

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

I have a confession to make: I have never eaten Spam. But, long ago, in those crazy, halcyon days of my later teen years, a friend I was driving home gave me a can of Spam as payment for the ride. If that wasn't strange enough, I happened to have some earthquake putty in the glove box, so I stuck that can to the center of my dashboard, where it remained for the next three years.

I lived in the Central Valley of California at the time, so when people asked why I had a can of that popular pork product on the dashboard of my car, I would tell them that it was in case I went off the road in a snowstorm. It would be my emergency food supply until I was rescued. Of course, living where I did, I never saw a flake of snow on the road and if I had slid out of control, I'd have just ended up in some cow pasture or almond orchard, not lost in a ditch or down a mountain side.

Over the decades since that time, I have hopefully grown in wisdom, and I have learned that having a good roadside emergency kit in the car is really no laughing matter. Here in Northern California, where intemperate weather is a regular thing and where heavy traffic leads to thousands of accidents and upwards of 50 deaths per year, being prepared to handle anything from a multi-car collision to helping a stranger in need along your route is a wise decision.

You could always BUY a kit to stash in your trunk. Online retailers sell them for fifteen to a hundred bucks. There are also some car clubs and insurance companies which give them away for free from time to time. But I prefer building my own, and you should too. All you really need is a sturdy canvas bag of some sort, just large enough to fit the rest of your gear in.

Let me list a few of the basic supplies everyone would want to have handy if they were in or responding to a mishap along the roadside.

First, a small, car-style fire extinguisher. It might save your car from an engine fire. It might save your neighbors from that small grassfire lit by a discarded cigarette.

Your car probably has a spare tire and a jack, but if not you'll want to add those things. A can of flat fix which can inflate a tire is a must as well.

A first aid kit with an extra box of bandages is important. So is a hand-powered flashlight. I've got one that takes about thirty seconds of cranking to light for fifteen minutes. I

saw one that uses a solar panel or a hand crank to charge an onboard battery, which powers the flashlight, an emergency radio, and has a USB plug in for your phone too. Very cool.

You should throw in some glow sticks too – at least four. Some people prefer flares, but we live in an area prone to wildfires, so I tend to avoid things which could ignite the bushes.

Jumper cables, duct tape, a package of wipes and some paper towels will fill in most of the room you have, but there are a few more things you'll want to consider. A blanket or two are good in almost every emergency. Even one of those space blankets you get for a buck in the camping section of the hardware store would help. Also, some bottles of water and a box of granola or chocolate bars with nuts, in case you really do have to spend some time waiting and need a high-energy snack. Or, I suppose, you could always throw in a can of Spam.

It doesn't take long or cost much to be prepared for the worst, and when you're prepared, the worst never happens.

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