HOW TO PREPARE?

A 3-scenario Apartment Emergency Go-Bag Guide

Practical checklists for overnight evacuation, shelter relocation, and city evacuation



FREE | November 2026

START HERE

How This Guide Works

An emergency can force you out of an apartment with little notice. This free workbook helps you plan what to carry, where to go, and how to remain connected without overpacking.

The three scenarios build on each other. Start with the essentials, then add supplies only when your situation calls for a longer or more distant relocation.



Guide Overview

Builds in Levels
A step-by-step approach that adds supplies and planning as your needs increase.

Two Short Introductions per Scenario
Each level begins with two brief paragraphs that explain the purpose, planning period, and what to expect.

Practical Safety Reminders Throughout
Real-world tips are included on every page to help you stay safe, smart, and prepared.

The Three Preparedness Levels

LEVEL 1

Essential Overnight Bag

Leave quickly and reach a safe location for about 12–24 hours.

LEVEL 2

Shelter Relocation Bag

Relocate to a temporary shelter or alternative accommodation for about 2–3 days.

LEVEL 3

City Evacuation Bag

Travel beyond the affected area and remain away for a longer period with a realistic plan and supplies.

How to Use the Checklists

- ☐ Check items you already own before buying anything.
- ☐ Keep your Level 1 bag light enough to carry comfortably, including on stairs.
- ☐ Review medications, batteries, contacts, food dates, and seasonal clothing regularly.
- ☐ Use the lined worksheets later in this guide to record your own routes, contacts, and notes.

SAFETY COMES FIRST

Never delay an urgent evacuation to collect supplies. Follow official alerts and your building's fire and evacuation instructions, which can vary by building and incident.

BEFORE LEVEL ONE

Choose the Right Backpack

The best go-bag is practical, comfortable, and quick to carry, and it does not attract attention. An ordinary backpack is often better than a flashy, tactical-looking pack.

What to Look For

1. **Plain appearance:** neutral gray, navy, brown, or black; limited branding.
2. **Comfortable fit:** adjustable straps and a weight you can carry on stairs.
3. **Simple organization:** separate medication, documents, water, and electronics.
4. **Practical durability:** secure zippers, weather resistance, and no dangling accessories.
5. **Appropriate size:** choose capacity for your actual needs, mobility, and health.

Keep It Plain, Not Flashy



✓ **GOOD CHOICE**
Simple, discreet, functional



✗ **AVOID**
Tactical, expensive-looking, or attention-grabbing

Blend In—In Looks and Behavior

- ☐ Dress simply for the weather. Avoid conspicuous luxury bags, jewelry, and accessories.
- ☐ Do not display cash, cards, expensive electronics, or valuables in public.
- ☐ Keep your voice and demeanor calm, be courteous, and remain aware of your surroundings.
- ☐ Move toward a verified safe location; do not take risky shortcuts merely to avoid attention.
- ☐ Wear broken-in, closed-toe sneakers or walking shoes with grip. Avoid heels for evacuation travel.





Keep Footwear Ready

Store sturdy shoes next to your bag if they do not fit inside it. For disabled residents, prioritize accessible evacuation plans and needed mobility equipment.

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Use a plain, durable, and comfortable backpack.
- ☐ Avoid flashy bags, brand logos, and high-end looks.
- ☐ Dress for mobility and blend in with your surroundings.

SCENARIO ONE

Level 1: Essential Overnight Bag

Imagine being woken by a building alarm at 2 a.m. You may need to leave without knowing whether you can return in an hour or tomorrow. Your first priority is a safe exit and a reliable place to go—not carrying everything you own.

A Level 1 go-bag supports the first 12–24 hours away: identification, communication, essential medication, basic water and snacks, weather protection, and a plan for reaching indoor safety. Keep it compact, ordinary-looking, and easy to carry.

Your Immediate Priorities

1. Follow the correct building-specific instructions; some high-rise fire situations call for remaining in place unless directed otherwise.
2. Bring essential medication and communication items only if immediately accessible.
3. Reach a safe indoor refuge, designated meeting point, or official assistance—not prolonged outdoor exposure.
4. Contact loved ones once safe and let them know where you are going.
5. Keep your bag secure and avoid displaying valuables in crowds.

Bag Setup

- ☐ Suggested format: compact backpack with comfortable straps.
- ☐ Planning window: first night or approximately 12–24 hours.
- ☐ Store beside essential walking shoes without blocking the doorway.
- ☐ Practice carrying the bag and locating exits before an emergency.

PRACTICAL REMINDER

A backpack cannot guarantee safety overnight outdoors in freezing cold, extreme heat, or hazardous air. Find appropriate indoor shelter and follow emergency personnel.

SCENARIO ONE

Level 1: Packing Checklist

IDENTITY & ACCESS

- ☐ Photo ID or appropriate identification; emergency contact card.
- ☐ House and building keys; modest cash in mixed denominations.
- ☐ Printed phone numbers and agreed meeting locations.

PHONE, POWER & LIGHT

- ☐ Charged phone and compatible cable.
- ☐ Charged power bank; compact LED flashlight or headlamp.
- ☐ Whistle to signal for help when appropriate.

WATER, FOOD & MEDICAL ESSENTIALS

- ☐ Portable water bottle; easy-to-eat shelf-stable snacks.
- ☐ Essential medicines, personal medical items, and prescription information.
- ☐ Compact first-aid supplies; hygiene items and tissues.

CLOTHING & PERSONAL PROTECTION

- ☐ Weatherproof jacket or poncho; warm layer and spare socks.
- ☐ Warm hat and gloves in cold seasons.
- ☐ N95 respirator for suitable particulate exposure, when appropriate.
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes ready beside the bag.

DO NOT OVERPACK

You may already own nearly everything on this page. A manageable bag and a sound exit plan matter more than specialized products.

SCENARIO ONE

Level 1: A Safer First Night

Before You Need to Leave

1. Learn the building's posted emergency procedures and stair routes.
2. Choose a nearby indoor meeting location, plus one alternative.
3. Decide who needs help, including children, pets, and people with mobility needs.
4. Keep emergency contact information in your bag and on your phone.
5. Test your flashlight and recharge your power bank regularly.

During an Evacuation

- ☐ Follow alarm, fire, smoke, gas, and evacuation instructions for the actual incident.
- ☐ Never use an elevator during a fire evacuation unless responders specifically direct you to an evacuation elevator.
- ☐ Do not stop to retrieve valuables if doing so delays a necessary exit.
- ☐ Do not show cash, jewelry, cards, or expensive electronics while moving through crowds.
- ☐ Stay calm and keep children or companions together.

After Reaching Safety

- ☐ Check in with a trusted contact and share your current location.
- ☐ Seek official updates, verified shelter information, and medical help if needed.
- ☐ Do not re-enter a restricted building until authorized.

QUICK PLANNING PROMPTS

My nearby indoor meeting location: _____ Backup location: _____

SCENARIO TWO

Level 2: Shelter Relocation Bag

If a building remains closed or a neighborhood is affected, your first-night kit may not be enough. You may need to travel to an official emergency shelter, community center, hotel, or a trusted person's home for several days.

Level 2 builds on every essential in Level 1 and adds clothing, hygiene, medical continuity, documents, and dependent-care supplies. The aim is to preserve dignity and independence without carrying so much that stairs, transit, and queues become difficult.

Before You Travel

1. Confirm current shelter or accommodation information through official channels.
2. Verify pet, accessibility, medical equipment, and prohibited-item policies.
3. Know how to travel there and identify a backup route or location.
4. Protect sensitive documents; carry copies where appropriate.
5. Keep valuables out of sight, and do not disclose how much cash you carry.

What Changes from Level 1?

- ☐ A medium bag may be appropriate, but use one you can manage.
- ☐ Plan for 2–3 days; keep the bag adaptable if the stay lasts longer.
- ☐ Add personal hygiene, medications, clothing, and comfort items.
- ☐ Prepare separately for infant, eldercare, disability, or pet needs.

SHELTER SAFETY

Shelters vary in services, capacity, and rules. Never assume that bedding, medication refrigeration, pet accommodation, or charging outlets will be available.

SCENARIO TWO

Level 2: Additional Packing

Add the items below to your Level 1 kit. Personalize quantities for your household, medical needs, and expected stay. Check shelter restrictions before bringing bulky belongings.

CLOTHING & HYGIENE

- ☐ Two changes of underwear and extra socks; spare shirt and trousers.
- ☐ Sleepwear, compact laundry bag, small towel, and basic toiletries.
- ☐ Menstrual products, wipes, and personal care supplies as needed.

HEALTH & IMPORTANT RECORDS

- ☐ Additional prescriptions when feasible; medication and allergy list.
- ☐ Spare glasses, hearing-aid supplies, mobility or assistive-device equipment.
- ☐ Protected copies of ID, insurance, and important contact details.

FOOD, CHARGING & COMFORT

- ☐ Extra suitable shelf-stable snacks and refillable water container.
- ☐ Radio, charging cable, and extra power source when practical.
- ☐ Earplugs, sleep mask, and light bedding if allowed.

FAMILY MEMBERS & PETS

- ☐ Infant feeding supplies, diapers, children's comfort activities.
- ☐ Pet carrier, leash, food, medication, and records where relevant.
- ☐ Caregiver notes, accessibility contacts, and a reunification plan.

KEEP IT DISCREET

Do not leave your bag unattended. Avoid displaying cash or cards at check-in; keep identification accessible but secure.

SCENARIO THREE

Level 3: City Evacuation Bag

A serious regional emergency may make remaining in your city unsafe or impractical. Transit may be disrupted, roads congested, and familiar services unavailable. Leaving the city requires more than a larger bag: it requires a destination and a workable route.

Level 3 carries forward the essentials in Levels 1 and 2 while strengthening travel, communication, medical, financial, and family arrangements. The best plan accounts for limited mobility, an unavailable first destination, and changing official directions.

Plan Your Destination First

1. Choose a primary destination outside the affected area.
2. Identify a backup destination and emergency contact.
3. Save offline maps and print key routes, addresses, and phone numbers.
4. Check official evacuation routes, transit guidance, and shelter options.
5. Tell a trusted contact your travel plan when safe to do so.

Travel Without Drawing Attention

- ☐ Use ordinary clothing and an unremarkable, well-fitting travel bag.
- ☐ Keep cards, cash, documents, and high-value electronics secured and out of view.
- ☐ Be patient in lines, respectful with others, and alert to changing conditions.
- ☐ Avoid displaying equipment or supplies unnecessarily.

SAFETY OVER SPEED

Never enter a hazardous or officially closed area for a shortcut. Follow authorities on evacuation timing and routes; do not assume a private vehicle will always be the best option.

SCENARIO THREE

Level 3: Additional Packing

Add only what supports your confirmed travel plan. Consider carrying limits, transit rules, accessibility, dependents, and how you will obtain safe food and water after arrival.

DESTINATION & NAVIGATION

- ☐ Printed destination and backup addresses; regional map.
- ☐ Transit routes, alternative transport plan, and offline phone maps.
- ☐ Phone numbers for contacts, accommodation, and emergency services.

DOCUMENTS & MONEY

- ☐ Essential identity and travel documents when relevant.
- ☐ Protected medical, insurance, and household records.
- ☐ Emergency cash and accessible payment methods kept discreet.

EXTENDED SUPPLIES

- ☐ Additional charged power bank and relevant charging adapters.
- ☐ Portable food and water for possible travel interruptions.
- ☐ Seasonal clothing, footwear, hygiene, and laundry necessities.

HEALTH & DEPENDENTS

- ☐ Extended medication plan and medical equipment needs.
- ☐ Childcare and eldercare supplies; comfort items as appropriate.
- ☐ Pet carrier, food, medication, and required travel records.

BEFORE DEPARTURE

Confirm official advice and destination conditions. Keep the most important items within easy reach, and never carry more than you can move safely.

ADJUST FOR CONDITIONS

Seasonal & Weather Adjustments

Your go-bag should change with the season, local weather and your health needs. Pack for the conditions you could face on the way to safety, not for an imagined wilderness trip.

1 Winter: Cold, Snow & Ice

- ☐ Warm layers, insulated hat, gloves and at least one dry pair of socks.
- ☐ Weatherproof jacket and closed-toe footwear with good traction.
- ☐ Keep essential medications protected from damaging temperatures.
- ☐ Plan a safe, heated indoor destination - never depend on a thermal blanket alone.

2 Summer: Heat & Sun

- ☐ Light, breathable clothing; sun protection and a refillable water bottle.
- ☐ Know where cooling centers or other air-conditioned spaces are located.
- ☐ Drink water regularly. Do not rely on a fan alone in dangerous indoor heat.
- ☐ Watch for dizziness, confusion or other signs of heat illness.

3 Storms: Rain, Wind & Flooding

- ☐ Pack a waterproof outer layer, dry socks and a sealed document sleeve.
- ☐ Protect electronics and medication from moisture.
- ☐ Avoid floodwater and follow road, transit and evacuation closures.

SAFETY REMINDER

Weather protection does not replace shelter. Reach a safe location and follow official alerts; do not risk exposure merely to stay with your belongings.

PERSONALIZE YOUR KIT

People, Pets & Accessibility

A good plan works for the people who will actually use it. Walk through the route, carrying ability and special needs of every person in your household. Adapt the bag instead of forcing everyone into the same checklist.

1 Children & Infants

- ☐ Pack diapers, wipes, feeding supplies and necessary medications, if applicable.
- ☐ Carry a small comfort item and a quiet, low-mess activity.
- ☐ Write down caregiver contacts and child reunification instructions.

2 Older Adults & Disability Needs

- ☐ Plan for mobility aids, hearing or vision needs, accessible routes and assistance.
- ☐ Arrange backup power or support for essential medical equipment as needed.
- ☐ Agree on who can help, and how to contact them if lifts or transit are unavailable.

3 Pets & Service Animals

- ☐ Prepare food, water, medication, leash or carrier, and identification.
- ☐ Keep vaccination records and a photo of your animal when relevant.
- ☐ Check ahead which shelters and destinations can accommodate your animal.

4 Plan With Neighbors or Caregivers

1. Share a simple check-in plan with trusted people.
2. Identify a backup helper if your primary contact is unavailable.
3. Practice calmly; know how to ask for assistance early.

KEEP IT PRACTICAL

A lighter bag and an accessible evacuation plan may be safer than a heavy pack. Never delay emergency instructions to gather extra supplies.

MAKE A PLAN TOGETHER

Communication & Reunification

A phone may lose power or service when you need it most. Agree now on who to contact, where to meet and what to do if household members are apart. Keep a paper copy of the basics.

Do not wait for a major evacuation to discuss your plan. A few short conversations and a simple practice walk can reveal obstacles, especially in a high-rise building.

Five Steps to a Workable Plan

1. Choose an out-of-area contact who can relay messages between family members.
2. Set a nearby meeting place and a second location farther from the building.
3. Check your building's posted emergency instructions and alternate exit routes.
4. Decide how children, pets and people needing assistance will reconnect.
5. Save key numbers offline and carry a printed contact card in your bag.

If You Are Separated

- ☐ Follow official shelter or evacuation directions before traveling.
- ☐ Send a brief status message to your agreed contact when service permits.
- ☐ Use your backup meeting point if the first is unsafe or closed.
- ☐ Do not publish your location, valuables or travel details publicly.

A Simple Text Message Template

"I am safe at _____. Heading to _____. Next check-in: _____. Please reply when able."

REMEMBER

Never re-enter a hazardous building to retrieve your bag or belongings. If you need immediate help, contact emergency services.

PRINT & FILL IN

My Emergency Contacts

Complete this page in pencil or ink. Keep one protected copy in your go-bag and review details whenever numbers or household arrangements change.

People to Call

Primary emergency contact - Name

Phone number | **Relationship**

Backup emergency contact - Name

Phone number | **Relationship**

Out-of-area contact - Name

Phone number | **City / state**

Where to Meet

Nearby meeting place (safe location outside the building)

Backup meeting place / address

Important Local Contacts

Building office / manager | **Local emergency information**

School / caregiver | **Other essential contact**

PRIVACY

This page may contain sensitive information. Store it inside your bag, not in a public-facing pocket.

PRINT & FILL IN

Medical & Accessibility Plan

Use this private worksheet to list information you or a caregiver may need during relocation. Include only what is necessary; protect it from unauthorized access.

Medication & Care

Essential medicines / instructions (include dose and timing if useful)

Allergies or urgent health considerations

Medical provider / clinic

Contact number

Equipment & Assistance

Medical equipment, charging, storage or refrigeration requirements

Mobility, hearing, vision or other accessibility requirements

Trusted support person

Phone number

My Backup Arrangements

What to do if medication, equipment, or routine care is interrupted

IMPORTANT

Ask a healthcare professional how to plan an emergency supply and protect temperature-sensitive medicine. Do not change treatment based on this worksheet.

PRINT & FILL IN

My Destinations & Routes

A destination matters more than owning a larger bag. Choose realistic places you can reach, with backup routes for transit disruptions and accessibility needs.

Close to Home - Overnight

Primary safe location / address

Alternative safe location / address

Contact / phone

How I can get there

Temporary Shelter or Accommodation

Where to check current official shelter information

Preferred shelter / temporary accommodation (verify availability)

Out-of-City Evacuation

Primary destination / contact

Backup destination / contact

Official transit or driving routes, mobility needs, and notes

CHECK BEFORE DEPARTURE

Confirm current official routes and restrictions. Do not travel through closed roads, floodwater or hazardous areas to reach a planned destination.

PRINT & FILL IN

Equipment & Maintenance Log

Start with supplies you already own. A functional flashlight, worn-in shoes and familiar backpack may be more useful than buying expensive replacements. Review items at least twice a year.

Review Checklist

- ☐ Recharge power banks; test lights and replace batteries as needed.
- ☐ Check food, water and medication dates and storage conditions.
- ☐ Update contact details, routes, clothing sizes and seasonal layers.
- ☐ Confirm that everyone can carry their bag or has an assistance plan.

My Supplies

ITEM / SUPPLY	WHERE STORED	CHECKED	REPLACE BY

Items I Still Need

Use existing supplies first. List only gaps that matter for your actual plan.

KEEP IT LOW-PROFILE

Use a plain bag, avoid displaying cash or valuables, and carry only what you can comfortably manage.

YOUR PERSONAL WORKBOOK

My Notes: Supplies & Priorities

What I already have, what I may need, and how to pack efficiently.

Write down any items that need testing, replacement, or an accessible storage location.

More room is reserved for your own sketches and planning on the following blank pages.

YOUR PERSONAL WORKBOOK

My Notes: Building & Neighborhood

Building procedures, nearby safe places, and contacts to verify.

Check building instructions and keep personal details secure.

More room is reserved for your own sketches and planning on the following blank pages.

YOUR PERSONAL WORKBOOK

My Notes: Questions & Updates

Lessons from practice, family discussions, and guide revisions.

Review these notes when you update the bag or re-download the latest guide.

More room is reserved for your own sketches and planning on the following blank pages.

YOUR FREE GUIDE — RESOURCES & UPDATES

Keep Your Guide Current

This is a living preparedness workbook. Revisit your plan as seasons, household needs, local conditions and available supplies change.

Your Free Guide, Whenever You Need It

The latest edition will be available to download again from SmartLifePages.com. You do not need to buy a new copy when the guide changes. Check the site for corrections, new worksheets and equipment suggestions.

Review Your Kit Twice a Year

- Check power banks, flashlights, charging cables and batteries.
- Replace expired food, water, medications and first-aid supplies as needed.
- Update contacts, meeting locations and transportation plans.
- Check clothing sizes, seasonal supplies, accessibility and pet needs.
- Review your building instructions and official local emergency guidance.

Equipment: Buy Only What You Need

You may already own most of the essentials. A working flashlight, ordinary backpack and dependable walking shoes are often better than expensive-looking gear. Local pharmacies, supermarkets and hardware stores can supply many missing items.

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Where to Find Trusted Emergency Information

- Ready.gov — U.S. preparedness checklists and planning resources.
- Weather.gov — National Weather Service alerts and forecasts.
- Your city or county emergency-management agency — local instructions.
- Your building management and local fire department — building-specific guidance.

Questions or suggestions? hello@smartlifepages.com