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**The AOL Survival Tin** [Post [294550550](#)]**Category:** News & Opinion (General) **Topic:** Miscellaneous**Synopsis:****Source:** <http://www.themartialist.com/>**Published:** January 1, 2001 **Author:** Phil Elmore**For Education and Discussion Only. Not for Commercial Use.**

"Get yourself an AOL tin," [Don Rearic](#) told me, "and run with the idea. Write an article about it."

We had been discussing the various [survival kits](#) people put together in anticipating environmental or civil adversity. Large kits obviously make sense for home and car use, but the need for smaller, portable survival kits remains. This is particularly true for those people (such as the thousands of stranded New Yorkers who walked out of New York City during the summer blackout that affected much of Northeast America) who may be caught away from home and without a vehicle.

The more compact the kit, the better, provided it still contains useful items. There are [commercial survival tins](#), homemade kits made from Altoid or Whitman Sampler tins, and similar kits tucked away in a variety of plastic or metal containers. One of the best tins for a compact, convenient survival kit arrives regularly and unsolicited in the mail of countless people everyday. It's free, too.

I am speaking, of course, of the tins in which AOL CDs are mailed. Like many people, I have no use for the constant barrage of questionably coded AOL software, but the metal tins are hard to resist. Don't throw them away and don't recycle them. Instead, throw away the CD (or use it as a coaster, for all I care) and save the tins for use as survival kit containers.



The beauty of the AOL tin, besides subverting annoying junkmail for constructive purposes (and besides the fact that it's free) is that it is remarkably flat. A packed AOL tin will fit above a car visor, in the pocket of a car seat or door, in the CD pockets of a briefcase or travel bag, and inside a zippered schedule planner. While

Signal mirror

Bullion powder

Alcohol swabs

Adhesive bandages

A small fixed-blade knife

There are some redundant items in the kit, but that's because I believe in having multiple options for important things. The striker for the matches is actually the cover from the tube in which the lifeboat matches were shipped. The fixed-blade knife is an inexpensive "neck knife" I selected because it is very thin and light – and because one of my shoelaces could be used to wrap the handle for more grip stability. (The holes in the knife could be used to lash it to a stick to make an expedient spear, too.) I have not included tablets of painkiller or water purifier, but these could be included wrapped in separate plastic bags and clearly labeled. (Do NOT confuse them, EVER.)

All of these things fit neatly into the tin when it is carefully packed. The whole unit can be secured with large, heavy rubber bands and could be further sealed with duct tape or electrical tape if necessary. The benefit of using rubber bands is that, hey, you have rubber bands if you need them. (Make sure you use the thick, heavy kind, rather than light rubber bands of dubious utility.)



AOL is practically throwing these tins at you, at least if you live in the United States, so make a small pile of them and start brainstorming things you might need or want in an emergency. "Dollar stores" are great places to find useful items, as is the camping and outdoors section of a discount store like Wal*Mart. It doesn't take a lot of money or effort to put something together on which you can depend in the future.

Don't wait until you need it to prepare a portable survival kit. Plan ahead and you'll be grateful you did.

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