
A Texas Nature Kayaking Guide

First Aid and Emergency Kits

Hopefully, you will never have to use a first aid kit, but it is nice to have one available when you need it. The contents of such a kit will vary with where you are kayaking, how long you will be gone, how large your group will be, and what you are doing in your kayak. Herb Nordmeyer's equipment is divided between a first aid kit (orange dry bag), a day use dry bag (small yellow bag), and an emergency dry bag (large yellow bag). Herb is the senior Texas Nature Kayaking guide and takes groups from 8 to 80 on trips. Some of those trips are multi-day in remote areas where he cannot count on emergency responders being available.

Here is what we consider some rules concerning first aid kits and for that matter, all emergency gear:

- Never take anything you do not know how to use. Usually, this requires some training. If the only thing you know how to do is apply a Band-Aid and kiss the ouchie to make it well, then that is all you should have in your kit. Do not depend on someone else being present who knows how to use the kit. If they knew, they would probably have their own kit.
- The kit is not any good if it stays at home or in the vehicle while you are out in your kayak.
- Repack your kit after every trip. That way you can ensure nothing was used up or lost, and that nothing got wet and ruined.
- Everyone on the trip needs to know where the first aid kit and other emergency gear are located.
- Never assume that EMS will arrive within an hour. First aid and CPR, as taught in modern America, assume that EMS will arrive within 30 minutes. This is appropriate for most urban situations; however, when you are in a kayak, you may not be able to call EMS during that first 30 minutes, and if you can, they may not be able to get to you in a reasonable amount of time.

No comment is made as to whether the following list is adequate or overkill; this is what Herb Nordmeyer carries. Most of the components are packed in zip lock type bags to protect them from water leakage and to keep like items together. With many of the items, he carries multiples, depending on how many are in the group and how long they will be away from their vehicles.

First Aid Kit

Gear & instructions

Head lamp	Pliers w/wire cutters
Key chain light	Watch
Wilderness Medicine Field Guide	Scissors
WMI patient assessment bandana	Tweezers
10X hand lens	Safety pin
Gloves – impervious	

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Sterilization

Matches	Wound-washing syringe
CPR Microshield	Hibiclens (better than H ₂ O ₂)
Hand sanitizer – individual	70% Isopropyl alcohol
Hand sanitizer – bottle	

Cuts and scrapes

Gauze pads – 4" x 4"	Medicated First Aid Relief – individual
Mirasorb Sponges – 4" x 4"	After Cuts & Scrapes – bottle
Advanced Wound Care Kit	Benadryl Cream
Wound closure strips	Triple antibiotic ointment
Band-Aids (assorted sizes)	Intensive Healing Lotion
Antibiotic ointment	Vaseline Renew & Protect Lotion

Sprains and broken bones

Triangular Bandages	2" ACE bandages
Sam Splint	1.5" Athletic tape

Stings, bites, and other

Benadryl tabs	Advil
Cough drops	Imodium
Oral rehydration salts	Cough drops
Ibuprofen	Meat tenderizer (for insect bites and jellyfish stings)
Aspirin	

Day use dry bag

Chap Stick	Batteries, extra
Sunscreen	Gloves, cloth
Lotion	Cord - 20 feet by 1/8"
Insect repellent	Orange safety vest
Toilet paper	

Emergency Dry bag

Duct tape	Space blankets
Signal mirror – CD	Chemical hand warmers
Cap light	Windbreaker
Chemical light sticks	Rain suits
4" Ace bandage	Dry clothes
3" Ace bandage	Fleece jacket (Hypothermia can occur in July)
Waterweld (first aid for kayaks)	
Extra chemical toilet bags	

Notes

Duct tape will stick where adhesive tape may not, and can be used as a splint for fingers and toes – if used as a splint, wrap the injured member with toilet paper or gauze first so more damage will not be

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caused by removing the duct tape. It also serves as first aid for kayaks, tent poles, and just about anything else that needs fixing.

If you have an emergency on the water, you, or someone with you, may need to change clothes before you get to your take-out point. With cold water immersion, if a person is not dressed in layers and using non-absorptive clothing, it is often better to strip and redress using dry clothes, rather than adding a dry layer on top of water-logged clothes. Even if you do not need to change before returning to your take-out point, after you get to your take-out point, you may want to go ahead and change. Dry clothes feel so good after a damp and cool paddle.

While solar blankets, wind breakers, rain suits, hand warmers, and fleece jackets can be used to treat mild hypothermia, it is better to use them at the first signs that someone is getting a chill, and in that way prevent hypothermia. A cold rain shower in the middle of a Texas summer can induce a chill for a person who does not have an abundance of body insulation. Eating regularly and keeping hydrated will also help to prevent chills which can lead to hypothermia. One of the signs of mild hypothermia is shivering. Often when the patient is asked, he will say he is OK and does not need a jacket. Repeatedly when I have gotten out a jacket or a space blanket for such an individual, he/she has taken it and used it.

You can buy readymade first aid kits or build your own. Purchasing a readymade kit is usually cheaper, but it may not have all of the things you want in a kit. Since you will be on the water, the kit should be in a waterproof container.

Following are a few items that were recently recommended for Herb's first aid kit that he has not added yet:

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| Antihistamine other than Benadryl | Dental repair |
| Blister pads / Moleskin | Eyeglass repair |
| Decongestant | Suture instruments |