

VACATION Go-Kits

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EmComm folks endlessly discuss and debate the optimal “Go-Kit”—a bag, box, or other containing the essential items we will need to serve on an emergency communications operation. The basic idea of the Go-Kit is simple—we collect what we think we will need, in advance, so that when we are deployed, we will not need to spend the next two hours wandering around our house, our shack, our attic, our garage, the trunks of our cars, the garden shed, our boat trailer, or whatever, with a checklist, looking for all that stuff, and so that when we arrive on the operation, we won't be missing that essential caloric-phlogistanometer that makes our radio work.

When we travel, whether on vacation or for business, it is often not practical to carry our complete EmComm Go Kit, especially if we're going by air, and are not planning a DXpedition. Most Go-Kits are designed to reside at home, in the garage, or in the car, and to contain nearly everything we think we will need to serve on an EmComm operation. They are sometimes quite bulky and heavy.

Although many of us will, as a matter of course, carry a hand-held radio whenever we travel, we might not carry some of the other items that could be valuable, or essential to success if we find ourselves unexpectedly pressed into EmComm service. Following is a list of suggested items for an extremely pared-down Go-Kit that addresses the needs of impromptu EmComm service, but that is still practical for travel.

1. Radio suitable for travel
 - (a) Small
 - (b) Light in weight
 - (c) Full Power
 - (d) Li-Ion Battery (low self discharge rate, high energy density)
 - (e) Multifunction receiver (receives commercial radio, NOAA WX radio, etc.)
Examples: VX-5, VX-7, TH-F6A
2. Means to provide renewable or long-term power for the radio. Many options available—use several if you have space and can tolerate the weight. Examples include:
 - (a) Battery charger
 - (b) AC adapter for radio
 - (c) AA-cell battery pack
 - (d) High-capacity battery pack (either one that fits the radio or an external, outboard battery)
 - (e) Car charger/adapter
3. Light-weight, efficient antennas
 - (a) 19-inch HT ground/counterpoise wire
 - (b) Long rubber duck
 - (c) Small dual-band mag-mount antenna with tiny magnet base
 - i. Available from several vendors, including MFJ, for under \$25;
 - ii. About 20 inches long and a few ounces in weight—can fit in a backpack or

- overnight bag;
 - iii. Comes with 6-8 feet of thin transmission line, BNC or SMA connector;
 - iv. Rare-earth magnet does a good job sticking to roof under sensible driving conditions;
 - (d) Roll-up J-Pole Antenna
 - i. Commercially available antennas are available, or you can build it yourself from plans available on the web;
 - ii. Most examples use 300-ohm TV twinlead and a few feet of thin coax;
 - iii. Light in weight and flexible—roll-up design easily fits in backpack, purse, overnight bag;
 - iv. Half-wave design, requiring no ground plane or counterpoise, is easy to mount in the field. Examples:
 - A. Hang from a tree limb
 - B. Tape to a window
 - C. Hang from a railing
 - (e) Arrow Open-Stub Dual-Band J-Pole (OSJ 146/440)
 - i. Sturdy, durable antenna performs well and is highly regarded;
 - ii. High-quality antenna is constructed from aluminum stock and stainless hardware;
 - iii. Light weight for its size;
 - iv. Special order version provides longest element in two pieces, about 30-inches each, which can fit in suitcases and duffel bags;
 - v. Integral mounting clamp attaches to mast, PVC pipe, broom stick, etc. Around \$50;
 - (f) Dual band high gain Comet SBB7 antenna and a mag mount. The Comet SBB7 is easy to dismantle into 3 short sections that will fit in a carry on suitcase.
4. Adapter fitting or short coax cable to adapter your HT antenna connection to SO239.
5. Miscellaneous Items
- (a) Small notebook or clipboard—keeps important papers together, rather than flying round in the breeze or falling on the floor
 - (b) Pen/pencil tethered to notebook/clipboard
 - (c) Spare pens/pencils
 - (d) Tiny compass for pointing antennas, finding your way, giving directions
 - (e) Small roll of duct tape
 - i. These are sometimes available at dollar stores in flattened 50-or-so-foot rolls, without the cardboard core
 - (f) Small, multi-tip screwdriver (some will prefer one of those stainless multi-tool devices)
 - (g) Manual or quick-reference guide for your radio
 - (h) Small LED flashlight
 - (i) Repeater directory
 - (j) Spare fuses

I take my Vacation Go-Kit with me when I visit my out of town children and grandchildren. It all fits in less space than a pair of shoes. It is also a great opportunity to introduce and/or keep your grandchildren familiar with amateur radio.