

# What do you buy as a new firefighter or EMT?

## Introduction

If you have too many items on your Batman belt, you might get made fun of by the other responders. That being said, it might be a good idea to carry a few things. You don't want to weigh yourself down with unnecessary equipment, but you also want to be prepared. There is a balance somewhere in the middle. Carrying one or two good items with you is probably better than none. Different roles will require different items.



## Firefighter / First Responder

Your department should issue you bunker gear consisting of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). The PPE you are issued will vary by your area, department, funding and all sorts of other factors. We do not make recommendations to that effect, other than to refer to the appropriate state and federal laws as well as the relevant NFPA standards. Pants, jacket, boots, nomex hood, helmet, gloves, SCBA face piece. You probably also should carry a radio, both for safety and so you can be given instructions..

Once you have your initial gear, it is time to think about what else will you need.

## **Flashlight**

If you are given a low quality light, you might want to purchase a better one. Your helmet light could be very important inside a structure or at night time. Do not skimp on your helmet light.

## **Rescue Tool**

Channellock makes some cool tools which act as a spanner wrench, cutting tools, pry bar, window breaker and natural gas wrench. The 87, 88 and 89 are good choices and are available here. While you can carry the 88 or 89 in your bunker gear pocket (at a slight angle), the 87 is designed to fit in there better. There is a holster available for the 88 and 89 to keep on a belt if you like. There are a lot of gimmicky firefighter rescue tools out there, but the Channellock tools are all metal and made in the USA. Good stuff.

It is nice to be able to cut the battery cables on a vehicle right away, turn off the natural gas valve while walking around doing a size-up and lending a quick hand to tighten or loosen a connector. There are lots of tools to do these sorts of things, but it is nice to be able to take care of some common tasks without having to walk back to the engine.

## **Multi-tool**

Many people like to carry a multi-tool just in case. It never hurts to have one. There will be all sorts of tools and equipment used on scene, but having something like a rescue tool in your pocket might come in handy. Fires are dirty and dangerous, leave your cell phone and car keys in the truck or at the station.

## Emergency Medical Technician

As a brand new EMT, you probably want to carry a bunch of stuff. Don't get too "Ricky Rescue" or you will get made fun of. It also sounds nice in theory to carry some things of your own involved in patient care, just remember that stuff gets gross and needs to be cleaned.

Some departments will give you clothing, others require you to buy your own. You may also want to buy better stuff than you are issued. A good pair of EMT pants is important along with a belt. A high visibility jacket is required when operating on a roadway in many cases. You also want boots that resist liquid. You probably don't want other peoples liquids (recreational activities excluded) to come in contact with your own, so make

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sure your primary clothing resists them. In most cases, you will have what you need in your jump kit/medical bag/trauma bag. That being said there are a few extras which you might find handy.

## **Extra Gloves**

Dealing with multiple patients? Tear your first pair? I don't think anyone would argue against keeping a bunch of spare gloves in your pocket.

## **Emesis Bag**

If you are going to spew, spew in this. You will feel pretty prepared when you rip one of these right out of your pocket right as the patient needs it.

## **Flashlight**

It is always a good idea to have a flashlight, and even a headlamp. Quality counts. Disposable pen lights are good to have as well so you don't blind your patient when checking their pupils.

## **Multi-tool**

A good multi-tool can always come in handy. Some of us would not go anywhere without one, much less into an emergency situation.

## **Sharpie Marker**

Sometimes you need to make a note, sometimes that note needs to be on a patient. You don't want it to wash off or be missed.

## **Pen and Paper**

Yes, we know you are probably carrying in a clipboard, but it is a good idea to have a little notepad just in case along with an extra pen.

## **Pocket Size Hand Sanitizer**

Even for people who are not fans of hand sanitizer, or think it's overuse is a public health issue, there are times when you will want to use some of the sweet stuff, liberally.

## **Trauma Shears**

You can buy cheap trauma shears and they will likely cut through a lot. Some of us prefer to carry a tool like the Leatherman Raptor which combines awesome trauma shears with a ring cutter, window glass breaker, 02 wrench all in a compact package with a cool holster. They are kind of a pain to clean, but they can easily cut through multiple layers of clothing at once. After using them, it would be hard to go back to the cheap kind.

## **Stethoscope**

Don't go crazy and buy some awesome cardiology \$500 stethoscope to start with. You probably don't want to buy the \$10 one either. Something like the Littman Lightweight II is a good compromise. Some of us don't like putting things in our ears that have been around the block too many times riding in the ambulance without proper cleaning. Carry your own. If you wear it around your neck on all calls to look cool you should be made fun of.

## **Conclusion**

There are all kinds of gear and products available to responders. Some are gimmicks and some could save your life. You need to balance many factors including the room you have on your person to carry things, the weight of the items and even the actual need for an item. You don't want to drag the entire kitchen sink with you, but there are some tools that are important and regularly used and it may be beneficial to carry them in addition to what you are provided.