

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort of The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

Looking at my calendar I see that September is National Honey Month. It's also National Papaya Month, National Chicken Month, National Sewing Month, and – believe it or not – National Blueberry Popsicle Month. I'm sure you're happy to learn this because it's National Self-Improvement month too. Or perhaps you're just being polite because it's National Courtesy Month.

I'll be honest, though: None of those really caught my attention as much as the fact that September is also National Preparedness Month. Part of my role for The Salvation Army is to serve as the Disaster Service director for my region. That means being ready to bring water and snacks to firefighters on the front lines of a wildfire or large structure fire. It means being ready to provide meals to those displaced by disaster. It also means being there to provide emotional and spiritual support or crisis counseling to those affected by tragedy of any scale, be it the loss of their home, the trauma of a terrorist strike, or the disappearance of a beloved pet.

One of my most important responsibilities is to help people prepare. We provide a free emergency guide to help people make themselves, their families, and their homes ready so that they can face disaster confident of the best possible outcome in any circumstance.

One thing everyone should do is to prepare an emergency supply kit which contains the basic needs for themselves and any family to get by without outside assistance for a minimum of three to five days. Then, every September when it's National Preparedness Month, check your supplies. Make sure they are intact. Trade out any food nearing its expiration date for new food so you can be sure that you won't have to eat the neighbors while you wait for rescue.

A well-prepared kit won't cost you an arm and a leg. I put together a professional level kit for less than \$20, then spent about \$10 more making sure it had extra supplies for my family of four. Shop at discount and dollar stores and be sure to check your cupboards and junk drawers for those odd items which we all have stashed there

My kit includes a pair of flashlights – a solar chargeable one and a hand crank one that also has a radio in it. I have a first aid kit which I splurged and spent two dollars on at a sale. I've got six big cans of high protein, high carb canned food per person. Beans, chili, tuna, and hearty soups will keep us fed.

There's a can opener and a Swiss Army knife, along with a set of silverware. These were thrift store buys – about five bucks for all of it. I also have blankets and a set of heavy clothing for each person. There's a box of matches too, along with a lighter, two rolls of toilet paper, and several large sealable plastic bags. Oh, and a Bible, because it's good to have something to read.

I keep it all in a sturdy plastic box with a case of bottled water and a full five-gallon water jug beside it. That's about two gallons per person per day.

The emergency planning guide lists other handy items and you might have ideas of your own. Keep the kit small enough to be portable if you need to evacuate quickly, though.

Take advantage of National Preparedness Month to be sure your family is ready for whatever may happen. If we're all prepared, we can work together through anything that comes our way.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort for today's KINS Community Comment.