gov and www.ksready.gov provide wonderful information for various disasters. For Kansas road conditions, visit 511.ksdot.org.

I wish you all safe driving throughout the coming months!

Further information is available by visiting the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; kamayer@ksu.edu; 765-3821). For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out wabaunsee.ksu.edu.