



YOU FIRST – MISSION SECOND

Once you are activated as Western Kern County ARES® you will need to continue to take care of yourself. If you become over-tired, ill, or weak, you cannot do your job properly. If you do not take care of personal cleanliness, you could become unpleasant to be around. Whenever possible, each station should have at least two operators on duty so that one can take a break for sleep, food and personal hygiene. If that is not possible, work out a schedule with the Emergency Managers or your NCS to take periodic "off-duty" breaks.

Food

Most people need at least 2000 calories a day to function well. In a stressful situation or one with a great deal of physical activity you may need even more. Experienced Emergency Managers and served agency personnel will usually be aware of this issue and take steps to see that their volunteer's needs are met. If you are at a regular shelter, at least some of your food needs may be taken care of. In other situations, you may be on your own, at least for a while. High calorie and high protein snacks will help keep you going, but you will also need food that is more substantial. You may need to bring along some freeze-dried camping food, a small pot, and a camp stove with fuel, or some self-heating military style "Meal, Ready to Eat" (MRE) packages. If you require a special diet you will need to prepare for that yourself.

Water

Safe water supplies can be difficult to find during and after many disasters. You will need at least three to five quarts of water each day, just for drinking, cooking and sanitation. In extremely hot or cold conditions, or with increased physical activity, your needs will increase significantly. Most disaster preparedness checklists suggest at least one gallon per person, per day or more.

Many camping supply stores offer a range of water filters and purification tablets that can help make local water supplies safer. However, they all have limitations you should be aware of. Filters may or may not remove all potentially harmful organisms or discoloration, depending on the type. Those with smaller filter pores (.3 microns is a very tight filter) will remove more foreign matter, but will also clog more quickly. Iodine-saturated filters will kill or remove most harmful germs and bacteria, but are more expensive and impart a faint taste of iodine to the water. Most filters will remove Giardia cysts. All water filters require care in their use to avoid cross-contamination of purified water with dirty water.

Purification tablets, such as Halazone, have a limited shelf life that varies with the type, and give the water an unpleasant taste. Tablets will do nothing for particulate (dirt) or discoloration in the water. Be sure to read and understand the information that comes with any water purification device or tablet before purchasing or using it.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) says you can use plain, unscented household chlorine bleach. After filtering out any particulate by pouring it through several layers of densely woven cloth, put 1/8 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in a gallon of water, mix well, and allow it to sit for thirty minutes. If it still smells slightly of chlorine, you can use it. It will not taste great, nor will the chlorine bleach kill cysts like Giardia, but it may be enough.

If you have no other means, boiling for at least five minutes will kill any bacteria and other organisms, but will not remove any particulate matter or discoloration. Boiling will leave water with a "flat" taste that can be improved by pouring it back and forth between two containers several times to reintroduce some oxygen.

For more information on disinfecting water go to:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/earthquakes/food.asp>

Sleep

Try to get at least six continuous hours of sleep in every twenty-four hour period, or four continuous hours and several shorter naps. Bring fresh soft foam earplugs and a black eye mask to ensure that light and noise around you are not a problem. An appropriate sleeping bag, closed-cell foam pad or air mattress, and your own pillow will help give you the best chance of getting adequate rest. If caffeine keeps you awake, try to stop drinking coffee, tea, or other beverages containing caffeine at least four hours before going to bed. Allowing yourself to become over-tired can also make falling asleep difficult.

Personal Hygiene

If you pack only a few personal items, be sure they include toothpaste and toothbrush, a comb, and deodorant. If possible, bring a bar of soap or waterless hand cleaner, a small towel and washcloth, and a few extra shirts. Waterless shampoo is available from many camping stores. After two or three days without bathing, you can become rather unpleasant to be around - think of others and make an attempt to stay as clean and well-groomed as you can under the circumstances.

Safety in an Unsafe Situation

Many disaster assignments are in unsafe places. Natural disasters can bring flying or falling debris, high or fast moving water, fire, explosions, building collapse, polluted water, disease, toxic chemicals, and a variety of other dangers. You should always be aware of your surroundings and the dangers they hold. Never place yourself in a position where you might be trapped, injured, or killed. Anticipate what can happen, plan ahead. Always have an escape plan ready in the event that conditions suddenly become dangerous. Do not allow yourself to become "cornered" - always have more than one escape route from buildings and hazardous areas. Pay attention to wind direction in fires and hazardous material incidents.

Wear appropriate clothing. Depending on the weather, your gear might include a hard hat, rain gear, warm non-cotton layers, work gloves, and waterproof boots. Always bring several pairs of non-cotton socks and change them often to keep your feet clean and dry. Create seasonal clothing lists suitable for your climate and the types of disasters you might encounter. As a volunteer communicator, you will not generally be expected to enter environments that require specialized protective clothing or equipment. Your Served Agency will generally provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Avoid potentially dangerous areas. Industrial buildings or facilities may contain toxic chemicals, which can be released in a disaster. Dams can break, bridges can wash out, and buildings can collapse. Areas can become inaccessible due to flooding, landslides, collapsed structures, advancing fires, or storm surges. If you can avoid being in harm's way, you can also prevent yourself from becoming part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Be prepared to help others find or rescue you should you become trapped or isolated. Carry a police or signal whistle and a chemical light stick or small flashlight in your pocket. Let others know where you are going if you must travel anywhere, even within a "safe" building. Try not to travel alone in dangerous conditions - bring a "buddy."

Shelter

In most cases, you will not need your own shelter for operating or sleeping. You may be able to stay or work in the emergency operations center, evacuation shelter, or even your own vehicle. However, in some cases a tent, camp trailer, motor home, or other suitable shelter may be necessary. Your choice will depend on your needs and resources.

Tents should be rated for high winds, and should be designed to be waterproof in wet weather. Most inexpensive family camping tents will not survive difficult conditions. Dome tents will shed wind well, but look for published "wind survival" ratings since not all dome designs are equal. Your tent should have a full-coverage rain fly rather than a single waterproof fabric. The tent's bottom should be waterproof, extending up the sidewalls at least six inches in a "bath-tub" design, but bring an extra sheet of plastic to line the *inside* just in case. (Placing a plastic ground cloth under a tent will allow rain to quickly run under and through a leaky tent floor.) Bring extra nylon cord and long ground stakes to help secure the tent in windy conditions. If you are not an experienced foul weather camper, consider consulting a reputable local outfitter or camping club for advice on selecting and using a tent.

Medical Considerations

If you have a medical condition that could potentially interfere with your ability to do your job, it is a good idea to discuss this with your physician ahead of time. For instance, if you are a diabetic, you will need to avoid going for long periods without proper food or medication, and stress may affect your blood sugar level. Persons with heart problems may need to avoid stressful situations. Even if your doctor says you can participate safely, be sure you have an adequate supply of appropriate medications on hand, and a copy of any prescriptions. Let your Emergency Manager and any work partners know of your condition so that they can take appropriate

actions if something goes wrong. Wear any medical ID jewelry you have. Keep a copy of any special medical information and emergency phone numbers in your wallet at all times.

Protect Your Eyes and Sight

If you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses, bring at least one spare pair. If you use disposable contact lenses, bring more than enough changes to avoid running out. Some contact lens wearers may want to switch to glasses to avoid having to deal with lens removal and cleaning under field conditions. If you have any doubts, consult your eye doctor ahead of time. Bringing a copy of your lens prescription along may also be a good idea, especially if you are likely to be some distance from home for a while.

Sunglasses may be a necessity in some situations. Working without them in bright sun can cause fatigue, and possibly eye damage. If you are in an area with large expanses of snow or white sand, prolonged periods of exposure can cause the retina to be burned, a very painful condition commonly known as "snow blindness." Since no painkiller will help with retinal burns, it is best to use good quality UV blocking sunglasses at all times, and avoid prolonged exposure.

If you do not normally wear eyeglasses, consider a pair of industrial safety glasses or goggles to protect your eyes from wind-blown water, dust, and debris. Keep all spare eyeglasses or safety glasses/goggles in a felt-lined hard-shell storage case to prevent scratching and breakage.