

Many of us fail to adequately anticipate emergencies, vehicle breakdowns, and other unforeseen situations that may occur when venturing out on the road. A medium-sized box, kept in the trunk, with some basic equipment that is updated for each driving season could be extremely helpful in the event of an accident or breakdown.



Pre-Packaged Vehicle Emergency Kits

Purchase at local retailers or online. You can also save money by assembling your own kit. When putting together your kit, be sure to take into consideration the seasonal weather conditions for which you will be driving. The following are items to consider including in a Basic Vehicle Emergency Kit as well as items necessary for the winter driving environment.

Basic Vehicle Emergency Kit



One of the most important items to have on hand when traveling is a fully charged cell phone. Be sure that your cell phone is charged and consider having a cell phone charging cord on hand. Charging cords are designed so that you can plug your phone into the vehicle's auxiliary power outlet. Many newer model cars are also equipped with USB ports, which are common for charging cell phones.

Items to consider packing in your Basic Vehicle Emergency Kit include:

- ✓ Sleeping bag or wool blanket
- ✓ Rags or paper towels
- ✓ Matches (in a waterproof container)
- ✓ Battery jumper cables
- ✓ Spare tire, jack, and lug nut wrench
- ✓ Windshield scraper/brush
- ✓ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ✓ Drinking water
- ✓ Energy food bars
- ✓ Multi-tool/Leatherman
- ✓ Tire Chains
- ✓ Spare car fuses
- ✓ Reflector kit (warning triangles)
- ✓ Tools: Pliers, flat and Phillips-head screwdrivers, adjustable wrench
- ✓ A bright colored antenna cloth/flag and/or a "HELP" sign for the rear window
- ✓ Basic first aid kit (compresses, bandages, band aids, disposable gloves, etc.)
- ✓ Folding camping (Army) shovel
- ✓ Tire gauge Foam tire sealant



Winter Emergency Kit

Being able to survive if stranded in winter weather conditions depends on whether you are equipped to manage the situation. Driving environments where freezing temperatures, snow and ice are present necessitate additional precautions. The basic equipment every driver should have in their vehicle for winter travel includes:

- ✓ Lightweight snow shovel
- ✓ Extra bottle of winter-rated wiper fluid
- ✓ Windshield ice scraper and snow brush
- ✓ Warm clothing/blankets
- ✓ Boots, wool socks, and gloves
- ✓ Hand warmers
- ✓ Syphon pump
- ✓ Cat litter (for traction)
- ✓ Set of tire chains
- ✓ Jumper cables
- ✓ Electrical and duct tape
- ✓ Rain poncho
- ✓ Drinking water
- ✓ Whistle
- ✓ Tow strap or tow rope (strong enough to tow 6,000 pounds)



Additional Precautions

Flat tires and blowouts are hazards that can happen to drivers at any time and in any weather condition. Knowing how to change a flat tire before it happens is your best defense to this situation. The safest way to learn how to change a tire is in your driveway with someone who can walk you through the procedure. In addition, check your spare tire frequently to be sure it is properly inflated and the tire jack and tools necessary for changing a tire are in the trunk and easily accessible.



Battery jumper cables are also important for drivers who travel in both northern and southern weather climates. Drivers in northern climates tend to have more battery problems requiring jump starting from another vehicle in cold weather months. Drivers in southern climates and particularly those in the hot southwest will tend to have more battery problems in the summer during periods of extreme heat.

Preparing your vehicle prior to traveling and knowing what to do in the event of severe weather, a breakdown, or accident are important steps you can take to ensuring that your next trip is safe and fun.