



# **USPHS SciPAC**

## **Deployment Packing Guide**



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## **Packing for USPHS Deployment: General Guidelines**

- **Make your own deployment checklist!**

- There are many deployment checklists out there. However, it is advised to make your own, as you know what is necessary to be comfortable and safe. Having your own checklist will prevent you from forgetting things and overpacking.
- Below is a link to the official USPHS Deployment Information and Master Checklist. Although it is a good place to start, do not expect to be able to bring everything from the list. <[https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/RedDOG/Forms/Deployment\\_Checklist\\_March2016.pdf](https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/RedDOG/Forms/Deployment_Checklist_March2016.pdf)>
- Keep your checklist with the deployment gear you don't use every day, preferably packed and ready.
- Never bring anything you do not want to lose (i.e., expensive electronics or jewelry).
- Update your list when you return from deployment. What didn't you use? What do you wish you had? What could you have lived without?
- Seek advice from other Officers who have deployed when making your packing checklist.
  - Contact other officers on your team, your ICS Section Chief, command staff, or team commander.
  - Need additional assistance making your own checklist? Contact the co-leads for the Readiness Resources workgroup. LCDR Jon Burgos<Jonathan.Burgos@fda.hhs.gov> or LT Andrew Brown <Andrew.Brown1@fda.hhs.gov>
  - For questions about what to pack for a specific deployment, email Readiness and Deployment Branch, Commissioned Corps at PHSDeployment@hhs.gov.

- **Overpacking**

- With all the variability and unknown factors around deployments, it is very easy to overpack.
- Pick up your checked bag and step on your home scale, subtract your body weight. Checked bags should weigh 70 pounds/32 kg or less.
- You might have to carry your bag up multiple flights of stairs or distances not associated with normal travel. When you have completed your packing, ensure you can comfortably carry your bag/s without them touching the ground (including wheels). If not, reassess the items in your bag/s.
- Learn to expand your comfort zone, you don't need to be perfectly comfortable in all situations. You just need to be comfortable enough. Bring one item to make you feel at ease if you are feeling challenged or missing home (e.g., favorite pillow, family portrait, favorite snack, etc.).

- **Deployment bags**

- Ideally, everything you pack should fit into one large checked bag and a go-bag (e.g., carry-on sized backpack). You will likely fill whatever size bag you purchase, so it is suggested to not purchase the largest bag you can find.
- You should be able to live out of your go-bag for up to 48 hours so it should include uniform, hygiene gear, some food, and water.
- All bags should be conservative in appearance. Black, navy blue, and olive drab are preferred and if it has a logo, ensure it is discreet.
- Place an identifier on the outside of your checked bag (e.g., name tape, colored handkerchief, etc.). Also, include your name and contact information inside your bag(s).
- You should be able to carry your checked bag without rolling it along the ground on wheels. If it has wheels, it is recommended that the bag also have backpack straps or a shoulder strap. You might have to carry your gear on a gravel road or uneven terrain where the wheels won't work or may break.
- Use a trash compactor bag or heavy-duty garbage bag to line the inside of your checked bag. This type of lining will prevent your gear from getting wet during rainy weather, especially if your luggage gets left outside on the tarmac or in a truck during a rainstorm.
- Consider using stuff sacks or packing cubes to keep your gear organized.
- If possible, take a photo of the contents of your bag and a photo of the bag itself at the airport before check-in. This might be useful if the bag is lost.
- For COVID-19 deployments, ensure to allow enough space for any necessary PPE, disinfectant wipes, and hand sanitizer.

- **Uniform Items**

- If you travel in civilian clothing, one uniform should be packed in your go-bag in case you are separated from your checked bag.
  - Instructions on whether to travel in uniform will likely be received prior to your departure. If you travel in civilian attire and space is limited, it is advised to wear the uniform boots.
- Generally, ODUs are the uniform of the day for deployment. If this is not the case, someone (RDB, Deployment Team leadership, or ICS Section Chief) will inform you prior to deploying.
- It is recommended to pack 1-3 sets of ODUs, and 6-8 sets of under garments (PHS T-shirt, underwear/shorts, and socks). Although two sets of ODUs and seven sets of under garments is recommended, feel free to bring more if you are deploying for an extended period.

- **Hygiene Gear**

- You will typically have access to showers. However, availability and type of showers varies and could include a private bathroom in a hotel, communal bathrooms and/or showers, an emergency shower trailer, or no showers for several days at a time.
- Bring flip-flops/shower shoes. In the event that only communal showers are available, and privacy is an issue, it is recommended to pack a swimsuit.
- If you don't have access to a shower, 5-10 wet wipes can provide you with adequate hygiene.

- **Laundry**

- Bring a plastic bag with 2-4 uses worth of laundry soap. You can pack your preferred soap, but powder is recommended.
- You will generally have access to some type of laundry facility, whether it is a laundromat, hotel washing machine/dryer shared among many officers, military/commercial laundry facilities, or hand washing your clothes in a sink.
- For military or commercial laundry, your clothes will be washed with other Officer's clothes. It is recommended to pack a sturdy mesh bag, with your name in permanent ink, as your clothes will be washed and dried inside this bag. Make sure it is tied closed using a knot when you turn it in to be washed.
- To ensure your clothes are not lost or accidentally taken by another Officer, discreetly mark your clothes with your name in permanent ink.

- **Sleeping**

- Sleeping arrangements can vary, depending on the type of deployment. You might sleep on the floor or cot in a shelter without climate control with hundreds of other people (not necessarily other PHS officers), small room with other officers, a hotel room with a roommate, or in your own hotel room.
- Conditions might not be ideal for sleeping (i.e., people snoring, lights that don't shut off, people working around the clock), so it is recommended to pack ear plugs and a sleep mask.
- You should bring a light sleeping bag, sleep sack, or blanket and sleeping pad.
  - Consider investing in an inflatable sleeping pad, as it will be lighter and less bulky.
  - Test out your sleep system at home by sleeping on a hard floor, deployment is not the time to find out you can't sleep on your sleeping pad. If you can sleep on the floor without a pad you do not need to pack one.

- **Non-Uniform Clothing**

- Sometimes you might travel in civilian clothing, go out to eat, or relax after your scheduled shift. Therefore, it is recommended to pack 2-3 sets of comfortable and modest civilian clothing.

- It is suggested to pack 2-3 sets of physical training clothes, including running shoes. These clothes can double as civilian clothing.
- Non-uniform items can be packed into your checked bag.
- **Documentation**
  - Always bring your CAC, driver's license, and passport packed in your go-bag or kept on your person.
  - Be aware of when your passport, CAC, and driver's license need to be renewed to ensure they do not expire during your on-call month.
  - Consider bringing cash in case you are not able to use credit cards or access an ATM.
- **Electronics**
  - You may not have access to reliable electricity everywhere you go, a portable charger will allow you to charge your cell phone. If cell phone service is nonexistent or spotty, placing your phone in airplane mode will conserve your battery for when you need it.
  - A building or even a city street can be dangerous to navigate if you can't see due to blackouts, a flashlight or headlamp should be in your go bag.
  - If you need a laptop to do deployment work, one should be issued to you. Alternatively, pack your work laptop (with PIV card) to answer the occasional agency email.
  - It is nice to have ear buds to listen to music or play white noise if you are in crowded sleeping conditions.
- **Settling In**
  - Try to maintain a small footprint. When in a community space, don't use more space than you need. Don't bring tables, chairs, lamps, etc. from community areas to your personal sleeping area.
  - When you leave for your shift make sure your bag is packed, even if you are in a hotel room.
    - In community living arrangements a packed bag will not protect you from theft but will discourage it or reduce the likelihood of your items from getting lost. It also presents military "smartness."
    - You never know when you will need to leave in a hurry or someone else will have to grab your gear.
    - Do not rely on hotel safes, keep valuables with you at all times in your go-bag.

## **USPHS Deployment in Extreme Weather Conditions**

- During deployment you might be doing everything from office work in a climate-controlled building to lifting heavy boxes in the blistering sun, pouring rain, or freezing snow. Look ahead at the weather and think about what uniform items you would wear if you had to be outside for an extended period.
- If you deploy to a hot or rainy weather environment, you may consider:
  - Wicking/hot weather boot socks, extra pairs of socks, and/or foot powder. If your feet are wet either from sweat or rain dry them out when possible. It is important to keep your feet and boots dry, as this will reduce the chance of foot problems (blisters, trench foot, etc.).
  - One thing to consider when purchasing black combat boots is ventilation. Some boots have small ventilation holes or screens on the inside and/or outside of the boot.
  - Consider bringing a lightweight sleeping bag, travel sack, or sheet. It will allow you to cover up even in hot environments.
  - The “Parka, Foul Weather, Type II” (minus the liner) is the only authorized rain jacket for ODUs.
  - In a deployment situation, the “Hat, Sun, Blue (Boonie)” may be worn at the discretion of the OIC (Officer in Charge) or LUA (Local Uniform Authority).
  - Remember you are allowed to uncover and remove the ODU blouse when performing labor, use this to stay cool while working.
  - Sunscreen, insect repellent, and sunglasses (conservative sunglasses are permitted, except indoors).
- If you deploy to a cold weather environment, you may consider packing:
  - Parka, Foul Weather, Type II.
    - Interestingly, the parka jacket/liner combination is not as warm as you would think.
  - ODU Utility Jacket.
  - Liner to the ODU or Polar Fleece.
  - Gloves, Black (leather) and glove liners.
  - Watch cap (black knitted cap) or Earmuffs. Both must be worn with proper outerwear.
  - Ensure you have the slide on embroidered rank for the Parka, ODU Utility Jacket, and/or the Polar Fleece Liner.
  - Make sure any compression or long underwear shirts and/or pants you wear under your ODUs are not visible.
  - To keep your feet warm, thicker wool boot socks and/or sock liners (dress socks work well for this) are recommended.

## USPHS International Deployment

- **Uniforms**

- Corps Officers are generally not permitted to wear the uniform outside the United States unless assigned to another Uniformed Service. However, the SG may authorize Officers to wear the Corps uniform outside the United States under certain circumstances. (CCI 412.01, dated 1 MAY 2018)
- An international deployment would likely fall under these circumstances and RDB will provide you with instructions regarding the prescribed uniform.

- **Before You Go**

- You should prepare to deploy for a longer duration than normal domestic deployments.
- Familiarize yourself with the weather, culture, and political climate of the deployment destination. <<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>>
- Confirm whether power adapters will be necessary and ensure you have the adaptors needed to power the devices you plan to bring.
- Cell phones will likely not have service, but Wi-Fi maybe available. Additionally, you may be able to purchase calling cards or a sim card for your phone in country.
- Confirm you have the appropriate and adequate amount of currency.
- Contact cell phone and insurance companies, as they might be able to provide you with a credit on your account(s) depending on the length of the deployment.

- **Orders**

- If travel orders are issued by RDB, print three copies. Place one copy in a water-proof bag and always carry this copy with you. Leave the other two copies in your suitcase.
- Take a picture of your orders or save a scanned copy in your cell phone.

- **Passport**

- RDB should provide instructions if you will need a government passport and acquisition of any necessary visas will be facilitated by PHS leadership.
- Make sure you always have a current US passport, keep your information up to date in RDB self-service, and renew your passport well before the expiration date.

- **Medical**

- Bring >30 days' worth of your prescription medications, consider bringing more if you will be out for more than 30 days.
- RDB will provide instructions about the necessary medications/vaccinations.
  - To get an idea for what you may need consult the CDC travel page (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>) or the TRICARE immunization clinic for foreign travel (<<https://www.tricare.mil/immunizations>>). You might have to plan accordingly since some vaccinations require multiple doses.

## **USPHS Deployment for National Special Security Events (NSSEs)**

- **Accommodations and Food**

- Planned events are normally associated with hotels. However, if you are local to the area where the event is held, you might be provided a hotel for only part of the deployment or not at all. This may require you to use a POV to get to and from your appointed place of duty. It is still possible you may have to stay in a shelter like environment, so pack a sleeping bag, sleeping pad, and small pillow, etc. (you will be notified by your Officer-In-Charge [OIC] if this is needed).
- Food will likely not be provided, and you may need to eat out often, but you will likely have easy access to food. However, depending on your work schedule and if the event attracts a crowd local food options while readily available may be time consuming, bring snacks.

- **Schedule**

- NSSEs are normally shorter in duration (e.g., 4th July, SOTU), but some may be a little longer (Olympics UN meetings, Nuclear Summit). Unlike a natural disaster, the start and return dates are scheduled in advance and your shift and schedule are more predictable.

- **Uniform**

- Ultimate guidance with specifics for each event should come from deployment authority/team leader. For example, depending on your role, some officers deploying in support of SOTU who are posted on the floor of the Capitol Building may be required to wear Khakis/SDBs while most officers will wear ODUs. The key is to familiarize yourself with your assigned role, which will likely determine which uniforms to use.
- Uniform requirements may change with weather projections and the Hazard Exposure Risk Assessment (HERA)/Health and Safety Plan (HASP).
- If possible, Officers should try to obtain more information about where and when to report and the deployment role to be better prepared.
- Depending on the time of year, weather can be much colder. Ensure you have the proper outer wear for your uniform to stay warm.