



## Disaster Management Community



# Solution Exchange for the Disaster Management Community Consolidated Reply

### *Query: Standardizing First Aid and Search and Rescue Kits - Advice*

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Issue Date: 16 May 2008

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**From Adesh Tripathy and Eilia Jafar, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - Regional Delegation of South Asia, New Delhi**

**Posted 22 April 2008**

One simple step towards building safer communities is to have standardized First Aid kit and family disaster preparedness kits. As we all know that disaster risk reduction begins at home, community and schools. There exist no standard criteria for such kits. Many agencies and the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies operating in the region have their own specifications for these kits.

This leaves many of us in a state of confusion. Considering this gap, International Federation South Asia Regional Delegation plans to standardize First Aid Kits, under the Building Safer Community initiatives in South Asia with the support of ECHO-DIPECHO.

You are kindly requested to suggest:

- Contents, quantity and specifications of first aid material for a **Family First Aid Kit** (Considering 5-6 persons family size for daily use and 1-2 person during accidents)
- Contents, quantity and specifications of first aid material for **First Aid Kit for Trained Volunteers** (to provide first aid to 5-10 people in an accident/ minor disaster)
- Contents, quantity and specifications of first aid material for **School First Aid Kit** (for 5-10 students in an accident in the school)
- Standardized criteria/specifications and contents for basic **Search and Rescue (SAR) Kit**

Any suggestions on incorporating special needs of the disabled or any other group while standardizing the above kits would also be very helpful.

Based on your inputs we shall standardize the First Aid Kits. We believe, these are equally useful to the beneficiaries and organizations as well.

#### **References by the query poser:**

IFRC has developed a set of draft kits on the outcome of harmonization the process initiated between the IFRC and the International committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In addition, they have reviewed the

existing First Aid kits contents and specifications shared by the National Societies and DIPECHO partner agencies in the region.

Below are the draft kits:

- Family First Draft Kit: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040801.doc>
  - Draft first Aid Kit for trained volunteers. <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040802.doc>
  - School first Aid Draft Kit: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040804.doc>
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### **Responses were received, with thanks, from**

1. [Deepa Prasad](#), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bhubaneswar
2. [Rita Savla](#), DIPECHO School Safety Project, Gujarat
3. [Hari Kumar](#), GeoHazards International
4. [Amit Sharma](#), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, India Office, New Delhi
5. [M. Sundar Senthil](#), University of Madras, Tirunelveli
6. [Suresh Bada Math](#), National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore
7. [Eilia Jafar 1](#), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - Regional Delegation of South Asia, New Delhi
8. [Sagori Mukhopadhyay](#), Independent, Kolkata

*Further contributions are welcome!*

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### **[Summary of Responses](#)**

### **[Related Resources](#)**

### **[Responses in Full](#)**

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### **Summary of Responses**

There are no standard criteria for making First Aid Kits, and many agencies have their own specifications for making such kits. Considering this gap, the International Federation South Asia Regional Delegation plans to standardize first aid kits, and requested members' inputs. They replied with suggestions and listed items for preparing and standardizing these kits.

Respondents pointed out that various organizations have been providing First Aid (FA), and Search and Rescue (SAR) training to prepare community level volunteers. However, they noted that it is an asset to have people trained in First Aid and Search and Rescue in an emergency, their contribution is limited in the absence of proper equipment and kits. Therefore, members felt there is a clear need for guidance on items required and their use.

Discussants explained that the FA kits used include only basic items, and expressed concerns over the lack of timely replenishment of stock and failure to check expiry dates. Therefore, they stressed the importance of regular checking and replenishing the stocks. Respondents felt one of the possible reasons for the non-existence of a standard FA kit could be that the items and quantities vary as per the user (family, trained people, offices, travel, etc). They also vary as per availability of resources, type and location of the emergency.

Thus, members felt it would be difficult to make a consolidated list of all items the practical scenario, and recommended preparing a detailed list of items to include in **First Aid kits for [families](#) and [school and trained volunteers](#)**.

Discussing Search and Rescue kits, members opined this is a specialized area and therefore community members can only be involved in light Search and Rescue, and advised community members not to endanger themselves; for example entering damaged buildings, especially following an earthquake when there is a possibility of aftershocks. For [Light Search and Rescue Kit](#), they suggested various items.

Finally, respondents after reviewing the survey form, made the following suggestions:

- Section on cleaning and disinfection also indicates personal protective equipments and hence could be renamed as "personal protection and hygiene"
- Include a pocket mask for CPR/mouth to mouth resuscitation in all the kits
- In the instrument section, include having tweezers in the kit, for foreign body removal
- Add antibiotic creams into all kits, for simple wounds, analgesic spray for strains and sprains and antihistamines (citrazine) for insect bites or bee stings are the most commonly required to the list of non-prescription medicines

Members concluded by remarking that preparedness is the key to tackling challenges and equipping trained professionals at the community level would play an important role in limiting the number of injuries and deaths following a disaster.

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Respondents shared specific suggestion on the items to include in the family first aid kit (with possible quantities), school first aid kit, and the light search and rescue kit for trained volunteers.

#### **Family First Aid Kit**

1. first aid emergency guide
2. 20 plasters (band-aids)
3. six bandages
4. eight dressing pads
5. four bandages
6. ten gauze swabs
7. two non-adherent absorbent dressings
8. one hypo-allergenic tape
9. four pairs of vinyl gloves
10. one apron
11. five antiseptic wipes
12. six safety pins
13. one face shield
14. one pair of tweezers
15. one emergency foil blanket
16. one note pad and pencil
17. one eyewash solution and two eye pads
18. one tubular bandage
19. one pair of scissors
20. one torch (flashlight)
21. one thermometer
22. mobile phone

#### **School and Trained Volunteer First Aid Kit**

1. first aid guide

2. bandages, including simple band-aids
3. burn free dressing
4. adhesive tape
5. triangle bandage
6. antiseptic towelettes
7. wet naps or pocket tissue
8. eye pads and eye wash
9. scissor/blade
10. blood stoppers
11. sterile gauze pads
12. adhesive tape
13. plastic bandages
14. CPR mouth piece
15. latex gloves
16. ice packs
17. hand sanitizer
18. bio-hazard waste bag
19. tweezers
20. multi-function knife
21. thermometer
22. small roll of tape
23. wire splint
24. box of butterfly bandages
25. clips
26. tongue depressors
27. burn free dressings
28. box patch bandages
29. dispenser tray
30. waterproof tape roll
31. stethoscope
32. safety pins
33. needle
34. thread to secure bleeding areas or snake bites
35. soap
36. non-prescription drugs (burn cream, Dettol bottle, antibacterial ointments, pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid, laxative, activated charcoal, etc.)
37. satellite phone
38. flags with labels or color code to categorize victims into 'A' 'B' and 'C'
  - A = immediate help and requires professional (urgently requires shifting to a hospital)
  - B = intermediate help
  - C= can be managed at the disaster site
39. contact/address book/ phone number diary
40. sanitary napkins
41. sugar/sweets/chocolates (glucose -d) packet
42. splint-something to stabilize long bone fracture (even a hard ruler)
43. clean gauze and cotton
44. crepe bandage

### **Search and Rescue Kit**

1. satellite phone
2. helmet
3. saw/hacksaws with extra blades
4. pliers

5. safety glasses
6. whistles
7. work/leather gloves
8. hammer(s)
9. torchlight/ flashlight with spare power source/batteries
10. crowbar
11. hand shovel
12. duct tape
13. caution barrier tape - to restrict access to dangerous areas
14. spray paint (to mark quickly)
15. fluorescent vests
16. pulley and nylon rope
17. triage tags
18. Swiss-Army knife
19. First Aid guidebook
20. carry bag
21. hat
22. folding shovel
23. safety vest
24. dust mask
25. whistle
26. pry bar
27. screw-drivers
28. trauma bandage kit
29. body tags
30. grease pen
31. chalk
32. utility knife
33. AM/FM radio
34. ham radio
35. steel pulley block/tackle
36. nylon cord
37. triage tags
38. locking pliers
39. informational signs
40. fireman axe
41. hydraulic jack
42. wrecking bars
43. compass
44. gas and water shut off tool
45. light sticks emergency candles
46. water proof matches
47. non-perishable food items
48. note pad
49. pen/pencil

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## **Related Resources**

### ***Recommended Documentation***

**Stress Prevention and Management for Disaster Relief Health Workers** (from [Suresh Bada Math](#), National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore)

Document; by Suresh Bada Math; National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore; Bangalore

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040808.doc> (Document Size: 72 KB)

*Contains stress management techniques for emergency relief workers, techniques can be used for the workers themselves or for the victims.*

### **Recommended Organizations and Programmes**

**Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) India, New Delhi** (from *M. Sundar Senthil, University of Madras, Tirunelveli*)

D-11, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110017; Tel: 91-11-26498371, 41748008; Fax: 91-11-26498372; <http://www.seedsindia.org/SCP.htm>

*Works to make communities disaster resilient, has prepared training modules for school teachers and students, including modules on first aid and search and rescue*

### **Recommended Portals and Information Bases**

**Redcross.org, American Red Cross, America** (from *Deepa Prasad, United Nations Development Programme, Bhubaneswar*)

<http://www.redcrossstore.org/shopper/ProdList.aspx?LocationId=2&gclid=CLeF8MWChZMCFQ5IOgodsHUEdW>

*Portal provides some suggestions for items to include in first aid kits and other resources on emergency preparedness kits and supplies.*

### **Related Consolidated Replies**

**Strengthening Pre-Hospital Care Systems during Emergencies, from Deepa Prasad, United Nations Development Programme, Bhubaneswar (Experiences; Advice).** Disaster Management Community. Issued 28 February 2007

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/cr-se-drm-05120701-public.pdf> (PDF, Size: 99 KB)

*Shares experiences of linking volunteers with public health systems and suggestions to improve pre-hospital care systems and involving volunteers in Mass Casualty Incidents*

**Mass Casualty Management, from Deepa Prasad, United Nations Development Programme, Bhubaneswar (Experiences; Advice).** Disaster Management Community. Issued 28 December 2007

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/cr-se-drm-11110701-public.pdf> (PDF, Size: 139 KB)

*Shares experiences on existing Mass Casualty Management systems at city level, challenges faced to implement them and ways to improve in cities and hospitals*

**Community Based Health Care and Psychosocial interventions Following Disasters – from Deepa Prasad, United Nations Development Programme, Bhubaneswar (Experiences; Examples).** Disaster Management Community. Issued 28 March 2008

Available at: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/cr-se-drm-20020801-public.pdf> (PDF, Size: 154 KB)

*Shares interventions on preventing disease outbreaks; strategies to involve volunteers in risk identification and community-based initiatives for psychosocial care during disasters*

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## **Responses in Full**

**Deepa Prasad, United Nations Development Programme, Bhubaneswar**

I totally agree with you that there is no standardisation on First Aid Kits. The kits that are provided by different agencies and organisations mainly vary with resource availability, though it is made sure that most of the basic essential items are included. Another important factor is that most often, the contents of the kit are not replenished after use nor the expiry dates of the supplies and medicines tracked.

It may not be easy to indicate the exact quantity of the supplies that would be required in each of these kits from available scientific data or studies. However some random figures for each of these items based on rational assumptions could be made. But the most important factor would be to check regularly (at least monthly or after each use) for exhausted items and then make sure it is placed in the kit.

I have attempted to fill in the survey form based on my assumption. To view the field survey please click <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040807.doc>

Some observations that I wish to highlight on the kits are:

1. The section on Cleaning and disinfection also indicates personal protective equipments and hence could be renamed as "personal protection and hygiene"
2. A pocket mask for CPR/mouth to mouth resuscitation is an essential addition in all first aid kits. However this has been indicated only in Volunteers kit .
3. Instrument section - Tweezers for foreign body removal could be added
4. Antibiotic creams for simple wounds, Analgesic spray for strains and sprains and Antihistamines (cetirizine) for insect bites or bee stings are the most commonly required and this could be added to the list of non prescription medicines.
5. Safety pins may be required for pinning up triangular bandages, which is usually present in most first aid kits.

A much simpler suggestive list for a family first aid kit could include –

first aid emergency guide; 20 plasters; six bandages; eight dressing pads; four bandages; ten gauze swabs; two non-adherent absorbent dressings; one hypo-allergenic tape; four pairs of vinyl gloves; one apron; five antiseptic wipes; six safety pins; one face shield; one pair of tweezers; one emergency foil blanket; one note pad and pencil; one eyewash solution; one tubular bandage; two eye pads; ten gauze swabs; one pair of scissors; one torch; and one thermometer

The link below provides some suggestive first aid kits.

<http://www.redcrossstore.org/shopper/ProdList.aspx?LocationId=2&gclid=CLeF8MWChZMCFQ5IQodsHUEdW>.

I have also attached the list of First aid equipments for medical first aid parties for reference. To view click <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040806.doc>

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### **Rita Savla, DIPECHO School Safety Project, Gujarat**

I also totally agree with that there is no standardization of first aid and survival kit. There can be common guideline for content of kit and minimum quantity and further content and quantity depends on following things:

1. Family, Institution, Industry, Office Work area etc.
2. Number of people/working member
3. Age /Vulnerable group
4. HVRC Analysis in term of Disaster
5. Medical History
6. Time of getting external aid

Considering few of above points will help while standardization of First aid kit and survival kit, I personally feel its very difficult to have one stand First Aid or Survival kit in general

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### **Hari Kumar, GeoHazards International**

Search and Rescue is a specialized area and other than light search and Rescue training, we should not encourage community members to endanger themselves by getting into buildings that have been damaged. (Especially in earthquakes when aftershocks are a real possibility) However, a light search and rescue kit may contain (but not limited to) the following:

Helmet, Saw to help cut trees/wood, hacksaws with extra blades, Pliers, Safety glasses, Whistles, Work Gloves, Hammer(s), Torchlight with spare power source, Crowbar, Hand shovel, duct tape, 'Caution/Danger' tape, spray paint (to mark quickly), Fluorescent Vests, pulley and nylon rope, Triage tags, a Swiss-Army Knife.

I hope others with experience in Search & Rescue or working in the Fire Services may be able to add, minus or revamp this 'draft' list.

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### **Amit Sharma, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - India Office, New Delhi**

As humanitarian agencies involved in enhancing preparedness for better response, many organizations have been providing First Aid (FA), and Search and Rescue (SAR) training to community and staff. Many schools have FA training for their students. Civil Defence, Scouts and guides and NCC have so many trained volunteers in SAR.

In emergency situation, while it will be an asset to have trained people in First Aid and Search and Rescue, their contributions will be limited in the absence of proper equipments and kits. It doesn't mean that all organization now start focusing on hardware components, but, there is a clear need for guidance on items required and their use in emergency.

One of the possible reasons for non-existence of a standard first aid kit could be that the items and quantities vary as per the user (family, trained people, offices, travel kit etc). The availability of resources, kind of emergency and place of emergency are major factors while planning for such kits. The usage of these supplies in proper manner is also an important aspect.

It would therefore be difficult to make a bouquet of all items in the practical scenario. However, all of us can provide our inputs for preparing a detailed list of key (critical) items to be included in a kit for an emergency situation.

Some minimum standards for such kits defined for certain groups may be set. The same can be modified by agencies as per the context and user.

The package of services during the emergency depends upon the nature of disaster and need of affected population. Though, it is not a comprehensive list for the items required in Search & Rescue or in First Aid Kit, but an attempt is made to chalk out the few relevant items. These items can be used in proportionate to the size of family, school, community or rescue team.

### **Search and Rescue Kit**

Guide book, Carry bag, Hat, Folding Shovel, Leather Gloves, Safety Vest, Dust Mask, Whistle, Flashlight with batteries, Caution Tape, Pry Bar, Screw-drivers, Trauma Bandage Kit, Body Tags, Grease Pen, Chalk, Utility Knife, Safety Goggles, Caution Barrier Tape - to restrict access to dangerous areas, AM/FM Radio,



Ham Radio, Steel Pulley Block/Tackle, Hammer/Hatchet - Nylon Cord, Triage Tags, Locking Pliers, Help/OK Signs, Fireman Axe, Hydraulic Jack, Wrecking Bars, Compass, Gas & Water Shut Off Tool, Light sticks Emergency Candles, Water proof Matches, Calorie Food Ration, note pad, pen/pencil.

### **First Aid Kit (Family, volunteers, School)**

First Aid Guide, Bandages, Burn Free Dressing, Adhesive Tape, Triangle Bandage, Antiseptic Towellettes, Eye Pads, scissor/blade, Blood stoppers, Sterile Gauze Pads, Adhesive Tape, Plastic Bandages, CPR Mouth Piece, Latex Gloves, Ice Packs, Hand Sanitizer, Eye Wash, Bio Hazard Waste Bag, ,Wet Naps, Tweezers, Pocket Tissue, multi function knife, Thermometer, Tissue Pack, Eye Wash, Small Rolls Tape, Wire Splint, Box Butterfly Bandages, Clips, Tongue Depressors, CPR Mouthpiece, Burn Free Dressings, Box Patch Bandages, Burn Cream Packets, Antibacterial Ointments, Dispenser Tray, Waterproof Tape Roll, Stethoscope.

I believe preparedness is the key to tackle challenges and equipped trained professional at the community level play an important role in limiting the expansion of injuries and deaths.

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### **M. Sundar Senthil, University of Madras, Tirunelveli**

Please refer SEEDSINDIA -"Training module on school teachers in disaster reduction" publication for safety FIRST AID kit, Search and Rescue kit. SEEDS Website: [www.seedsindia.org](http://www.seedsindia.org)

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### **Suresh Bada Math, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore**

I want to recommend a paper on stress prevention and management for Disaster relief health workers (<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/drm/cr/res21040808.doc>), which can be a part of all the three first aid kits.

Also I want to recommend the following items mentioned below to be part of the First aid kits;

- Safety pins
  - Pen torch
  - Needle
  - thread to secure bleeding areas or snake bites
  - Soap
  - First aid manual
  - Non-prescription drugs (pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid, laxative, activated charcoal)
  - Communication tools like Mobile phone in case of family and Satellite phones in case of school and volunteer kits.
  - Flags with Labels or colour code to categorize the needy into 'A' 'B' and 'C'
  - A = immediate help and requires professional. Urgently requires shifting to a hospital
  - B = intermediate help
  - C= can be managed at the disaster site
  - Contact book
  - Phone number diary
  - Address book
  - First Aid training manual
  - Sanitary napkins
  - Simple band-aid
  - Dettol bottle
  - Normal blade
  - Sugar / sweets / chocolates
  - (glucose -d) packet
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**Eilia Jafar, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - Regional Delegation of South Asia, New Delhi**

Thank you very much for your response. I understand that there are no existing standards for FA kits or SAR kits, however there are certain contents that must be included in these kits. We would definitely consider and try to incorporate your suggestions while developing these standards.

[Dr. Deepa](#) has rightly pointed out that replacing of contents after they are exhausted or expired is an important issue. With your experience in this area, it would be good to know if there are any other issues/ concerns to be addressed, or recommendations that need to be included with such kits.

Are there any special arrangements required for people with certain specific needs (feeding mothers, disabled, old aged, children.)?

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**Sagori Mukhopadhyay, Independent, Kolkata**

Just to add to list of things that should be available in a first aid kit:

1. Splint-something to stabilise long bone fracture, even a hard ruler
  2. Scissors
  3. Clean gauze and cotton
  4. Crepe bandage
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***Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!***

*If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Disaster Management Community in India at [se-drm@solutionexchange-un.net.in](mailto:se-drm@solutionexchange-un.net.in) with the subject heading "Re: [se-drm] QUERY: Standardizing First Aid and Search and Rescue Kits - Advice. Additional Reply."*

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