

An Approach to Evacuation Preparedness

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Of all the facets of Emergency Preparedness that our leaders and counselors have recommended, and that common sense requires, the most difficult to conceive, carry out, or to coherently teach is Evacuation Preparedness. Here are some reasons why.

DIFFICULTIES

There are no teachers. While there are lots of people with evacuation experience, most of them did it poorly, lost much, and did not learn the lessons available from their ordeal. No one seems to have made it the subject of scientific study. There are no books on the subject, and chapters of books on relevant subjects are necessarily very general when it comes to evacuation. (I have found one book with the right title, but its content scarcely goes beyond a good discussion of the 72 Hour Kit. Nobody talks about how to save a substantial portion of your personal possessions in an evacuation.)

The loading time is unknown. The most crucial variable in an evacuation is time. You might have 30 seconds to get out, (as in a house or apartment fire), five minutes to throw some things in a box, (as in a police situation, where the evacuation is precautionary), an hour to load your vehicle, (as you might with an approaching flood or range fire), or three days' warning, (such as a hurricane provides). It would really help to know how much time you are going to have, but you cannot know.

Commencement time is unknown. You cannot predict where you will be or what you will be doing when the alarm is sounded. Will you be at home? Will your family members all be at home, or scattered thither and yon across the city? Will you be awake, dressed, rested, healthy, and fed, or will some combination of their opposites prevail?

How long will I be out of my home? Some crises are over in hours, with others you never return. What kind of a plan can span that range of possibilities?

The survival of what you leave behind is unknown. Another variable that may make a tremendous difference how you would like to handle things is whether or not your house will remain safe while you are gone. Will you have a home to return to, or will everything be lost that is not taken with you? Not only can you not know this now, in your planning, often it is not at all obvious when you are in the midst of the evacuation. Will the firemen be able to stop the fire at the road, as they intend, or will it leap across and consume everything but the driveway? Will the weather moderate and spare us, or will it set new records for badness and litigate with Murphy's Law?

Family resources and liabilities vary widely. Who is going to put forth a plan that works equally well for the bicycle-riding student, the sedan-driving elderly couple, and the farm family with two pickups, an equipment trailer, a cattle truck, and three strapping teenage sons? What if your livelihood is in that home? What if you have domestic animals? What if that fragile old grandfather clock was all you got of your grandpa's, and you'd die if anything happened to it? What if you are the family genealogist, and your charge fills five filing cabinets?

Will I be able to coordinate my actions with extended family and friends, or will the urgency be too great? Will the local Church organize, rendezvous, and pull together, or is it "every man for himself?"

Should I make sure I'm one of the first on the road, or stay clear of the panicky crowd? Will back roads be less crowded, or should we stick to the main corridors where help will be concentrated?

Will there be gasoline for sale, or not? Will I be able to gas-up before I go? Will I be able to gas-up in the towns along the way? Will I be able to gas-up at my destination?

What will be the prospects for re-supply of groceries and water along the way?

Will the roads be blocked, or passable?

Will we have average weather, or the worst possible weather because that will be the cause of the evacuation?

How far will we have to go to get outside the affected area?

What happens if the car breaks down along the way--if we have to go on without it, will it be looted and plundered? Are we taking our belongings to safety, or just into a new hazard?

Where will we go? Will the government dictate that? Should we “head for the hills,” or make a bee line for the resources of a big city? Is there safety in numbers, or in solitude?

Will a battery-powered radio really help, or will the public announcements be as poorly informed as the public address system announcement that told office workers to return to their offices in the World Trade Center?

Is it worth the effort, in this relatively safe part of the world (no smoking volcanoes, no recent earthquakes in the news, too high for a tsunami, no rockets raining down, etc.), or do I owe it to those who depend on me to take some reasonable precautions? And in a world with so many shrill voices, what are those “reasonable precautions?”

Will I be returning to work on Monday, or will my employment be among the casualties?

Will it be radiation that pushes us out, and we leave everything intact, or will it be earthquake, and we have to dig our car and supplies out from under the rubble first?

Will it be local, so that beyond Houghton Road and Highway 83 everything is normal, or will the entire country be in turmoil, with riots, price gouging, shortages, and a sea of refugees?

What exactly are we planning for, here? Should I take with me what I need to jump-start a normal life somewhere else, or supplies for a “worst case” end-of-civilization scenario?

Will God and the Government take care of us, despite His warnings and their track record of incompetence, or am I really on my own? What about God’s assurances? What about my faith and faithfulness? How much will that cover? Isn’t it actually faithless and nutty to think He won’t take care of us?

What is it that is nutty, exactly? Is it nutty to spend \$2000 on a two-wheeled trailer for an unlikely evacuation, or nutty not to invest \$2000 to save most of a \$40,000 household? Who is the crazy one?

Do we even need to evacuate? Will we “luck out,” and never need to leave home at all? Will “shelter in place” be the right strategy for everything that happens to us for the next fifty years? If the bomb goes off in Los Angeles, will the fallout reach Tucson, or will the wind shift and take it to Salt Lake City where we had thought to take refuge? Is there any point in thinking beyond the 72 Hour Kit, or will I kick myself for not taking a more proactive approach?

These and so many other questions that we cannot answer now, and may not be able to answer at the time of the evacuation, make all the difference in the world in deciding whether to prepare, what to prepare, and how to prepare. As Nature presents it, it is a huge intractable problem; which is why most people do nothing to prepare, and are frustrated that their efforts are too little, too late when their motivation arrives. Evacuation is something nobody wants to think about, nobody knows how to think about, and, for the present, nobody has to think about. Small wonder that it is the neglected frontier.

Before most of us can do anything about evacuation preparation, that is to say, do more than just drive off with a 72 Hour Kit, there has to be an approach—a rationale, a concept—that makes it logical and clear what to do. This approach must be easy, inexpensive, and adaptable to a wide variety of households and budgets, and it must be meaningful and effective, in spite of all the unknowns.

I do not know how well I have succeeded, but that is exactly what I have attempted in this write-up—to come up with an approach to Evacuation Preparedness that is simple, clear, easy, and powerful in the face of uncertainty and misfortune. Even if I have done poorly, it remains my belief that a simple conceptual framework for evacuation preparation is needed; the right approach (if we can find it) will work for every family and just about every event; and it will make a tremendous difference in the prosperity and quality of life for our family if an evacuation should ever be required of us. I solicit your feedback on what is presented here.

IN A NUTSHELL

The approach proposed here is this:

* We will do a lot better than just a 72 Hour Kit, but we will not try to save everything. Save what you can save with a modest and reasonable investment, and let the rest go. The furniture stays. Large or heavy items stay. Anything not ready to go, stays. Anything that takes two people to load, anything fragile, anything that requires special padding, handling, problem-solving, or tying down, stays. You can always change your mind later if the nature of the event allows you the luxury.

* Separate high-value things from low, and focus on the high-value items.

* Assess the volume and weight capacity of your vehicle, and take that as the scale of your evacuation. Aim to fill your vehicular space in the most time-efficient manner. Do not overload. Through mental rehearsal and some hands-on practice, identify impediments to the evacuation in general, and the loading process in particular, and eliminate them.

** Use serialized containers to organize your high-value possessions into subject modules. These modules are here called “boxes,” but may be housed in any actual container that meets the guidelines. This is the heart and essence of the plan.

* Whether preparing, upgrading, or loading, always deal with one module or box at a time, in its order. The order of the boxes is the order of their importance. Preparing one box at a time makes the job bite-sized. Loading each box in its order means that if you are interrupted, if you run out of time, the most important things are already on board.

* When the alarm sounds and the evacuation is underway, load the “boxes” in sequential order until (a) you have to leave, or (b) the vehicle is full, or (c) all the boxes are in place.

FLEXIBILITY

I will suggest an order of importance for these boxes. If you disagree then reorder them as you see fit. But do try to establish an order and stick with it. It will avoid confusion under stress.

I will suggest limits on size, weight, construction materials, etc. These are guidelines, and you are encouraged to use your own judgment and resources, despite the reasons I give. It is the principles that matter.

Scale everything to your vehicle and other personal limitations. Eliminate boxes that don't apply to your situation. Combine boxes if it makes sense. Add boxes to the list if I've left out some.

If you read this over and it seems overwhelming, trim it back until you can say “I can do that.” If it looks too modest, in light of your ambition and determination, then by all means expand it to where you can say, looking back, “I gave it my best effort.”

In a given scenario priorities may change. If it looks like you will not need a given module, skip over it. A flash flood does not invoke preparations for war, for example, and a chlorine chemical spill doesn't necessarily mean you have to load up your rare coin collection. That is another reason for organizing in ordered modules. If it is ready to go you have an option. By solving in advance the problems of prioritizing, packaging, and loading, the decision to “include or not include” is relatively quick and painless. It would be a rare and truly major disaster in which you would actually take all the boxes.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Communicating with and rounding up all of the family members will be a major aspect of most families' evacuation effort and emphasis. You have to solve that problem, but I do not address it in this document. ..except to say that one of many scenarios is the husband at work, the wife at home, and she has to load the car and scoot without his help. You should discuss how you will proceed under such a situation. The intent of this plan is that by following it the way it is set up, the best that could be done will be done.

To a certain extent what you evacuate with will be governed by where you are going. If circumstances channel you to a public shelter, you might as well leave your guns and pets at home, because they will not be admitted.

Pets and domestic animals are a whole new challenge. Sorry. I don't know how to help you there. The scope of this write-up is really quite narrow, but hopefully it will serve as a springboard to your particular complications. There is some advice on the internet provided by veterinarians regarding how to evacuate animals.

It would be well to have a checklist of other things that must be done when evacuating, such as turning off utilities, locking doors and windows, securing various things, leaving notes, etc. Those are important, but peripheral to this write-up.

Topics such as vehicle selection, special container design and construction, loading and tie-down techniques, etc., --not covered here. I am assuming everyone will work with what they have.

In a major catastrophe the best and worst of human nature come out. As the event unfolds, some people will be heroic; some will turn villains, and some always were villains and will get more brazen. If a box is easy for you to remove from the house, it will be easy for a burglar also, so you might give some thought to ways of slowing him down without hindering your own purpose. A toolbox ready to evacuate, kept inside a large locking cabinet, would be an example of this. There will be strategies for avoiding crime that you will need to observe, such as not leaving a loaded evacuation vehicle unattended, even for a second, even in your own drive way. These matters are beyond the scope of this write-up.

Take note of the 'gas law of packing for a trip': what everybody wants to take expands to fill the space available. Therefore allocate the vehicular space fairly, and miniaturize as necessary.

If there is a time of uncertainty, during which an evacuation is imminent but may not finally be necessary, use that time well to stage the evacuation boxes near the front door and review your evacuation protocol.

This approach leaves many of the questions we began with unanswered, but it does not leave the question of how to prepare unanswered.

Lastly, ponder the great lesson of the handcart pioneers. Because their carts were small, and often shared with other families, they were given a specific weight limit for their luggage; which most max'ed out, and many circumvented by wearing several layers of clothing and strapping odd items onto their persons. Along the road they surreptitiously shed these items onto the cart. They began their journey loaded to the gills, and ended it with virtually nothing, having discarded all that they could not eat, piecemeal along the trail. Stressed to the limit their bodies wore out, their handcarts wore out, their shoes wore out, and their lives wore out, partly because they overestimated the importance of their customary things, miscalculated the scaling laws of the forces of attrition, and underestimated the challenges they would face. With greater wisdom they could have started with less, and arrived sooner with more. It is so hard to get the balance right.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MODULE CATEGORIES:

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Name of Box</u>	<u>Purpose or description</u>
BOX 1:	The 72 Hour Kit	(personal comfort and health: change of clothes, water, food, light)
BOX 2:	The Car Kit	(maintain the vehicle, facilitate travel: maps, tools, water, blankets,)
BOX 3:	The Nuclear War Kit	(preparations specific to nuclear events and radiation exposure.)
BOX 4:	The Water Box	(additional five to ten gallons of drinking water per person.)
BOX 5:	The Portable Office	(continuity of family financial obligation and resources. Account info)
BOX 6:	The Camping box	(cook, bathe, sleep, shelter, laundry, under wilderness conditions)
BOX 7:	The Family First Aid Kit	(maintain health despite injury or illness.)
BOX 8:	Personal Wardrobe(s)	(One suitcase per person: clothing for an extended absence.)
BOX 9:	The Kitchen Box	(basic cooking and eating utensils, to restock a kitchen)
BOX 10:	The Cream of the Pantry	(up to 1 month's supply of non-refrigerated food)

- BOX 11: The Traveler's Workshop (optimized collection of tools, sewing and repair supplies)
- BOX 12: The Library (your most valuable reference books, diaries, genealogy, etc.)
- BOX 13+: The Treasures (other valuables, box for each category: hobby, heirlooms, etc)

PHILOSOPHY

Once you have this plan in place the only substantial difference between one emergency and another, prior to shipping out, is how much time you have to load.

The essential elements of an evacuation are (1) surprise, (2) more work to do than time available, (3) travel, and (4) potential loss of what is left behind.

We overcome surprise by assuming it will happen and preparing now, not waiting to be blindsided.

We overcome the work/time ratio by organizing and packing now, so that when the event happens, all we have left to do is load, shut off the utilities, lock up, and leave.

We overcome the challenges of travel by keeping the gas tank always at least half full, by preparing these boxes with travel in mind, and by leaving early.

We overcome loss by prioritizing, and focusing on preserving the highest value items.

Because we are less surprised we will think more clearly and make better decisions. Because we have less work to do, we are less tired and accident prone. Because we are ready to travel we are much more likely to make good our escape. Because we have preserved those things with the highest value, we suffer as little, and recover as quickly, as possible.

The cost of implementing this plan is very slight in every respect. You must buy or make the containers—negligible in comparison to your estate. You must go through and organize your possessions—which will repay you for the time spent through the efficiencies of being well-organized. It may sound like living out of boxes, but you are already living out of boxes (drawers, cupboards, cabinets, shelves)—they're just not good boxes for travel. Discretely implemented, no one visiting your home will ever suspect that you could be out of it with most of your wealth intact in an hour's time.

NATURE OF THE CONTAINERS

During times of peace and plenty, obtain suitable containers and put together the "Boxes" listed above. They may be actual boxes of any construction, or they may be buckets, cans, duffels, or tote pans. Containers may be any size or shape, but boxes smaller than a shoe box should go inside a larger container, and none should be so large or heavy when full that one person cannot safely lift, carry, and load them alone. Because you may have to leave during, or travel through, a rainstorm, cardboard is not recommended. When wet, corrugated cardboard falls apart, then you have no box.

In addition to labeling, color coding may be helpful, or selecting a distinct kind of container, unlike your usual storage boxes.

Other qualities that are of value include: Lockable and secure. Waterproof. Lids that can't blow off going down the highway. Unbreakable. (Some light plastic tote pans are brittle and easily broken, especially in cold weather.) Rubbermaid large tote pans are the right size and shape, but the lids come off easily. In a van that isn't a problem, but in the back of a pickup it could be.

A folding table among your camping supplies is its own box, and needs no other. Likewise a sleeping bag rolled up in a canvas, a water cooler, or bicycle, need no further packaging.

There is nothing sacred about these thirteen box titles. It would be entirely reasonable for some families to combine two or three categories in one box, for instance, or have several boxes for one category. Or leave out a category (recommend you not leave out any of the first six.) You may want to rename them. The camping equipment may be several boxes, and each person will usually have his or her own wardrobe box. Each child might have two boxes: a 72 hour comfort/survival pack, and a footlocker that holds all his other possessions, such as clothes, a selection of toys, and toiletries.

New categories are fair game. If half your good clothes are in the laundry at any one time, you may wish to have a designated laundry bag next to the washer, the plan being that all the dirty clothes will be

rammed into the bag and the bag tossed into the back seat in an evacuation. That could probably be done in a minute or two, if it's on your checklist, and you have the container ready. Call it "The Laundry Box." A plastic garbage bag is better than no container at all, and will hold lots of clothes and bedding.

Use what containers you have now, and replace them with better as you have opportunity.

To a large extent the "Containers with Names" ARE the plan. You organize them and they organize you. They become the scaffold, the mnemonic, and the structure of your preparation.

MAKING SURE THEY FIT

When most or all of the containers have been obtained, while they are still empty, try packing them in your vehicle as you would in an evacuation. If they all fit, that's great. If not, now is the time to work out that problem; either by getting a larger vehicle or by agreeing to smaller or fewer boxes.

For the things of high value that are too heavy or too big to take, always have a plan. Doing nothing is a plan if you have made that decision other than by default, or you may wish to upgrade that plan by devising ways to secure them at home.

After these containers are organized, they are not necessarily set aside in isolation, but may be routinely used from. It is even permissible in some instances to merely keep the empty container nearby, provided you have rehearsed the steps you will take to quickly load it if an evacuation is called for. An empty tote pan in the pantry, for example, can be filled in thirty seconds and taken out to the car, but not if you have to go looking for it, or haven't decided before hand what you will put in it.

When it is necessary to evacuate, start with box 1, then 2, etc., and load them into the vehicle in sequential order. Try to arrange them so that at least the first three are immediately accessible while driving. If you run out of time, or space in the vehicle, before loading all, then stop, lock up the house, and go. By loading the boxes in their proper order you leave with the most important things even if your packing time is cut short. Remember that decisions consume time, so make as many of those decisions as possible before hand, while you have plenty of time. Remember also that remembering is hard, and remembering everything unlikely, when the pressure is on. Put as much of the plan in place before hand, then you will be free to spend your precious minutes focused on those unique aspects of the situation which could not have been anticipated.

Evacuations are high-risk activities. You, your neighbors, your machines, any animals in the environment, all governments and officials, and even the roads—all are operating outside their normal parameters. Chances of a vehicle breakdown are higher, and odds of getting help are lower, in an atmosphere of panic and competition. Conflicts, accidents, misdeeds, miscalculations, and misjudgments will characterize the experience. There is a sense in which you will be risking your life for everything you take with you, and putting everything you take, at risk. Weight and volume add up. Do not attempt to take anything that isn't worth the effort, the expense, the space, or the risk. Do not take anything that will be safer left at home. Do not take anything that doesn't have an excellent chance of surviving the trip. Do not take anything that will make the roads more dangerous for others.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE BOXES:

BOX 1 **Your 72 Hour Kit** Type of container: BACKPACK

This is what you take if you must dash out of the house once and not return. Waking up in the middle of the night to find the house on fire would be an example of this. It must be carryable, and a backpack is the ideal container for it. All the other boxes assume you will be leaving by automobile.

It is worth noting that the 72 Hour Kit contains some elements of all the other boxes in your evacuation plan, and the modularity within the 72 HK is similar to the modularity of the boxes. If you have planned your evacuation assuming an automobile will be available, but at the last minute discover that the evacuation must go forward without one, then scavenge from the other boxes whatever supplies are appropriate to the event at hand and add them to your 72 Hour Kit before setting off on foot.

BOX 2 The Car Kit. Type of container: DUFFEL BAG, LOCK BOX.

This is the collection of tools and supplies that you normally keep in the vehicle at all times. It's primary purpose is to maintain the vehicle and facilitate travel. The only cause for leaving without it is if you leave without the car—in which case you probably won't need what is in it. A secret here is that the more you have in your car kit the less you have to load during an evacuation.

The Car Kit can be multiple containers. The main reasons for having it in a container of some sort is to keep it organized, and protect it from heat and theft.

If you have gasoline cans, take them full if you can, but even empty they have value, since they may later help you re-supply. As a matter of safety, once a can has had gas in it, ground it before uncapping and while filling; most gas cans are vented, deliberately or inadvertently, and can explode if the vapors are subjected to static electricity. One way to generate a powerful static electric charge is to drip any liquid, or pour any non-conducting liquid, into an ungrounded container. The fumes preclude it riding in the passenger compartment.

BOX 3 The Nuclear War Kit. Type of container: STEEL AMMO CAN.

Prior to 9/11/01 there were a few 'extremists' talking about the possibility of terrorists flying airplanes into buildings. A few planners worked out contingencies for dealing with that sort of thing, but for the most part nobody believed it would ever happen. It was just too weird.

It wasn't so extreme during the fifties to build a bomb shelter, but since the apparent dissolution of the Soviet Union nobody wants to listen to talk about nuclear war. Most Americans are banking on it being somehow indefinitely avoided. Well, guess what. It's coming.

The Soviets still have their nukes. Pakistan, home to a strong contingent of al-qaeda and other mal-content Muslims, has the bomb. So does India, an enemy of Pakistan. So does China, a Communist country that supplies most of our retail goods and has taken over much of our industry. North Korea, the personification of militant aggressive ambition, has or is near to having atomic bombs and the missiles to deliver them. Iran is seeking the bomb full tilt, even while reviling and attacking by proxy another nuclear power, Israel. It is utter denial to think that there will not be a nuclear war, of some scale, somewhere; and a long shot that we will not be directly involved. Like the San Andreas Fault, it is just a matter of time; and maybe not all that much time.

This kit is for terrorism or war. Assume the next war on American soil will turn nuclear even if it doesn't start out that way, and take this box with you in any evacuation involving foreign aggression.

At the very least it should contain a copy of "Nuclear War Survival Skills" by Cresson Kearny; a quarter pound of potassium iodide (KI is best stored in the dark. Wrap it in aluminum foil.); a two-ounce glass bottle with an eyedropper. It would be well to include a battery powered radio and fresh batteries.

A radiation meter, or tools and materials to make one per Kearny's instructions, would be good too. There isn't space here to explain it all. Read Kearny's book.

BOX 4 The Water Box Either in the form of a stout wooden box containing two-liter water bottles, or five gallon jerry cans, or flats of bottled water, --provide five to ten gallons of drinking water per person. This is in addition to water stashed in the 72 Hour Kit, but water in the Car Kit counts for this purpose. Water weighs 8.4 pounds per gallon, so don't try to put it all in one box or one container—it will be too heavy to load easily. Forty pounds maximum per box is a good rule of thumb.

BOX 5 The Portable Office Type of Container: Large Brief Case.

This is so you can continue to pay the bills, manage your credit card, conduct correspondence with creditors, clients, insurers, and other institutions, even file your income taxes, after being displaced from your home. It is the part of your usual home office where you normally take care of these functions, but housed in a briefcase, two-drawer filing cabinet, or other removable vessel so that it is ready to load all the time. Slung in the back of the pickup it's going to get scratched up. Refuse to care about that. What you care about is that rain and thieves don't get to it.

Include a box of new checks, account information, last year's tax return and this year's check stubs and deductible receipts, stamps and envelopes, medical records, employment records, wills, deeds, titles, policies, passports, social security records, resume, etc. This is not your everyday briefcase—you wouldn't carry this stuff around all the time, but you'll need it to get a new job and buy a new house.

BOX 6 The Camping Box Type of Container: Large Wooden Box

When I turned twelve and joined the Boy Scouts, my dad was asked to be the scout master. He went to town and contracted a carpenter shop to make two nice, very sturdy, foot-locker-sized plywood boxes: one for him and one for me. When they were ready he brought them home, and we painted them together. That was my introduction to the concept of camping boxes.

I still have mine, and when Dad passed away a few years ago I got his too, which he was still using to go camping until the time of his death. What a sacred experience it was to go through his camping box, and find relics of our experiences together in the mountains spanning forty years.

As a scout I appreciated that our boxes were long enough for a large axe, but I discovered after his funeral that Dad had actually designed the boxes just long enough to hold his favorite hunting rifle—a 30-30 carbine. His box had special cleats on the inside to hold the rifle out of sight and out of the way, but easy to get to.

At 12 x 18 x 39 inches, our camping boxes would hold all the gear, food, and winter clothing needed for a week long campout. The only drawback for the purpose of evacuation is that they are a little awkward for one person to manipulate when full. A smaller box, or one with different proportions would be better in an emergency, when you might not have help loading.

The concept remains the same, however. Prepare a rain-resistant box that will hold all your essential camping supplies, enabling you to “go camping” fully provisioned with as little as five minutes notice. Keep the extras and frivolous items elsewhere. It will serve you well in the best of times, and in the worst of times.

In addition to the camping box proper, separate items may include sleeping bags, a large tent in its case, a folding table, a gun case, folding cots, etc., etc. On the other hand, when you go hunting or car camping you are free to fill the whole vehicle with this stuff; but in evacuation it is a small part of what is to be taken. Therefore miniaturization is invaluable. Every vacation trip is a dress rehearsal. Backpacking as an avocation is excellent training for making everything smaller, lighter, and multi-functional.

BOX 7 The Family First Aid Kit Type of Container: Fishing Tackle box, Tool Box.

I use an orange plastic tool box of about one cubic foot volume that I think just can't be beat. I have seen others who have paramedic training use large fishing tackle boxes. The advantages of this type of container are: It is portable, it has the right volume, it is carried upright (avoiding spills from leaking containers), it is available in bright colors, lightweight, and when open it gives easy access to everything inside. Anything strong enough to hold carpenter's tools, or for a fisherman to kick around in the floor of his boat, will be strong enough for a First Aid kit.

BOX 8 Personal Wardrobe Type of Container: Duffel bag, Suitcase, Footlocker.

There is room in a 72 Hour Kit for one change of clothes. That's not enough to go on with your life in a new place. One large suitcase per person will allow you to take the best of your clothes, which will enable you to stay covered and presentable without finding a mall that is open. One suitcase, or even one trunk, will not hold a closet full of clothes, but with discipline you can meet your needs and get by, having something appropriate to wear to Church, to work, or whatever.

Include good shoes, your toiletries, a washcloth and towel, underwear, street clothes, and a minimum of winter clothing, even if it is summer—these clothes may have to last you a while. (Presumably your hat is with your 72 HK.)

This is one box where most people will want to keep the container handy but have the contents distributed in all the traditional places: bedroom, bathroom, closet, etc. That's OK, as long as it is clear what fits, what goes, what stays, and you have a system in place for moving quickly from dresser to closet to bathroom counter, toss the stuff in (hangers and all), latch it and go. An evacuation is not the time to be

making decisions about what to pack. Forget wrinkles—the only reason to fold something is because it takes up less space. At least once you should try doing it in a single breath. It will help if the dresser drawers and closet are segregated for evacuation: “All of this drawer goes, this section of the closet goes, and these two things on the bathroom counter go.” If you want it neat, then organize it before the evacuation. Once the whistle blows, you grab it, stuff it, and run. The closer you can live to the evacuation state, the easier it will be. What must NOT happen is that you spend precious time scrounging up a container, more precious time weeding out what won’t fit, and then get a hernia trying to load it into the truck. Solve these problems now, by separating out an elite wardrobe, and letting it reside in an evacuation-quality container.

BOX 9 The Kitchen Box. Type of Container: Rubbermaid tote, wooden box, trash can.

The Camping box will contain a minimum set of functioning cooking utensils, but typically a homemaker has an emotional attachment to her everyday kitchen hardware for various reasons, not the least of which is her responsibility to feed her family good, safe, well-cooked food. The wedding china, the heirloom silverware--those go in box 13+, as treasures. We are talking here about the ability to set up a new functioning kitchen in a new home, without having to re-purchase everything.

Do not include electrical appliances, breakables, duplicates, or anything else that will take undue space, time, or care.

BOX 10 The Cream of the Pantry Type of Container: Ice chest, Tote pan, wood box, or bucket.

The imagery I wish to create here is skimming off the best. Assume you will need food. From all that you have, prepare to very quickly fill a container or two with canned goods, dry cereal, or whatever will sustain you without refrigeration. Aim for a month’s supply, which you can do with maybe one or two large containers of the right stuff. By keeping canned goods in tote pans, they are always ready to go. By keeping a large box in or near the pantry, and designating certain shelves for evacuable commodities, it should be possible to load three or four weeks worth of food in just a few minutes.

BOX 11 The Traveler’s Workshop Type of Container: Toolbox

In addition to the tools in the Car Kit, which are needed to maintain your vehicle, there may be many other tools that will become valuable before you get home again. Woodworking, metal working, fabric, tape and adhesive, wire, a few nails and screws—use your judgment. Just remember to confine it to things you can use (non-electrical, or 12 volt), and what fits and isn’t too heavy. I would love to take the lathe, but I just don’t have a plan for it. The portable welder, on the other hand, is “flying standby.” Do what makes sense for your family.

BOX 12 The Library Type of Container: Wooden box.

There are lots of potential reasons for being unwilling to part with a book. If you don’t have enough to make up a box, then distribute them among the other boxes. If you have many, use more than one container. Books are heavy, so keep the containers small.

I have on occasion demonstrated my bookcase that folds up into four evacuation boxes. I can prepare 120 pounds of books for removal in about one minute, without touching a single volume.

BOX 13+ The Treasures Type of Container: (as required.)

This is where all the possessions of great value in your life, which I cannot anticipate, get accounted for. It may range from heirlooms, antiques, and collections, to professional tools, garden tools, or hoards of gold bullion. It may be your hunting equipment, electronics, musical instrument, family photographs, or telescope. Regardless of what you choose to save in a full scale evacuation, to come within the pale of this plan it must be (A) packaged (always or instantly) for travel, (B) loadable in the vehicle by one person, (C) something you have room for, and (D) something you are willing to put everything else at risk for, to the extent it increases the risk of an interrupted journey. You are free to make any exceptions to these rules you wish—it is, after all, your evacuation—but by now you know the principles and the reasons behind them.