

"What's In Your 'Go' Kit?"

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Many of us take a HT along on our daily activities. Obvious accessories are an extra nicad battery pack, external power cord, some sort of gain antenna and comfort and safety items in case of some unexpected disaster. It only takes your nicad to "go south" when you need to access the autopatch to report a traffic accident, or to get lost or break down on the road in an unfamiliar place to appreciate the value of being "prepared."

The best kit for you may not fit a "canned" list, but should be based upon your operating mode, experience and local conditions. It is better to have the bare essentials always handy than to leave a bulky pack someplace where you can't get to it. A larger kit bag is more practical if you are almost always in or near your home or car.

The trunk is the best place to store emergency gear because it is dry, relatively secure and is accessible either at home or away. I actually have three kits. An "Everyday" kit accompanies my HT and is small enough to fit in a briefcase. A larger "Backup" bag stashed in the car provides 24 hours of auxiliary power, a spare HT, brick amp, coax and accessories for extended operating. The "Disaster " bag has emergency cash, food, water, rain gear, a larger gel cell battery, clothing and shelter to sustain a 3-day activation or evacuation.

The ARRL ARES Field Resources Manual provides excellent guidance on "Go" kits. If you travel through rural areas, you should also include fire making supplies, a pocketknife and a compass in the kit. In the suburbs, you'll want a local street atlas, change for a pay phone and emergency cash or a credit card. A compact, sturdy flashlight, extra batteries, first aid kit, extra HT battery pack and spare eyeglasses of your current prescription are useful everywhere. If you regularly take prescription medications, you should carry those.

A typical "go" kit should sustain a day of continuous operation and be easily supplemented for overnight or weekend trips. The bare essentials are a 2-meter or dual-band HT, some sort of "gain" antenna, auxiliary power source, writing materials, comfort and safety items. You can do a lot with a minimum kit, if you plan its contents carefully. There is risk of not having something you may need if you go "too" light, but obvious "bells and whistles" should stay home.

My "Every Day" kit stays within easy reach. Including a dual-band HT, it weighs 5 pounds and is 4"x5"x10." It fits in a small waist bag and includes the following:

1. Dual-band HT in padded belt case.
2. Copy of current FCC Operating License.
3. "Tiger tail" (enhances transmit and receive of typical "rubber duck" by 3 db).
4. Extra high capacity (1000 mah) nicad or backup AA battery case for HT.
5. DC adapter & cigarette plug cord for HT
6. Two extra 2A fuses, for HT cord.
7. Earphone and/or speaker mike
8. Spartan pattern Swiss Army pocket knife
9. Leatherman multi-purpose tool
10. Mini-Mag-Lite, extra bulb and spare AAs
11. Pencil and pocket notepad
12. Emergency gas / phone money (\$10 bill, + four quarters and five dimes in pillbox).
13. SO-239 to male-BNC adapter to fit HT to mobile antenna coax and female BNC to SO-239 to fit HT gain antenna to jumper.
14. 6 ft. RG8-X jumper w/BNC male and female connectors to extend HT antenna with suction cups or auto window clip.
15. Spare eyeglasses of current prescription.
16. Band aids, moist towelettes and sunscreen
17. Pocket sewing kit, matches
18. Small pocket compass
19. Operating reference card for HT
20. ARES phone and frequency reference card

The "Backup Bag" contains "24-hour" items in a sturdy shoulder bag with carrying strap. I am trying to reduce mine from its 12"x8"x6" size and 18-lbs. weight. I use a padded, ballistic nylon camera bag with external pockets marked as to contents. It stays in the car until needed. Suggested contents are:

21. Neck-lanyard pocket with spare car keys, \$20 emergency cash, credit card, long-distance calling card and ARES photo ID.
22. Second, "backup / loaner" 2-meter HT. (battery packs and accessories should interchange with the dual-bander)
23. Spare nicad and AA-battery pack, ear phone and speaker-mike for second HT
24. Operating manuals for HT's.
25. Fused DC adapter cords with Molex connectors for brick amplifier and HTs
26. Extra 10' AWG 10 gage twin lead extension cord, with battery clips, in-line fuses and Molex connectors to power brick amp or HT.
27. Compact, rugged, 25-40w 2 meter or dual-band brick amplifier. (see note on brick amp parameters at end of article)
28. Gain antennas for both HTs: (telescoping half-wave Larsen and flexible dual-band Comet CH-72, 1/4-wave VHF, 5/8-wave UHF).
29. HT nicad and 12V gel cell wall chargers.
30. Four NP2-12 gel cell batteries to power small brick amp at 10w @ 25% duty cycle / 8 hrs.
31. Two refills of AA Alkaline batteries for HT.

32. RG8-X jumpers with soldered PL-259s, two 3 ft., one, 6 ft., one 10 ft. and one 25 ft. with double-female connectors to combine all.
33. BNC-male+BNC female to SO-239;
BNC-male+BNC female to PL-259;
NMO to SO-239 adapters.
34. Cable ties, large and small, 6 each
35. Lensatic compass, 7.5min. series area topo map.
36. Two sharpened pencils, pencil sharpener, gum eraser, note pad, permanent marker.
37. ARES Field Resource Manual
38. Compact, rugged, flashlight (Pelican Stealthlite), with extra bulb and AA batteries
39. Two sets of spare fuses (2A, 10A, 15A) for HT cords, mobile radio or brick amplifier.
40. Comfort, safety and basic first aid items: sunglasses, matches, tissues, toothbrush, sun block, sewing kit, insect repellent, tweezers, Band-Aids, adhesive tape, gauze pads, wound cleaning wipes, etc.

The "Disaster Bags" -- are packed in a duffel, stowed with the "backup bag" in a Rubbermaid storage locker in the car trunk, until needed. Their contents are inspected and changed seasonally to provide a complete change of clothing, shelter, food and equipment to support a weekend activation or evacuation, such as operating a remote Net Control station during a power outage accompanying a severe storm event:

41. 3-ring binder with Fairfax County ARES Handbook, Skywarn Net Control Operations Manual, area topo maps and operating manual for automobile rig, in zipper portfolio.
42. Dual-band or 2-meter mag mount antenna, with portable ground plane.
43. MS-44 mast kit, tripod adapter, dual-band base antenna and 100 ft. of 9913F coax on reel.
44. AC charger for HT nicads and small gel cells
45. BCI Group 27, 95 ah AGM battery and 1.5 amp charger (48 hrs. power for HT brick amp or mobile rig on low or medium power, plus 12V, 8w fluorescent light, for use as needed).
46. 12-volt fluorescent droplight with alligator clips for attaching to auto or gel cell battery, with spare bulb. Adequate light is important for operating efficiency and morale. A strong, battery powered light is safer and more reliable than gasoline lanterns.
47. Weller Pyropen soldering torch with 2 cans of propane fuel, 63/37 eutectic solder and flux.
48. Leather work glove shells, wool finger less liners, warm hat, wind/rain suit, sweater, insulated rubber safety boots, extra dry socks and change of underwear.
49. Tarp or poncho
50. Wool blanket or insulated poncho liner
51. Two message pads, two pencils, grease pencil, two sheet protectors, 12 push pins.
52. Vinyl electrical tape for rain wraps, 1 roll
53. Cable ties, large and small, 1 dozen each
54. Rubber bands, medium and large, six ea.
55. Adjustable open-end wrench, 6"x 0-5/8"
56. Folding hex key set
57. Klein pliers with crimpers and side cutters

58. Needle nose pliers
 59. Channel locks or Vise-Grip pliers
 60. Small, mobile-type SWR/power meter
 61. Pocket VOM or multi-meter w/ test leads
 62. Assorted connectors / adapters including no-solder BNC and UHF for emergency repairs
 63. First Aid Kit container.
 64. 3 days supply of bottled water and nonperishable food (which can be eaten cold*), mess kit and utensils.
 65. Personal hygiene and sanitation supplies.
- * 1 gallon of water per person/day is needed for drinking and washing. Good are canned soup, beans, tuna, juices, fruits, veggies which can be eaten cold, or warmed without further preparation; also peanut butter, cheese spread or jam in plastic jars, lots of hard candy, instant coffee, tea, dried fruit, crackers. Sterno is best for warming. Military MRE's are lightweight and convenient, but some find them both expensive and boring. You get better variety, more appetizingly and cheaply at the grocery store, if weight is not a problem.

PORTABLE BRICK AMP PARAMETERS:

The purpose of a brick amp for emergency use is to provide better range and clarity with a HT while providing maximum endurance when operating on battery power. When choosing a portable amp to augment a hand held for ARES, it should weigh no more than 1.5 lb., provide 10-15w output when driven by the HT transmitting on its low power setting and 25-40w output when the HT is operating at full power from its normal nicad battery pack.

A portable brick amp should draw no more than 8 amps of current at its maximum output, so that it can run safely from a Series 1545, .093 pin Molex connector and fused cigarette plug. FM mode only is fine. No preamp is wanted or needed, because a preamp usually increases intermod.

Low-priced, no-name amps may overheat and "quit" under heavy use. It is more important to buy a rugged amp with an ample heat sink than the smallest "box." Our ARES group has found the Mirage B-23, BD-45 and RF Concepts Mini-144 to be satisfactory in our experience.

All of the above seems like "overkill," but ARES mutual response teams must be entirely self-sufficient, otherwise they cease being an asset and become a liability. The above is not the "last word", but is offered as a "thought starter" for your family or group disaster planning.