

Build a Proper

When home-building accidents happen, off-the-shelf kits just don't cut it. Here's what you really need.

BY T.H. RICHARDS

Being prepared to deal with construction injuries is important and could well save your life or the life of a crew member. Every homebuilder should learn basic first aid, and a quality first-aid kit should always be on hand whether you work on houses for a living or just like working on your own home.

Unfortunately, most "industrial" first-aid kits are no better than the basic versions sold at the corner pharmacy. They simply contain more of the same items intended for minor traumas.

As a full-time patroller at the largest ski area in Eastern Canada, I've been extensively trained to deal with both minor accidents and traumatic injuries. As a carpenter, I know the consequences of working in a dangerous trade. Based on my experience and training over the years, I've assembled my own first-aid kit, which I keep with me whenever I'm working. Here's a look at what's inside. □

T.H. Richards is a carpenter and a full-time ski patroller in Mont-Tremblant, Quebec. Photos by Krysta S. Doerfler.

SAFETY GEAR

Viruses and bacteria can be transmitted via bodily fluids during first-aid treatment. Use precautions no matter what the injury may be.

- 1 Clear **safety glasses** protect your eyes from splatters of blood or other bodily fluids.
- 2 **Nitrile gloves** protect your hands and the victim from fluid transmission.



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EYE CARE

Dust and small debris can be removed from an eye with care. If an object in the eye can't be found or is embedded, then both eyes must be patched before the victim is transported to the hospital.

- 1 **Eyewash solution** and an **eye cup** for rinsing small debris out of the eye
- 2 **Cotton-tipped swabs**, which can be moistened with eyewash and be used to lift debris from the eye
- 3 **Adhesive eye patches** to block light and to keep the victim's eyes from shifting and aggravating the injury
- 4 3-oz. **plastic cups** for covering an object that has impaled an eye

A midsize, **gate-mouth tool bag** holds all the kit's contents.

MINOR CUTS, SCRAPES, AND SPLINTERS

Small wounds and abrasions should be cleaned with plain soap and water, and should be covered with quality dressings.

- 1 Heavy-gauge **fabric dressing strips** with waterproof adhesive
- 2 A roll of **uncut adhesive fabric dressing**, which can be cut to the exact shape and size needed
- 3 **4x4 gauze pads** for wounds that are too large for adhesive dressings
- 4 **Cloth medical tape** to hold nonadhesive dressing pads on large wounds
- 5 **Needle-point tweezers** to extract splinters
- 6 A scalpel or an **X-Acto knife** with #11 blades to gain access to deep-seated splinters
- 7 **Sterile water** for washing dirt out of wounds and for rinsing scalpel blades and tweezers after they've been sterilized with an open flame



First-Aid Kit

SPRAINS AND BROKEN BONES

To immobilize a broken bone or sprained joint properly, both the joint above and below it must be immobilized correctly.

- 1 Muslin sandbags or **pillow cases** to fill with dirt, sand, or damp sawdust to immobilize a victim's head or to stabilize a major leg fracture
- 2 Chemical **cold packs** to reduce inflammation and pain
- 3 **Washcloths** or hand towels to prevent cold burn from chemical cold packs
- 4 Moldable **splints** to stabilize a broken limb
- 5 **Flat twine** or stretch-weave gauze bandages to secure splints or to hold cold packs in place
- 6 **Cloth triangular bandages** to make arm slings or to strap large splints in place



BURNS

Victims of severe burns are unstable, and they must be kept warm, handled gently, and taken to a hospital quickly. Their injuries need to be protected from further damage and infection.

- 1 **Crash scissors** to cut clothes away from burned areas of skin
- 2 Sterile **4x4 gauze pads** to protect charred skin
- 3 **Water-based gel products** to stabilize skin temperature
- 4 **PVC food wrap** to cover burned areas to help prevent infection and further tissue damage



IMPALED OBJECTS

An impaled object should be kept in place, bandaged, and stabilized so that the victim can be transported to the hospital.

- 1 A **bolt cutter** to snip impaled objects off close enough to the body so that the wound can be bandaged properly
- 2 **4x4 gauze pads** to dress the wound around the impaled object
- 3 **Cloth medical tape** to stabilize the impaled object so that it doesn't move

ARTERIAL BLEEDING

Arterial bleeding can be identified by blood that spurts out under pressure with every heartbeat. The flow of blood through a severed artery needs to be stopped as quickly as possible. A three-stage hemorrhage protocol, which is taught in virtually all first-aid courses, is used to control this type of bleeding.

- 1 **Stretch-weave bandages** to bind dressings over a wound
- 2 **4x4 gauze pads** (above right) for dressings when applying direct pressure to a wound
- 3 **Abdominal dressing pads** to absorb excess blood after bleeding is under control
- 4 A 12-in. piece of $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. **dowel** to tighten a tourniquet (as a last resort) if bleeding isn't stopped from direct and indirect pressure
- 5 **Cloth triangular bandages** to bind dressings and to make a tourniquet



AMPUTATION

An amputated body part could cause arterial bleeding, which needs to be addressed quickly. Having items in your kit to deal with the severed body part is critical.

- 1 **Chemical cold packs**, which are placed in a **large freezer bag** with separately bagged, dressed body parts
- 2 **4x4 gauze pads** (above left) to dress the severed body part and to keep it dry and clean



These are the tools. *Learn how to use them.*

A complete course in first aid is a good idea for anyone who regularly pounds nails, climbs ladders, or works with power tools. There are many first-aid training organizations in North America. A few of the major players are listed here. Also, check with local fire, rescue, and ambulance services to find out about training in your area.

American Red Cross www.redcross.org
 Medic First Aid www.medicfirstaid.us
 Wilderness First Aid www.nols.edu
 Saint John Ambulance www.sja.ca