Health and Safety Equipment

Every team should have a health and safety kit they carry with them on every investigation containing the following items:

- CPR pocket mask – Hopefully you’ll never need to use this item, but in case someone needs CPR, several team members should be certified to administer it.
- Disposable N95 respirator masks – These are inexpensive but you should always wear them in areas where there is mold, heavy dust, or evidence of animal excrement.
- Emergency blanket – These little mylar blankets may not look much, but if a team member is injured and goes into shock they are better than nothing.
- Polyvalent antibiotic cream – Apply to simple wounds or put on existing sores and scabs before an investigation, as well as new ones that show up during the investigation.
- Bandages – Adhesive bandages (all sizes), adhesive tape, nonadhesive pads (Telfa), and 4” x 4” sterile gauze pads are essential for wound care.
- Anesthetic spray or lotion like Bactine or Calamine – Use these for rashes and insect bites.
- 2”, 3”, and 4” Ace bandages – Use these for sprains or strains, as well as for wrapping gauze on to wounds or securing splints.
- Benadryl – Use this oral antihistamine for allergic reactions and itchy rashes.
- Exam gloves – Use for infection protection. They can also be made into ice packs if filled with water and frozen.
- Safety pins (large and small) – You need these for splints and ace bandages.
- Scissors – Use these to cut tape and bandages.
- Tweezers – Use for splinter, stinger, or tick removal.
- Trash bags – These are good for a variety of things, such as making ice packs or covering a large wound.
- Hand sanitizer – Use this often to protect against fungal, bacterial and viral infections.
- Carbon monoxide detector – Place these near furnaces and stoves to prevent accidental poisoning.
- Painter’s masking tape or caution tape – Use this to mark off dangerous areas.

More Diseases and Infections

- Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection usually caused from eating food or drinking water contaminated with urine from infected animals. It can also be contracted via the skin or mucous membranes (such as inside the nose) with water or soil that is contaminated with the urine from infected animals. Symptoms usually appear after a four to 10-day incubation period and include high fever, severe headache, chills, muscle aches, and vomiting. Additional symptoms may include jaundice, red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and rash. The symptoms may grow more severe if you don’t seek early medical treatment.
- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) is a virus contracted by breathing in dust that is contaminated with rodent urine or droppings, direct contact with rodents or their urine and droppings, or being bitten by a rodent. Dissemination of symptoms usually occurs eight to 13 days after exposure. Symptoms include fever, malaise, lack of appetite, muscle aches, headache, nausea, and vomiting. This infection is rarely fatal but can cause serious complications if not treated.
- Plague is an infectious disease of animals and humans caused by Yersinia pestis (Y. pestis/bacteria). The disease is uncommon and can be treated with antibiotics but it can be fatal. The symptoms include fever, headache, weakness, and a bloody or watery cough due to infection of the lungs (pneumonia). It spreads by being bitten by an infected flea or having direct contact with infected animal.
- Rat-Bite Fever is typically caused by a bite or scratch wound from an infected rodent, contact with a dead rodent, as well as eating or drinking food or water that is contaminated by rat feces. There are actually two types of Rat-Bite Fever known as RBF: streptobacillary RBF and spirillary RBF.
  - The streptobacillary RBF symptoms most often appear three to 10 days after exposure but sometimes can take 21 days. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, and rash. A maculopapular rash with red patches and small blumps may appear two to four days after the onset of the fever and joints may be swollen and painful.
  - The signs of spirillary RBF occur seven to 21 days after exposure and consist of fever (that may occur repeatedly), swelling near the wound, swollen lymph nodes, and rash. In most cases simple antibiotics can treat rat bite fever if treated early. Left untreated it can have deadly complications like endocarditis, myocarditis, or pericarditis, meningitis, pneumonia and abscesses in internal organs.
- Marline Typhus & Epidemic Typhus are both bacterial infections. Marline Typhus most often is related to some type of rodent exposure and is more prevalent in California and Texas during the summer and fall. However, it has been seen throughout most of the lower 48 states. A lice bite is most often the cause for Epidemic Typhus, and only a couple of cases are reported in the US each year. Symptoms for both include headache, fever, muscle pain, joint pain, nausea, and vomiting. About half of infected people will develop a discrete rash six days after the onset of signs, as well as neurological symptoms such as confusion, stupor, seizures, or imbalance.
  - Treatment for Marlin Typhus is antibiotics; however, a large number of cases in California have required hospitalization. Death from Marline Typhus is rare – about two to four percent without treatment.
  - Epidemic Typhus is treated with antibiotics. Close to 50 percent of the cases require hospitalization to stabilize the patient. The mortality rate is 10 to 60 percent if the patient seeks treatment early, the mortality rate is significantly lower.
- Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever a bacterium found in mice caught when mice feeding on mouse become affected. The disease is transmitted to humans when infected mice bites them. Many of the symptoms are flu-like and include fever, chills, weakness, and achy muscles. The most distinctive symptom is the rash that breaks out, usually beginning with a bump formed by the bite that eventually results in a black, crusty scab. The rash spreads over time, spanning the infected person’s entire body. Even untreated, rickettsialpox usually will resolve itself in two to three weeks. Treated, the symptoms often resolve within 72 hours.

Safety Tips for Paranormal Investigators

Paranormal investigators -- in particular “ghost hunters” -- often fail to recognize the dangers in front of them. The purpose of this handout is to educate investigators so they can remain safe in the field.

This pamphlet was created by Elaine Davison, a paranormal investigator under the guidance of a physician using information provided by doctors, health departments and the Center for Disease Control.
This does not cover every disease, infection or hazard investigators may encounter. It does provide some information on some of the most probable circumstances and tips to lessen the risk of illness and injury.

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General Guidelines for Staying Healthy

- People with a cold or otherwise comprised immune system should not investigate. Stay home and rest. The team and clients don’t want to get sick either.
- Drink plenty of water. Investigating can be intense, so your body will produce more cortisol in response to the stress. Cortisol is a stress hormone that causes increased heart rate and respiration, as well as weakening the immune system. When you do not drink enough water during a paranormal investigation, you may experience a "hangover" the day after the investigation due to this increase in cortisol. A good rule of thumb is to drink four to six ounces of water every hour of investigating. If you actually get thirsty while investigating, double this amount.
- Get your shots. - Getting a flu shot will reduce the likelihood of getting influenza or a cold. Even if you do contract the flu, studies show the influenza vaccine can lessen the severity and duration.
- Keep your OTP (diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus) shot up-to-date, as well. Whooping cough has reached the highest incident rates since the 1920s, and it can be very dangerous, particularly in people with weakened immune systems.
- Use a hand sanitizer with alcohol every hour.
- Rinse your mouth with a mouthwash every few hours before exposure and two hours after. Visit the World Health Organization’s website for more information. http://www.who.int/phe/em른/publications/risk_hand.on/index.html
- Mold – You can find mold everywhere – both indoors and outside – but it thrives most in damp environments. There are thousands of strains of mold, which are broken down into tens of thousands of sub classes. You can identify mold by its fuzzy appearance, which can be orange, green, black, brown, pink or purple. Most people do not experience any health effects from mold exposure. However, some molds can cause nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, throat irritation, and coughing or wheezing. People with mold allergies may have more severe reactions. Immune-compromised people and those with asthma may get serious infections in their lungs when they are exposed to mold. Sometimes, even seemingly healthy people come down with respiratory infections after mold exposure.
- Mildew – There are two main types of mildew. Downy mildew starts as yellow spots, and then the color changes to brown. Powdery mildew is whitish in color and looks like talcum powder. Inhalable mildew can cause coughing, headache, scratchy throat and lung problems. Mildew can also start growing in lungs and cause other serious issues.
- Carbon monoxide detector. Not all homes have them or place them where they are most needed. Place detectors near any stoves or furnaces. CO emissions can sometimes rise quickly. When you are investigating, you need something to warn you there is a colorless, odorless gas about.

Environmental Dangers

- People dangers – While many clients are of sound mind, others may be schizophrenic or have some other mental disorder. Living people can be more terrifying than any spirit you encounter. Despite some skeptics believing all paranormal investigators are mentally ill, it is not the case. However, there are a small percentage of people who are mentally ill and seek refuge in the paranormal community. They may also contact teams to validate themselves. Some of these people may suffer from histrionic personality disorder (HPD), a group of mental illnesses where the individual needs to draw attention to him/herself. People with HPD often behave in overly emotional and dramatic ways to gain attention. Munchausen Syndrome falls into this classification of illness. Often people with these issues are only a danger to themselves. However, if a person with HPD doesn’t receive the attention he or she desires, he/she may engage in behaviors that put other investigators in danger in order to play the part of a hero to gain the craved attention.
- Mice and rats – These little creatures are known to spread more than 35 different diseases throughout the world. Only a few are known to exist in the United States, but several of these diseases can be life threatening. Illnesses associated with mice and rats include hantaplasmosis, hantavirus, pulmonary syndrome, leptospirosis, lymphocytic chorio-meningitis (LDM), plague, rat bite fever, murine typhus, and rickettsiosis.
- Spiders – There are over 3,500 types of spiders. Only two types have the potential to inflict a single fatal bite: Latrodectus (a.k.a. the widows; black, brown, and red) and Loxosceles (brown recluse). The bites from the Tegenaria (hobo spider) are not known to be fatal to humans, but substantial envenomation can cause prolonged systemic effects that can lead to death if untreated. Most spiders are venomous; however, except for those listed above they generally only cause a mild irritation. Multiple bites from any spider, on the other hand, can cause a variety of health issues.

- Snakes – More than eight thousand people in the United States are bitten by venomous snakes each year. On average, only five die from the bite because most seek out immediate medical care. The venomous snakes indigenous to the US are rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. Even non-venomous snakes can cause a reaction if the person bitten is allergic to the snake’s bite.

Electrical Hazards

- Electrical hazards – Every year, hundreds of people are killed in homes by electrocution. If there is a low-hanging wire, test it with a voltmeter or multimeter before touching. Assume all wires are live until proven otherwise. Metal is an excellent electrical conductor; so be careful around vents and pipes, as well. If a wire is touching them, they are likely to carry a charge that can hurt you.
- Electronic static fields – Laptop bags differ, so investigate the field on the safe side for EMF exposure. Some agencies even believe there is no danger from EMF fields; however, other agencies disagree and cite problems associated with EMF that include mental and physical health issues. Safe levels of EMF are hotly debated in the scientific field; so it’s best to err on the side of caution. Some studies show exposure to levels of over 1 mG for more than an hour may cause digestive tract issues. These studies concluded that if you are entering an area with potentially high EMF, you should limit food intake for four hours before exposure and two hours after. Visit the World Health Organization’s website for more information. http://www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/risk_hand.on/index.html

Mental Health

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