

JEFA's Own Survival Kits

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Over the last few issues, I've talked about the need for survival kits. This has been a topic of conversation within the board for some months. We knew we wanted to do something but how much was appropriate?

I've talked about the kit I've put together. As my own personal kit, my thoughts were to plan for the worst and hope for the best. If you've had to put down, do you really want to rely on luck being with you until help arrives? Think about how your day has gone so far... So my own approach was to think about what I would need for, say, putting down in the mountains in the winter. The thing is, most JEFA pilots don't fly in the mountains in winter (I don't yet, for that matter). And the kit I put together (and am still working on) was not cheap. It's just not an expense that the board could justify for 3 aircraft and the flying that most of us do. But we care enough about your safety that we knew that we wanted to do something.

A small committee came up with a list of what we thought should be the minimum that a kit should contain to meet basic needs. We then assembled three kits to meet that list. These kits are being placed in each of our JEFA aircraft. This isn't camping and these kits aren't intended to cover every situation but we hope that they will improve your chances if your day decides to take a turn for the worse. These kits will be placed in the baggage area of each aircraft and we recommend including a check for the kits when you do your pre-flight.

There are four areas that any survival kit needs to meet - shelter, signaling, medical, food and water. Let's start with shelter... The kits provide components for basic shelter. The included tarp is pretty versatile depending on the number of people you need to provide for. There are also plastic "space blankets", ponchos, and garbage bags that you can use to separate you from the elements. There's also 100 feet of cord to help. With that and whatever you can find or scrounge, you should be able to stay dry and out of the wind.

Signaling... For daytime, each kit contains a signal mirror and for night, a strobe. There are also matches in there for both warmth and signaling. Be sure to gather enough wood and other fuel before you start your fire! And some wet, green stuff works a treat for creating smoke! There's a flashlight and batteries in the kit, too. The red surface of your shelter makes a dandy signal as does the foil in the kit.

Medical... We've included some basic medical supplies. We're not trying to set up a hospital, but to take care of the basics until help arrives. To that end, we're talking basic wound stuff. We figure if it's something that requires a band aid, then it can wait till you're back in civilization. However, if you or your passengers need regular medications for heart, blood pressure, asthma, what have you, it is your responsibility to fly with what you need.

Food and Water... There's not much you can do here or that most people are willing or able to do. So we started with basics. Each kit contains 2 large water bottles and some disinfectant tabs to treat water you might find handy. Boiling for 10 minutes is the best bet, but the tablets work well, too. We've included some energy bars and some raisins. Not a lot of nutrition, but digestion helps keep you warm. If you're adventuresome, there is a basic fishing kit and some wire for a snare.

To help with all this, each kit contains a multi-tool, lightweight carabiners, and a box knife. There are lots of plastic storage bags for whatever you need them for and duct tape. And to round things out, there are a couple bandanas, gloves, lip balm, and insect repellent with sun screen. Lastly, we're assembling some basic instruction sheets to help you out and will be putting together a mini-survival class that you can attend.

As I said earlier, these kits are pretty basic and are a pretty good start. With the water, they add about 15 pounds to the aircraft. If, like me, you would like to be even more prepared, I offer my kit to club members to borrow for their flights. It covers a lot more ground and there are backups for a lot of the important

things - like 5 different methods for starting a fire! This kind of preparedness does come at a price in that my kit weighs about 30 pounds. If you would like to assemble your own kit, and I highly recommend it, I would be happy to help and to point you to some great resources.