

What to pack in an emergency kit:

- A 3-day supply of non-perishable food & 3 gallons of water per person
- A map with at least 2 evacuation routes
- Necessary prescriptions or medications
- A change of clothes & extra eyeglasses/contact lenses
- Extra car keys, credit cards, cash, or traveler's checks
- A first aid kit & sanitation supplies
- A flashlight & battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- Pet food & water

Always have sturdy shoes and a flashlight near your bed, ready for sudden night evacuations.

If time allows, consider adding:

- Valuables that are easy to carry
 - Family photos and irreplaceable items
 - Personal computer data on hard drives and disks
 - Chargers for cell phones and laptops
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A “flash flood warning” means a flash flood is imminent or already occurring, and you should immediately move to higher ground if you're outside or in a basement apartment.

The most dire alert is a “flash flood emergency,” which indicates that not only is flooding occurring, but it's posing a severe threat to human life.

[Ready.gov](#) also advises creating “password-protected digital copies” of important paperwork, like birth certificates, identification cards, insurance policies, wills, deeds and titles.

“go bag” — driver’s licenses, credit cards, medications and key documents — and seal them in a waterproof pouch. (A plastic freezer bag works just fine.) Make sure your phone is charged and, if you have time, unplug small appliances so they won’t get fried by electrical surges. Move valuables to a higher floor (if you have one).

(To find an emergency shelter, [text SHELTER and your ZIP code](#) to 43362.) [FEMA warns](#) against climbing into a closed attic, as you could become trapped by rising floodwaters. If necessary, climb onto the roof.

It takes just six inches of fast-moving water to knock you off your feet. Not only is it difficult to gauge water depth and road conditions, but [just 12 inches of water](#) can float your car and 18 inches can carry off your SUV or pickup truck. “Everybody tends to underestimate the force of the water,”

That said, if your [car does get taken by floodwaters](#), first, roll down your windows, said Lynn Burttschell, an emergency medical worker, rescue swimmer and founder of [Wimberley Rescue Training](#). If they won’t budge, he recommended breaking the glass with an

escape tool (like [the one in this Wirecutter guide](#), which you can store in your glove compartment) or using the [metal pole of your headrest as a ram](#). It's important to open the windows, Mr. Burttschell said, because "if the water continues to rise, then that car fills up and becomes more of a rock instead of a bobber floating downstream."

Lie down on the roof to keep yourself stable, and don't tie yourself to the car, in case it rolls.

If you do get swept away, don't attempt to stand up, as you risk trapping your foot in a drain, fence or other object. Instead, Ms. Munger advised swimming perpendicular to the current, as you would with a rip tide, until you get to safety. Since you'll be fighting against drainages, debris and the current, she warned this is extremely difficult, even for strong swimmers. "People need to realize that most people who lose their footing in a flash flood don't get out," she said.