THE 72-HOUR HOUSEHOLD CHECKLIST

Most families own emergency supplies they have never opened. The gear was never the problem — nobody ever taught them. This is the part nobody teaches, and none of it costs money you haven't already spent.

WHY 72 HOURS?

"We went out on a foot patrol in Afghanistan that was supposed to take about two hours. A sandstorm closed in and it ran three days.

We were fine — not because we were tough, but because we'd packed for seventy-two hours we never expected to need. That's where the number comes from. It isn't marketing."

DREW JENNINGS
FOUNDER, OUTPOST PREPAREDNESS
U.S. MARINE CORPS, 20 YEARS · RETIRED

START HERE, IT'S FREE. Walk every room with your phone and photograph everything you own. Eleven minutes, and it becomes your insurance claim. People who skip it end up arguing with an adjuster about things that no longer exist.

01 DOCUMENTS

- [ ] IDs, passports, birth certificates
- [ ] Insurance policies, the deed or lease
- [ ] A written medication list — names and doses
- [ ] Room-by-room photos, backed up off-site
- [ ] All of it in one waterproof bag you can grab one-handed

Free, irreplaceable, and the first thing people forget.

02 WATER

- [ ] One gallon per person per day, stored at home
- [ ] Two weeks' worth if you intend to stay put
- [ ] A filter or filter straw in the bag you'd carry
- [ ] Fill the bathtub when a storm is coming

Three days of water for two people is about 48 lb. Nobody carries that. Store it at home; filter it on the road.

03 MEDICATION

- [ ] A one- to two-week buffer of anything essential
- [ ] The written list — a doctor elsewhere will ask
- [ ] Ask about early refills before a storm arrives
- [ ] Spare glasses; chargers for any medical device

An emergency is a pharmacy outage. Know what day five looks like.

04 WHEN PHONES FAIL

- [ ] A meeting place near home, and one outside the area
- [ ] One out-of-state contact everyone calls instead of each other
- [ ] Numbers on paper, in every wallet and backpack
- [ ] Say the plan out loud, then have the kids repeat it

Networks fail precisely when everyone uses them at once.

05 THE BAG

- [ ] A headlamp, not a flashlight — you need both hands
- [ ] A radio that isn't your phone
- [ ] A real first-aid kit you have opened
- [ ] Cash in small bills; card readers need power
- [ ] Food needing no cooking, no water, no fridge
- [ ] Shoes you could walk a mile in

A kit you've never opened isn't preparation. It's a receipt.

06 ANYONE WHO CAN'T CARRY THEMSELVES

- [ ] Who in the house can't manage stairs alone?
- [ ] Who is helping them — and have they practiced it?
- [ ] Pets: carrier, records, food, a photo of you together
- [ ] Decide now where you'd go with them

Not every shelter takes pets. People who haven't answered this decide in the driveway, at night. Some decide not to leave.

WHERE DOES YOUR HOUSEHOLD STAND?

LEVEL 01
READY TO LEAVE
Out the door in ten minutes with what you actually need.

LEVEL 02
READY TO LAST
Seventy-two hours with no outside help. Water, meds, documents.

LEVEL 03
READY TO HELP
You can assist a neighbor, a child, an aging parent.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Open the bag. Empty it onto the floor. Put back only what you can explain the use of. Whatever you can't explain, you were never going to use — and whatever's missing, you now know about while the stores are still open.