



Like a good Boy Scout...
Be Prepared!

I haven't always lived the organized life. That's probably why I get such a charge out of being prepared. I'm thrilled when someone asks for something and I can put my hand on it immediately.

What does being prepared mean to me?

- 1) **Always having supplies when I need them.** I use the concept of a pantry for every area of the house. I like to have backups for toiletries, laundry supplies, gift wrap and school supplies. We have a list on the fridge. If you are the person who finishes an item, it is your responsibility to write it on the list.
- 2) **Being prepared for birthdays and holidays.** I buy cards and gifts in advance. I have a card box and a gift drawer to store the items until I need them.
- 3) **Having emergency numbers handy.** I program obscure numbers into the cell phone. Things like the bus company or the school can be very handy if you are standing at the bus stop, and your child's bus is late. I also have all emergency numbers written in a book on our kitchen counter. If the furnace isn't working, I don't have to search for the number for the gas company.
- 4) **Knowing how to do infrequently done chores .** I have an Information Box. I followed the model by Sandra Felton in the New Messie's Manual. I bought a recipe box and two sets of alphabet tabs. The first A-Z holds addresses. The second set is for all of those annoying pieces of paper that collect on the counter. I also write down instructions for things like: How to bleed the radiator. How to drain the expansion tank. How to light the pilot light.
- 5) **Having a Household Inventory.** It is good to have a record of your possessions in case you ever need to collect on your insurance. Knowing the estimated worth of your possessions gives a more accurate prediction of how much home owners insurance you really need.
- 6) **Traveling confidently.** I have a friend who went to Europe and lost his ID. That can be a mess! It is nice to have photo copies of your drivers license and passport. It doesn't hurt to have photo copies of your credit cards either. Copy

front and back. The back usually has the contact information.

7) Knowing where the money is. In our house, I pay the day-to-day bills and my husband does the long-term investing. Periodically, we sit down and tell each other where the money is.

8) Being ready for emergencies. During Y2K, everyone worried about water shortages and not having cash. Some websites warned that a person should prepare a bag that they could grab in a hurry. The bag would include important documents, toiletries, flashlights and batteries, cash and, of course, duct tape.

For those living in the path of a hurricane, a bag like this could still have its place. For the rest of us, we should be ready for severe storms that might cause a power outage. It is a good idea to have a flashlight, candles and a battery-powered radio somewhere other than the darkest corner of the basement. Consider keeping a flashlight in a kitchen drawer, although a flip phone will work in a pinch.

The Wall Street Journal had a column discussing disaster planning. A reader suggested that pet owners need to think about their pets when making disaster preparations. She suggested an emergency backpack which includes: “extra leashes, shot records, phone numbers of veterinarians in outlying areas, a light blanket and, of course, some food, water and treats.”

In Minnesota, in the winter an emergency kit in the car is a good idea. The weathermen used to advise candy bars and tin cans, candles and blankets, and a little kitty litter for traction. Our modern day equivalent is a cell phone and AAA, and a blanket to keep us warm until they arrive.