

# 3 DAYS IN



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## INTRODUCTION

When you think about what is most important to you, what comes to mind? Your family? The home you have worked so hard to build? Many people, as they go about caring for their family and building their homes, forget the simple truth that in one moment, everything can change.

Many people don't like to think about situations that could potentially harm their family or disrupt their lives. While considering the consequences of hurricanes, earthquakes, famine, epidemics, war and civil unrest are certainly unpleasant, it is important not to ignore such possibilities but to instead plan for them.

It's not about living in fear. In fact, being prepared for such eventualities can bring about a sense of peace because you will know that, should disaster strike, you have done all that you can to be ready.



## *Change in an Instant*

Some are caught unaware by a sudden disaster or situation that immediately causes them to be in survival mode. Like a flash of lightning, the whole world changes in the blink of an eye.

In such situations, if you have not prepared ahead of time, it can be too late.

If your life were to change in an instant would you be prepared?



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Grocery stores only keep about two to three day's worth of items on their shelves. When everyone is clamoring for the same emergency items at the same time, there is a good chance that you won't get what you need. The items that will sell out first are the ones that people know will help them get through a time of crisis.

## *Sudden Disasters*

Sudden disasters happen every day, and there is usually very little that can be done to prevent them. Catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods and tornadoes can wreak havoc on your ability to get the things that you need.

You may be left without access to water, electricity and emergency aid for days or even weeks at a time.

Your first line of defense when it comes to surviving a sudden disaster is preparing ahead of time.

## *Not All Are Sudden*

While many are caught without the things that they need when a sudden disaster strikes, there is a situation that is even sadder: When people are left unprepared after a not-so-sudden disaster or situation occurs.

Sometimes, there is plenty of warning that a disaster or situation that could cause supplies to become scarce is imminent. Still, some fail to prepare. Perhaps they think that it won't really happen or that they still have time. Whatever causes such procrastination can become problematic very quickly.

If you know that a hurricane is on the way or if there has been talk of possible civil unrest or warnings about any other situation, be sure that you have all of the items that you will need to get through the time of chaos that may follow.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that the government or rescue organizations are going to swoop in during a time of trouble and take care of you and your family. There have been many instances when such aid was simply unavailable or took weeks to reach those who desperately needed it.

Instead, consider the possibilities and do what you can to prepare. Remember, YOU are the first point of help for yourself and your family. If you wait until disaster strikes to try and gather the items that you need it might be too late. You'll be forced to fight the crowd for what little supplies are available on the shelves of the grocery store. The most essential items will sell out quickly, leaving your family without the basics that they need.

Prepare today. It's not about fear. It's about being ready to face disasters and have the best chance for survival.



Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

## GETTING STARTED

Many people know that they should prepare for various disasters, but they don't know where to begin, so they do nothing. One of the most important parts of survival is psychology. Improving the way you approach a survival situation, and changing the way you think about your surroundings, is an important part of the process.



For many, changing their thinking is the first step that is needed. Studies show that people who survive in difficult situations have certain traits that non-survivors do not. The good news is that most of these traits can be learned. One study found that during a crisis, 10% of people fell into a category of being a leader. They just seem to know what to do, and were able to handle the situation without becoming overly emotional or hysterical. The largest group of people, 80%, was left in disbelief

at the situation. They were unsure what to do next and just sort of wandered around waiting for direction. The final 10% were those that went off of the deep end, and were completely unable to deal with the situation.

Obviously, the ideal group to be in is the leadership group. People that fall into this category are the most likely to survive. Do you need to be a natural born leader to be in this category? No. You just need to be able to keep your own fear and emotions in check and have an idea of what to do in a survival situation.

The more preparations that you make for a variety of situations, the less overwhelmed you will feel when something happens.

### *Start Small*

The problem that many people face when it comes to emergency preparedness and survival planning is that they do not know where to start. Others cite financial reasons for not being able to start building a stockpile of the items that they would need during an emergency.

While it would be great to be able to order every single thing that you would need all at once, very few people are in a position that allows that. Instead, start small. In fact, there are some steps that you can take that won't cost anything at all.

The 37 things that will sell out during a crisis will be discussed in the next chapter. First, here are some small steps that you can take to get started in your emergency preparedness planning.

One of the most important things that many forget during a time of crisis is important paperwork. Should you need to leave your home, you will need to bring these papers along with you. Below is a list of some such important papers.

- Birth certificate
- Insurance policies
- Passport
- Social security cards
- Medical record/copies of prescriptions
- Pet medical records
- Bank account information
- Deeds and titles to homes and cars
- Computer backup: This should be in the form of two memory sticks. One can be kept with you and the other should be kept in a secondary location.



Gather these documents and put them into a suitable container. Some use a safe, but remember that you need to be able to grab these items and go. For that reason, an ammunition case is a better choice. It is portable, yet still offers the needed protection for the documents.

Another step that you can take without spending a lot of money is assembling a short-term sustainability pack. This is a group of items that are packed and ready to go should you need to flee your home for a few days, such as to evacuate ahead of a fire or hurricane.

Below are some items to include in your pack.

- Toilet paper
- Cleansing wipes (great item to have when a bath or shower is not available)
- Cash (small bills and change is best)
- Whistle
- Tactical flashlight
- Batteries
- Hand crank emergency radio
- Multi-tool
- Compass
- Parachute cord (useful in building shelters)
- Duct tape
- Fishing lines and lures
- Saw
- Knife

- Folding shovel
- Ponchos
- Canteen
- Knit cap
- Small first aid kit
- Glow sticks
- Matches
- Medications
- Pet supply items
- Special items needed for elderly or babies
- Comfort items such as games, toys and books



Many of the items that you may want to include in your short-term sustainability pack may be things that you already have around your home, so completing your kit will not require much of an investment.

You should keep the pack where it is ready to go on a moment's notice. Many keep their packs in the trunk of their car. Keeping an extra one at the office is also a good idea.

See? Without spending hardly a dime you were able to check off two important items on your emergency to-do list.

Now it is time to start assembling the food and non-food items that you will need. Again, starting small is the key. You don't need to buy everything all at once. Instead, buy one or two extra items each time you go to the store. Before you know it, you will have built an impressive stockpile. The key is to **START NOW**.

## ***Building a Stockpile on a Budget***

One of the main reasons that many put off starting a stockpile is money. Already on a tight budget, some feel there is just no way to buy extra items to add to their stockpile. Keep in mind the advice from the section above: start small. Understand that it is much easier and less expensive to start building your stockpile than you might think. Below are a few tips for starting a stockpile on a tight budget.

### ***Coupons***

Watch your Sunday and online coupons for items that would work well in your stockpile. Clip those coupons and then try to match them up with sales at your local grocery store. With a bit of research, you will be able to find items that are free or nearly free that will make great additions to your stockpile.



Also, use coupons for your regular weekly grocery shopping. The more money that you can trim from your weekly grocery bill is a bit more that you can spend developing your stockpile.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*During a time of crisis or when a crisis is imminent, the cost of food is very likely to go up. That is another reason that you should focus on building your stockpile now. It will save you from having to pay extra high prices during a crisis IF you can even find the needed items in stock.*

## ***Gardening/Canning***

This is one of the least expensive ways to add to your stockpile. Grow your own vegetables and then set some aside to can and add to your stockpile. At planting time, plant enough to enjoy now with plenty of extra for canning. The more vegetables that you can, the less you'll have to buy for your stockpile.

## ***A Couple Extra***

When you do your grocery shopping, just buy one or two stockpile items per trip. Yes, it will add to your weekly grocery bill but, for most people, the cost of an extra can or two won't make that much difference.

If you do this every time you go to the grocery store, you'll soon have a nice selection of items that will make a great addition to your stockpile.

## ***Food Banks/Churches***

If you have absolutely no money to dedicate to starting a food storage, you may be able to get the top three crucial items, such as canned vegetables, from your local food bank and from local churches that have a food pantry program.

## ***Start Now***

Again, it cannot be stressed enough that the time to start collecting the items that you will need during an emergency is NOW. If you have ever tried to buy a gallon of milk, a loaf of bread or a bag of ice ahead of a storm then you already know how quickly stores sell out of the most popular items.

Imagine now if a disaster were to occur. Imagine the panic and the rush to clear the shelves of any items that may be helpful during the crisis. Also, as mentioned above, factor in the price gauging that, although it's illegal, takes place during many crisis situations.

If you are serious about keeping the safety and security of your family, you must START NOW. Don't wait until it is too late and you have to fight for what few items remain on the shelf. Take steps today to make sure your family will be taken care of during an emergency.

## 37 FOOD ITEMS YOU NEED IN A CRISIS

### *Short and Long Term Crises*

Some crisis situations will last a few days. Others can go on for months and years. While some aid may be available after a week or two during a longer crisis, you cannot count on this. Instead, you must understand that even though you are used to the grocery store shelves being full, that this is not something that is guaranteed to always be the case.

You need to make provisions for both short term and long term crisis situations, so that you don't have to worry about how quickly aid will be available. Unfortunately, there will be times when aid will be very slow in arriving to you – if it ever comes at all.

### *Why These Items?*

As you look over the list, you might be surprised by some of the items that are included on the list. These items were chosen for several reasons including:

### *Why These Items?*

As you look over the list, you might be surprised by some of the items that are included on the list. These items were chosen for several reasons including:

- **Quick to Sell Out:** The main reason for this guide was to inform you about which items will sell out first after a crisis. The items on the list below are those that will sell out first, however, as you can see in the resource link titled “What Your Grocery Store Will Look Like After an Emergency”; it doesn't take very long for grocery store shelves to be *completely* empty.



**Shelf Life:** Another consideration is the shelf life of the items. When planning for an emergency, you must consider crisis situations that could last a few days and those that could last far longer. To be truly prepared, you will need to include items that have a long shelf life.

**Nutrition:** During a crisis situation, it is extremely important that you get the proper nutrition. There is a good chance that you will be more active than normal. Additionally, you may have limited access to medical care, so maintaining good health is very important.

**Ease of Storage:** Items that require refrigeration are not a good choice for obvious reasons. Instead, you want to select items that will do well on a shelf or even in the back of a car.

**Comfort Items:** In addition to items that you need, such as meats, grains and vegetables, you will note that some items on the list, such as snack cakes and popcorn, are comfort items. Such items can act as stress relievers during times of crisis. They can add a sense of normalcy, which can go a long way in maintaining the psychological health of you and your family.

**Ease of Preparation:** Finally, most of the items on the list are very easy to prepare. During a crisis situation, you may not have access to your regular stove and oven, so it is important that the items are able to be prepared either with no cooking or on a simple stove or even over an open fire.

The food that your wife buys may be nutritious, delicious and nearly perfect. The problem is that the food coming into your home on a regular basis might be mostly perishable items. You need to store food items with a longer shelflife.

## List of 37 Items

When a hurricane or storm is coming, what items do you usually see people grabbing at the grocery store? As mentioned above, many people want bread, milk and bags of rice. These items, however, are not always the best items to keep on hand during a crisis. Sure, it's a good idea to have some of these everyday staples on hand in case you can't make it to the store for a day or two, but should a real disaster strike, such items will often become useless very quickly, especially following a loss of power.

Of course, a storm warning isn't technically a crisis yet. Many people just blindly grab what



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*A disaster does not have to directly affect your area in order to have an impact on your ability to buy the items that you need. For example, a terrorist attack that targets our nation's food supply can cripple the supply chain of the entire country.*

they see others grabbing or think of the items that they will want to have on hand for the next few days. Many do not think much past that. When an actual crisis hits, however, things change very quickly. People begin to realize that milk and bread is not going to be enough to sustain them. As the reality of the situation sinks in, people will then try to stock up on items that will make more sense during a crisis.

It will be these 37 items that will sell out during a crisis. Some will sell out within the first few hours; others will sell out in the first few days. By preparing ahead of time, however, you will not have to navigate through potentially hazardous road situations, fight large crowds for a few items and then possibly overpay for the few items that are left on the shelves.

These 37 items should be part of your stockpile, so when disaster strikes, you'll be ready. Not only will these items be among the first to sell out, but they are easy to store and make sense during times when you have limited power and cooking resources.



# FEMA

The Federal Emergency  
Management Agency  
(FEMA) suggests having enough  
food and water on hand to last for  
**two weeks.**

1. **Water:** Bottled water is obviously one of the first things that will sell out after a crisis. While some of the items on this list are not absolute necessities, water is something that is essential to survival. Water is one of the first items that will sell out after a crisis, so you want to keep water on hand. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suggests having enough food and water on hand to last for two weeks. Water, however, is something that you will absolutely need. If the crisis lasts two weeks, you'll need two week's worth of water. If the crisis lasts two months, you'll need two months' worth of water. Storing enough water for a long term crisis can be difficult. For that reason it is important to have plans in place that



allow you to collect water. As part of your emergency preparedness, you should consider rainwater and underground water collection systems. You should also purchase very high quality water filters. Making such plans could truly mean the difference between life and death should circumstances make it impossible to get drinkable water any other way.

2. **Pasta:** Pasta is filling, nutritious and has a long shelf life. It is easy to store and, if needed, can be taken with you should you need to leave your home. Another plus is that pasta is fairly inexpensive, so it is an item that is easy to add to your storage even if you are on a tight budget.
3. **Rice:** This grain, a staple of any good emergency food storage, has a variety of cooking uses, and steaming rice can be done on virtually any type of stove. Uncooked rice has a very long shelf-life when properly stored.
4. **Canned soups:** Canned soups taste good, can be prepared on any type of stove and have a long shelf life. It is easy to store a variety of flavors and many of the soups are filling and provide a good amount of nutrition.
5. **Canned meats:** While canned meat might not be your first choice, it is a great option when you want to store meat for the long term. Canned roast beef, ham and chicken can be heated on any type of stove and then used in a variety of filling and nutritious dishes.



6. **Canned veggies:** You can purchase canned veggies or can your own. Either way, these are a staple in any good food storage. You need the nutrition that vegetables provide, yet getting fresh vegetables can be very difficult during a time of crisis. Remember, if you do not have a garden, now is a good time to start one. This will provide you with items that you will be able to use in canning and will also provide a renewable source of food.
7. **Canned fruit:** Coming by fresh fruits may be nearly impossible during certain types of crisis situations. Something as simple as a truck driver's strike could make it difficult to get fresh fruit in many parts of the country. Canned fruit has a good shelf life, is easy to store and requires no preparation.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*All manner of canned goods will be among the first items to sell out during a crisis. For that reason, you should stock up on all types of canned goods as you build your stockpile. Canned goods are relatively inexpensive, very easy to store and have a great shelf life.*

8. **Popcorn:** Popcorn is a food that will sell out quickly during a crisis for a number of reasons. It is a tasty treat that is not only healthy, but is a comfort food for kids. Because it has a long shelf life and is very easy to store and prepare, it makes sense to include a supply of popcorn in your food storage.
9. **Salt:** Salt has an extremely long shelf life, is very easy to store and is an important part of baking and cooking most meals. Salt has other uses besides being a delicious addition to many foods. It can also increase the shelf life of vegetables and can be used to clean up spills without the need to use potentially harmful chemicals.
10. **Milk (condensed or powdered):** Milk is a staple in cooking and baking and you'll need it if you have cereal in your storage. Of course, you will not be able to keep a supply of fresh milk on hand, but condensed and powdered milk both store easily, have a long shelf life (powdered milk has a longer shelf life than condensed milk) and can be used for cooking, baking and drinking.
11. **Cereal:** Cereal is easy to prepare, has a fairly long shelf life and is a quick and easy meal that your kids will eat without a fuss. You will want to choose nutritious cereals rather than those that are heavy on the sugar.
12. **Beef jerky:** Beef jerky has an extremely long shelf life, is easy to store and carry, and tastes delicious. You can buy beef jerky or you can learn to make your own. This is one of the most survival-friendly foods around. For a healthier version, you can substitute turkey for beef.

13. **Grains:** A variety of grains are an important part of any food storage. Barrels of wheat from ancient Greece were found that were still good. Of course, proper storage is key, but grains in general have a very long shelf life. They are very nutritious and can be used in baking, made into cereals and used in a variety of other ways. Shortly after a crisis, or anytime a potential crisis is looming, sellers of whole grains often sell out and/or the prices shoot up. Buy now before the rush is on.



14. **Cooking oil:** Cooking oil is necessary in cooking and you'll need it if you are cooking over an open flame to avoid scorching your food.
15. **Sports drinks:** Sports drinks are a great source of energy. If you are working outside, especially in the heat, your body loses electrolytes which can be replaced with sport's drinks.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*Even if you do not typically spend time outside now, that could change during a crisis. For that reason, stocking up on sport's drinks is a good idea.*

16. **Nuts:** Many nuts have a long shelf life and are a comfort food item as well as being nutritious. You can also use nuts along with grains and dried fruits to make a delicious trail mix.
17. **Pickles:** Pickled cucumbers are probably the first thing that comes to mind, but you can pickle just about anything including meat, vegetables and eggs. You can certainly buy pickled items at the grocery store, but it is also very easy to do it yourself. Experiment with different spices so that you can have a variety of flavors in your stockpile.
18. **Dried fruits:** Dried fruits have a long shelf life, are easy to store and they taste great. Dried fruits can be used in creating trail mixes and other snacks and are great on cereals as well.
19. **Spices:** Spices can help turn your emergency meals from bland to delicious. Spices typically store well and have a long shelf life. In addition to adding some flavor to your meals, some spices can help to keep your family healthy. For example, including some garlic in your diet each day can boost your immune system. Staying healthy during a

crisis is more important than ever, because getting medicine or seeing a doctor may be more difficult.

- 20. **Honey:** Honey never goes bad if properly stored. It can be used in baking and in sweetening cereals.
- 21. **Crackers:** Crackers are a great snack, store well and many types have a very long shelf life. Choose whole grain crackers whenever possible.



### IMPORTANT NOTE:

*Foods that are very simple to store and each, such as crackers, are going to sell out very quickly after a crisis. Remember, as mentioned above, stores only keep a couple of days supply of most items. That is why stocking up on these items well before a crisis is looming is so important.*

- 22. **Baking essentials:** Baking essentials, including flour, sugar, baking soda and baking powder, will sell out quickly after a crisis. These items are vital for preparing the basic foods, such as breads. When people realize there is a crisis, they will know that these basic staples will soon be hard to find and will quickly empty the shelves.
- 23. **Power Bars:** Many types of power bars have a long shelf and make a good, nutritious snack. It is best to avoid bars that are chocolate covered. These will not store well and, obviously, the chocolate will melt quickly in the heat.
- 24. **Instant rice:** While you should store regular rice, a supply of instant rice can be quite convenient. With a little boiling water and three to five minutes of time, your rice will be ready.
- 25. **Coffee:** Not only will coffee sell out quickly after a crisis but, since it is not considered essential by many, restocking it will not be a priority. If you are a coffee addict – or just enjoy a cup with breakfast – keep a supply on hand.
- 26. **Alcohol:** Many are surprised to see alcohol in the list, but you should include alcohol in your food storage even if you don't drink. Jack Daniels is a great choice. In addition to being a bit of a stress reliever, it can also be used for medicinal purposes, such as cauterizing wounds and relieving pain. It is also a wonderful bartering item.



“. . . stores only keep a couple of days supply of most items.”

27. **Hard candies:** Hard candies have a good shelf life, are easy to store and can provide a quick burst of energy. They are also a nice treat to keep in your storage. Hard candy can easily be brought with you should you need to evacuate.
28. **Dehydrated canned entrees:** Dehydrated canned entrees are a good addition to your food storage, but should not make up the majority of your food storage. These are meals that have an extremely long shelf life and all you need to prepare them is some hot water.
29. **Juice powders:** Some juice powders contain vitamin C. Mix with water and you'll have a healthy and delicious drink.
30. **Protein drinks:** If you can't get a full meal, a protein drink can provide you with the nutrition that you need to get by. These drink mixes usually have a very long shelf life and come in a variety of flavors.
31. **Peanut butter:** Peanut butter is cheap, easy to store, has a long shelf life, is nutritious and filling and – and important bonus – most kids love it!
32. **Long lasting treats (Twinkies, Pop Tarts etc...):** Some snack foods have a long shelf life. While the myth that Twinkies will last for years is just that, a myth, they do last longer than most baked goods. Other snacks, such as Pop Tarts have a shelf life of several months or even a couple of years. While these items are not necessary to survival, including comfort items in your food storage is important. And, yes, such comfort items will sell out quickly after a crisis.
33. **Salsa:** Salsa is a great food storage addition because it has a long shelf life, and it is a nutritious food made from vegetables. Use salsa to give some flavor to powdered eggs or add to rice and canned chicken for a delicious meal.
34. **Ramen noodles:** Ramen noodles are lightweight, cheap, have a long shelf life and are quite filling. On the down side, they pack a LOT of sodium. Still, they are easy to prepare and will be one of the first foods to sell out after a crisis.
35. **Fresh Fruit:** You might be surprised to see fresh fruit on this list. Grocery stores get fresh produce delivered on a daily basis. If the supply line is interrupted, there will be none. While you cannot store fresh fruit for the long term, it will be nice to have some during the first few days of the crisis before you have to start using your dried and canned fruits.
36. **Baby food/special needs food items:** Within a few hours after a crisis, baby food and other specialty foods are likely to be gone from the shelves. This is of particular concern because, obviously, these items are very important. Having a good supply of such items is absolutely essential.
37. **Pet food:** If you don't have pet food on hand, you will have no other choice than to share your food supplies with your pet. Remember, after a crisis, everyone will be clamoring

to get the items that they feel are important, and pet food is high on the list. Many types of pet food have a long shelf life, so keep a good supply on hand.

Another great addition might not necessarily sell out quickly, but if the general population knew the benefits of this ancient seed it would likely fly off the shelf. The Amaranth seed can grow with very little water, is better for you nutritionally than most store bought cereals. It also has more amino acids than an egg. Consider adding a supply of Amaranth seed to your emergency stockpile.

Keep in mind that it is not necessary to buy name brands of food or other items. Very often, the generic brands are just as good as the name brands. In fact, in many cases they are made in the same factories using the same ingredients and the only difference is a label. Some of the top generic items that are just as good as the name brands are:

- Ibuprofen
- Cold
- medicines
- Peanut
- butter
- Bandages
- Baking
- essentials
- Popcorn
- Candy



Of course, you must decide which generic items are acceptable to you, but keep in mind they are often exactly the same as the name brand options.

### ***Food Items NOT to Include***

Almost as important as learning which foods will sell out after a crisis and that should be stored is learning which foods NOT to include in your emergency food storage.

- **Meals Ready to Eat (MREs):** Some think that MREs are the best possible addition to their food storage. It's easy to understand such thinking. MREs are loaded with calories, are very filling, have an extremely long shelf life and are easy to transport. The problem is that if you plan to feed these meals to your family over a long period, it could have a negative impact on their health. MREs are loaded with fat, sodium and preservatives. Also, they don't taste that great. It's fine to include a few MREs in your stockpile, but for the sake of your family's health, they should not make up the majority of your supplies.

- **Frozen Items:** While frozen food will last for a long time, once it thaws the shelf life is very short. Even if you have a generator, there is no guarantee that you will be able to keep it going for the long term. It is fine to keep some frozen items, but do not put all of your hope in being able to keep your freezer going for several weeks or months.
- **Items that Require Complicated Preparation:** Another consideration when making a decision about what items to leave out is how much preparation is required. In general, you want to keep like as simple as possible during a crisis. There are plenty of healthy meals that do not require a huge amount of preparation. Such meals are a much better choice than items that will require more work than necessary.



Now that you have an idea about which foods will sell out quickly after a crisis, the next chapter will take a look at how to learn about the shelf life of different foods and how to be sure that you know that what items you have on hand at any given time.

## PERISHABLES, SHELF LIFE AND KNOWING YOUR STOCK

### *Should You Stock Perishables?*

After reading the section above, you learned that stocking some perishable items is fine, but that they should not make up the majority of your emergency food supply. Here is a recap of the reasons that you *should* stock some perishable items, such as milk, fresh fruit and vegetables and meat.

- **First Few Days:** Having such items on hand can bring you some comfort in the first few days following a crisis.
- **Bartering:** These items will make good items for bartering in the days immediately following a crisis.
- **Canning:** If you have a good amount of fresh fruit and vegetables on hand when a disaster strikes, you can take the time to can those items before they go bad.

A cool food cellar is ideal for stocking perishables. If you do not have a basement, you can build a cellar as a separate structure. If you have the room on your property, consider adding one.



## ***Determining Shelf Life***

One of the first things that you will need to learn before selecting items for your food storage is how to determine shelf life. Most items at the grocery store will have a stamp. Often that date is a “best by” or “sell by” date rather than an expiration date. In ideal storage conditions, the food items will be good well after the “sell by” or “best by” dates.

Some foods, such as dehydrated foods, canned foods and specialty items, such as MREs will have a very long shelf life. If there are no dates stamped onto the cans or pouches, be sure to contact the company that you got them from to get a general idea of the shelf life of such foods.

Many survival supply sites include in depth information on the shelf life of the products that they sell. Here are some of the basics of understanding shelf life.

- A “best by” refers to the length of time that the food will retain all of its nutritional value and taste. It does not refer to the date that the food will become spoiled or no longer be edible.
- Some freeze dried and dehydrated foods have a shelf life of up to 25 or 30 years. To get the longest shelf-life, proper storage conditions are required.
- In general, minerals and carbohydrates will remain the same over a long period of time. Proteins are more likely to deteriorate. If not stored properly, vitamins in food can quickly lose their potency. Fat can acquire an unpleasant taste.
- Even if an expiration date has passed, the food could still be good. On the other hand, it is possible for food to become inedible well before the expiration date. For those reasons, you should learn to tell if food is bad. Look for mold or notice if there is any odd or foul odor. If there is, do not eat the food no matter what the expiration date says.
- The way that you store your food will have a huge impact on the shelf life. Learning proper storage can greatly increase the shelf life of the items in your food storage.

## ***Factors That Effect Shelf Life***

There are four main factors that will affect the shelf life of your food.

1. **Temperature:** The colder, the better. If you keep your food in a garage, it is best to try to make the space as temperature controlled as possible. You don’t need to keep it as cold as a freezer, but you should aim for room temperature or colder. If you cannot make a space cool enough, then you should NOT store your food there.
2. **Light:** Fats, proteins and vitamins are especially susceptible to light. You can keep light out in a number of ways. One is by the packaging. For example, if a food item is stored in a metal can, light is not much of an issue. The other way to keep light out is to place the food in a pantry or cabinet where it is not exposed to bright light on a regular basis.

3. **Oxygen:** Oxygen can not only affect certain food components, such as fats, colors and vitamins, but it also greatly increases the chances of insects and microorganisms growing in your food.
4. **Moisture:** Moisture can cause food to spoil by increasing the chances of growth of microorganisms and causing a variety of chemical reactions that are harmful to the food items.

By controlling the temperature, amount of light, oxygen and moisture levels, you can greatly increase the shelf life of your food. When the grocery stores sell out of the essentials after a crisis, you will be able to turn to your own supply and have confidence that it is just as nutritious as the day you put it on the shelf.

## ***Knowing Your Stock***

As mentioned in the introduction, learning about the items that sell out after a crisis and then creating your own stockpile of those items can be a daunting task for a beginner. Knowing your stock is one of the keys not only to getting started but also to making sure that your stockpile is well-balanced and properly rotated. Here are some tips.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*There is no point in having food that will last 25 years until you have a good supply of food that will last one year. Many of the food items that you can buy at the grocery store – and that will sell out quickly after a crisis – have a shelf life of six months to a year. These are the items that you can include in your stockpile that your family may use on a regular basis. Once you have a year supply of these foods, you can then turn your efforts to foods with an even longer shelf life, such as freeze dried and dehydrated options.*

- If you are brand new to the idea of trying to prepare for an emergency, do not buy anything until you spend a week or two writing down everything that your family normally eats. While you will probably not be able to maintain the exact same diet during a time of crisis, you can focus on storing items that your family likes and that you tend to use on a regular basis.
- Once you have a good idea of which items your family likes that will work well in your storage by learning about the shelf life of each food, make note of how much of each item you tend to eat in a given period of time. Track a short period, say two weeks. From there you will be able to figure out how much of each item you will need for longer periods of time.

- Add each item to your food storage until you have two weeks' worth. This is where balance comes into play. It won't do you a lot of good to have a year's worth of fruit but no meat or grains. Work on building a two week supply that includes all of the essentials. Once you have a two week supply, work on a month, then two months and so on.

Keep track of exactly what you have by using a notebook or computer program. Some online survival supply businesses even have a free food storage calculator. You simply plug in what you have and how many people are in your family. The calculator, sometimes called a food storage analyzer, will tell you how long your supply will last, how many calories per day your storage will provide as well as areas in which your food storage may be weak.

- Rotate your stock. This is especially easy to do when you have followed the above advice and included many items that you use on a regular basis. While you could invest in food rotation shelving, this isn't necessary. Just be sure to put your newest items in the back to ensure that you use the oldest items first. Keep track of what you are using and then replace those items on your next trip to the store.

To build your stock, you will need to purchase a few extras of each item that you plan to store. You will need to do this only until your stock is at the level that you want (i.e. two weeks, six months or whatever length of time that you choose). Once you have that supply, you will then only need to replace the items that you use without the need to buy extras.

If you have some items stored separately, such as at a secondary location (this will be discussed later in the guide) or in your short-term sustainability pack, be sure that you make note of those items and be sure that they are also included in the food rotation.

By knowing exactly what you have on hand, you will not be caught without essential items when a disaster strikes.

## NON-FOOD ESSENTIALS

In addition to knowing which food items are most likely to sell out after a crisis, there are many non-food items that will also sell out quickly and that will be a great addition to your emergency and disaster supplies.

### *Different Reasons to Store Different Items*

Food and water are needed for survival. Other items may serve a different purpose. Some of the non-food items that will be suggested in the next chapter could be considered necessary for survival. Others are not. Still, there are very compelling reasons to consider adding some of them to your emergency supplies. Below are some of the reasons that items could be useful or necessary.

- **Maintain good health:** Vitamins, exercise gear and a very well-stocked first aid kit are a few examples of items that will help you to maintain good health. Remember, you may have limited access to medical care, so taking care of yourself is more important than ever. Including items that will allow you to maintain good health, as well as deal with minor wounds and illnesses, can make life after a crisis much more tolerable.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*Do not forget what you read above: One of the most important factors in surviving a crisis is maintaining psychological health. Stress relief and times of fun and relaxation are important to keeping that healthy mindset.*

- **Barter:** No matter how much you plan and how diligently you work to assemble a decent stockpile, at some point there will be something that you need or want that you don't have and that you can't find for purchase. That is where bartering can come in. If you have a hefty supply of certain items, such as alcohol, tobacco and health and beauty products, you will have the power to barter for some of those items that you lack in your own stockpile.
- **Relieve stress and boredom:** During and after a crisis, staying alive is the top priority. That doesn't mean, however, that you should ignore the emotional well-being of your family members and yourself. Some items, such as comfort foods, games, books and magazines, can help to relieve the stress that can be associated with boredom. There is

a good chance that you'll need to work hard after a crisis just in order to survive. That is all the more reason to include some items that can help you to relax in those rare moments of downtime.

- **Maintain a sense of normalcy:** In the same vein, you want to maintain a sense that some things stay the same. After a time of crisis, there is a chance that many things will be different in your day to day life. By having access to certain comforts, you can maintain some sense of familiarity.
- **Convenience:** Finally, you must consider, to a certain extent, convenience. For example, do you NEED a propane oven that will help make preparing meals easier? No, but it will certainly be convenient. That is just one of many examples. Of course, you will not be able to buy every possible item that could make your life a little easier after a crisis, but anything that you can do to make life a bit simpler will be well worth the effort.

## OTHER IMPORTANT LISTS

Food and water are not the only things that you will need to survive and maintain as normal and healthy a life as possible following a crisis. This chapter contains three additional lists of items that you should try to accumulate.

You don't necessarily need to have every single item on each list, but you should gather as many of the "Top 10" items as possible. From the other two lists, pick and choose which items you think would work best for your situation.

### *Top 10 Must-Have Non-Food Essentials*

If you knew that you would have no ability to buy anything and that no aid would be coming your way for several months, what types of items would you want to have on hand? It is likely that many of the items that you list will be the same as what others would list. That means that should a serious crisis occur, these non-food items are going to sell out very quickly.

If you have prepared ahead of time, then you will already have what you need to sustain you for a time. This puts you in a much better position than those who will be desperately searching for these top 10 non-food essentials.

1. **Sources of Light:** You need to see. While a serious and long lasting crisis situation has the ability to cause you to revert back to a way of life that starts at sunrise and ends at sundown, you will still need sources of light. It is best to include a variety of light sources, such as candles, oil lamps and flashlights. Rather than only including battery operated flashlights, be sure to include some that are solar powered or run on the power generated by hand-cranking. Do keep some battery operated flashlights as well as a good supply of extra batteries.
2. **Means of Cooking:** Not every type of crisis will stop you from using your normal stove and cooking implements. Others, however, will force you to turn to alternative methods of cooking. Consider how you plan to prepare meals in a variety of situations. This may include cooking on a propane stove or even cooking over an open fire. You will also need to be sure that you have cookware that can be used with your cooking devices. Your typical household pots and pans may not be suitable, for example, for cooking over an open fire.
3. **First Aid Items:** Having a well-stocked first aid kit is a must. Just as the food items will sell out after a crisis, you can expect the same with first aid supplies. Within a day or two of the nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, it became nearly impossible to buy IOSTAT, a pill that blocks the thyroid from absorbing harmful radiation, because all sellers of the product were completely



sold out. And that was in the United States, thousands of miles from where the crisis was occurring. Some sellers continued to take orders telling customers that it could take up to six months to be able to fill the orders.

The above is just one example of how a disaster can cause first aid items to become difficult, if not impossible to find. The few first aid items that can typically be found on grocery store shelves will sell out quickly followed by supplies at local drugstores and big box stores.

When shopping for a first aid kit, you can choose a preassembled kit or you can put your own kit together by purchasing items separately.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*Even the most well-stocked first aid kit will not do you any good if you do not know how to use it. Be sure to take a first aid course as part of your emergency planning. Also, keep a book with your medical supplies that explains how to handle a variety of first aid situations.*

4. **Garden Seeds:** If you garden then keeping a supply of seeds is a no brainer. But even if you do not garden, you should keep some non-hybrid seeds in your stockpile. The reason garden seeds make the list of the top 10 non-food items is obvious: these seeds can provide you with a way to feed your family on an ongoing basis. In a long-term crisis situation, such renewable sources of food will be essential to your survival.  
Because these are non-hybrid seeds, you will be able to collect and cultivate seeds from each crop. You can purchase garden seeds sealed in a #10 can. The seeds were processed and packaged with long-term storage in mind. One online seller of emergency preparedness products sells a can of non-hybrid seeds that includes 18 varieties of vegetables along with instructions. This makes a perfect item for a non-gardener. During a time of crisis where the food supply chain is compromised for an extended period, having your own garden will be the only way to get fresh produce for your family. Again, even if you do not garden now, keeping these seeds on hand makes sense.
5. **Personal Hygiene Items:** Food and water are not the only items that are necessary to stay healthy. Maintaining good personal hygiene is an important part of maintaining good health. During a time of crisis, it may be impossible to get the items that you need such as toothpaste, soap and shampoo. When assembling person hygiene items, do not forget feminine hygiene products. These items are extremely important to the health, cleanliness and comfort of the women in your family.  
During World War II, there was an extended period of time when factories in England that once produced such items were forbidden from doing so. All efforts of all factories had to be put towards the war effort. It was, in fact, illegal to produce shampoo and toothpaste.

While it might be difficult to imagine that exact scenario repeating itself, the point is that at any time it could become impossible to get the products that you need. By keeping a supply of your favorite products, you will be able to maintain your personal hygiene, even if it becomes impossible to find the items on grocery store shelves.

6. **Weapons and Ammunition:** Anytime there is talk of possibly tightening gun laws, or any hint of trouble on the horizon, gun sales go through the roof. Should an actual crisis occur, it is almost a certainty that guns and ammunition will go flying off the shelves.

There are a couple of reasons that it is important to keep a good supply of guns and ammunition. First, rifles can be used for hunting. Of course, if you live in the city this is not applicable to you, but for folks in rural areas, hunting

for meat could become a source of food during a time when you have very limited options.

Secondly, you need weapons and ammunition so that you will be able to protect your family and your supplies during times of civil unrest. In the United States, people are used to having the luxury of being able to call the police for protection. During a time of serious crisis, however, this will not be an option. You will have to take on the responsibility of keeping your family safe from harm.

No one likes to think about being put in a situation where they would be forced to use a gun to protect themselves. But during a time of serious crisis, there will very likely be people who go from house to house seeing what they can take – even if that means harming the homeowners.

Just as you assemble a first aid kit with the hopes that you'll never have to use it, so should you view the purchase of guns and ammunition for protection. Hopefully, you will never have to use the gun in a defensive manner. But it's good to know that should the need arise, you will be ready.



7. **Baby/Elder Care Items:** Imagine not being able to purchase diapers, formula, wipes, adult incontinence products and the other items that you need to properly care for babies or elderly members of your family.

These items will be among the first to sell out at stores once people realize that a disaster or serious crisis is at hand. Storing extra of most of these products is easy as they have no expiration date. Of course, this is not the case for formula, so be sure to check those dates carefully.

When storing diapers, be sure to take the baby's growth into consideration. For example, are you trying to have enough for six months? Then you need to buy diapers in more than one size to accommodate growth.

8. **Bleach:** Bleach is the ideal household cleanser, because it disinfects the surfaces as well. It can also be used to purify water and, of course, is useful when doing laundry. Because there may be a lot of people who need to do much more cleaning than usual following a disaster, cleaning supplies will likely sell out very quickly.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*While grocery store shelves will empty following a crisis that is not the only reason to try and keep all of the items that you need on hand. People will be very upset; there could be riots in the streets and other forms of civil unrest. If you have what you need at home, you will not have to leave your family alone to go out in search of items. Even if some of the needed items are available, you may be putting yourself in harm's way if you run into a crowd of people who are also trying to buy the items that you need.*

9. **Water Filtration System:** As mentioned above, it is just not possible to store enough water to last for an extended period of time. Instead, you need a system in place that will allow you to collect and then filter water. There are very cheap filters available, but you need a high quality filter that will allow you to properly filter large quantities of water. Quality water filtration systems cost from several hundred to a few thousand dollars. Yes, it is quite an investment, but it is an investment that could save your life.



10. **Energy Source:** While you do not NEED power to survive after a crisis, it sure will make life a lot easier. Imagine the difference between living with no source of energy and being able to power appliances and even entertainment items, such as a television. After a serious crisis situation, you could be without power for an extended period of time. In Norfolk, Virginia, Hurricane Isabel rolled through in 2003. By the time it made landfall in Norfolk, it was at the high end of a category 1 hurricane, the weakest possible hurricane. Still, this storm left some people in Norfolk, a major city and home of the largest naval base in the entire world, without power for close to a month. If the weakest hurricane can cripple parts of a major city in this way, imagine how long you may be left without power following a stronger storm or some other type of disaster or crisis.

Solar energy is a good choice because it is renewable without you having to have anything on hand. Gas generators are better than nothing, but you will also need to keep a supply of gasoline. Since gas is an item that often becomes unavailable or prohibitively expensive following a crisis, a generator may not supply the power that you need for the long term.

There are other items that are great to have on hand following a crisis. These include comfort items and items that are great for bartering. Below is a list of some comfort items and a list of items that work well for bartering.

## ***Goods for Barter***

Bartering is one way that you may be able to get some of the items that you need and that you did store in a great enough quantity. Of course, the key to successful bartering is having items that others are going to want.

While it is not possible to know ahead of time which items are going to bring the greatest return, this list includes items that will sell out quickly from stores and that many people will want during a short or long term crisis.

The more of a variety of items that you have for bartering, the better the chances that you will be able to find someone who has what you want and also wants what you have.

The items on this list are in no particular order.

- Food items: The basics, such as sugar, flour and oil are good bets. Food with a long shelf life is another good choice. Cigarettes and chewing tobacco
- Potable water: If you have a renewable water source, this could be your ticket to getting all sorts of items in trade. Not everyone will have access to a constant supply of drinking water, and it is something that absolutely every person needs. For this reason, if you have such a supply, it will be one of your greatest bartering tools.
- Charcoal
- Alcohol
- Non-hybrid gardening seeds
- First aid items
- Over the counter medications
- Toilet paper
- Tools
- Lumber
- Firewood



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*DO NOT bring all of your bartering items at one time. You will need to hold some back for future use, especially if you foresee the crisis situation lasting for an extended period of time. You also do not want to reveal how much stock that you have. Doing so can make you a target for criminals. Be discreet about what you have and in what quantities. There is no reason to reveal what you have.*

- Propane gas
- Guns
- Ammunition
- Books/magazines
- Gasoline
- Fishing gear
- Baby items such as diapers, wipes and formula
- Cleaning supplies – especially bleach
- Feminine hygiene products
- Batteries
- Extra clothing
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellant

## *Comfort Items*

Another important, yet often overlooked, group of items are comfort items. Yes, survival is the most important thing following a crisis. That doesn't mean, however, that you should not try to include some comfort items in your stockpile as well.

This is important for everyone, but especially if you have kids. Comfort items can help to relieve stress, provide something to look forward to and help to keep morale up in general. Below are some ideas for some comfort items that you may want to keep on hand.

- Toys and games
- Books and magazines
- Certain foods, such as candy and popcorn
- Cigarettes and tobacco
- Alcohol
- Writing implements, such as pens, paper or journals
- Art supplies, such as crayons, markers, paint and paper
- Musical instruments
- Stuffed animals
- Extra pillows and blankets



You know what items will bring the most comfort and joy to your family during a difficult time. If someone in your family enjoys a particular hobby, such as sewing, include items that will allow them to continue in that hobby.

If you have children and it seems that the crisis situation is going to be long term then hold back a few toys to be given as gifts on birthdays and for holidays.

No, comfort items are not the first priority, but they can help to make a terrible situation a bit more bearable.

## **COOKING IN A CRISIS**

Even the best stocked emergency food storage is not going to do you a lot of good if you do not know how to cook and prepare the food during a crisis. In some situations, you will not be able to use your stove and oven to prepare meals. For that reason it is important to familiarize yourself with other cooking options.

Also, while some of the food in your storage will be familiar items that you use every day, some may be items that you have not cooked with on a regular basis. That is why practicing with unfamiliar items is an important part of your emergency planning.

### ***Know How to Use Items in Storage***

Dehydrated onions. White soup base. Powdered milk. Those are a few examples of items that you may have in your emergency food storage that you don't use on a regular basis. Of course, you will also have plenty of items that you are used to using, but it is important to know how to use all of the items that you have in your food storage.

When you choose items for your emergency food storage, you should also have a plan about how you plan to use them. You don't necessarily need to map out exact meals, but you should have a basic idea of how the items will come in handy.

Some are surprised when they buy long-term storage food items for the first time and realize that there are often no instructions on the can. Instead, you have to find other sources of information as to how to use each product.

Obviously, the time to do this is BEFORE a crisis occurs. You don't want the added stress of having to learn how to cook with strange ingredients while you are in the middle of dealing with a crisis situation.

Instead, become familiar with how to use each item in your food storage now. Then, should a disaster or crisis occur, you will have all the knowledge that you need to be able to continue to feed your family.

## *Practice*

Some who keep long-term food storage items in their stockpile are a little reluctant to make practice meals with them. One reason is that the items tend to cost more than what you would normally buy at the grocery store. Still, it is best to practice with each item at least once for a couple of reasons.

1. You can learn if your family likes the food. If your family absolutely refuses to eat a certain meal then there is very little point in including it in your stockpile. Sure, when food is scarce they will surely be more open minded about what they eat, but it is just as easy to stock foods that they will enjoy as it is to stock foods that your family will have to force themselves to eat.
2. You can make mistakes without serious consequences. If you are nervous about cooking with long-term storage foods for the first time, it makes more sense to get some practice in during a time when you can afford to make some mistakes. During a crisis situation, it would be heartbreaking to waste some of your precious storage supplies by burning or otherwise ruining them during cooking. If you practice now, a mistake won't hurt nearly as much and you'll have time to perfect your skills before a real crisis occurs.

Practice can actually be fun. For some families, practicing for a crisis is a serious matter. Again, having all of the supplies in the world won't mean a lot if you don't know how to use them. Some families have drills during which they cook with nothing but items from their storage for an entire week.

To be sure they are truly ready for a crisis, some shun the use of their oven and stove and rely solely on their alternative means of cooking. This might sound extreme, but by doing such drills, your family will not be the least bit intimidated by having to rely on alternative cooking methods during a crisis.

This will make the situation much less stressful and allow the needed kitchen related chores to get done with ease when a crisis occurs.

## *Survival Baking*

Survival baking is a bit trickier than survival cooking. How do you make bread without an oven? Is it even possible? Those who are newer to emergency and survival planning might be surprised to learn that you can actually bake bread and other items over an open flame. This is a skill that you definitely want to practice and perfect before you need it.

There are two options for survival baking.

- **From Scratch Baking:** This is where you take all of the basic ingredients and whip up everything from pancakes to rolls. You can also make stuffing, loaves of a variety of breads and much more. Ingredients that you need to keep on hand for from scratch baking are already included on the 37 things, but are listed here as well for easy referencing.

- Flour or grain (if you choose to store grain, be sure that you have a grain mill with which to grind the wheat to flour)
- Baking powder
- Sugar
- Baking soda
- Oil
- Shortening
- Honey
- Dehydrated eggs



- **Baking Mixes:** Baking mixes are available for both short term and long term storage. The baking mixes intended for longer term storage typically only require that you add water. Some of the mixes sold in grocery stores, which are fine for shorter storage needs of up to six months or a year, may require additional ingredients. Be sure to look to see what ingredients you will have to add.

As a general rule, you want to choose baking mixes that are as simple to use as possible. That means the fewer additional ingredients that you will have to add to the mix, the better.

A Dutch oven will allow you to bake over an open flame. You may want to keep two different sizes of Dutch ovens; a smaller one for making certain baked goods and a larger one for soups and stews.

Here are some tips for seasoning and cleaning your Dutch oven.



- **Seasoning:** You will need to properly season the Dutch oven before use. Seasoning is a process by which you bake oil into the inside surface of the oven. You should do this before a crisis as the process will be easier. To season the Dutch oven, wash and dry thoroughly and then spread vegetable shortening all over the inside of the oven. A thin layer of vegetable shortening is fine, you don't need too much.

Next, place the Dutch oven in an oven set at about 300° for one hour.

Once cool, wipe off any excess grease. You want to see a smooth surface over the entire interior of the oven. If you do not, repeat the seasoning process.

- **Cleaning:** Never use soap or dish detergent to clean your Dutch oven. Instead, follow these simple steps:
  - Scrape any excess food out of the inside of the oven using a plastic instrument. Using a metal scraper can damage the oven.
  - Using nothing more than hot water and a non-abrasive sponge, clean the oven.
  - Dry thoroughly
  - Using a soft cloth, add a thin layer of oil to the inside of the oven
  - Wipe off excess oil
- **Heating:** Getting the proper temperature in a Dutch oven is not difficult, but it does require some practice. You can use charcoal or wood over an open fire to heat your oven. Take the time to watch one of the many videos on YouTube that demonstrate cooking with a Dutch oven. Watching a video will show you just how easy it is.

Learning survival baking will allow you to bake warm, comforting breads and other items that can make dealing with a crisis situation a little more palatable.

## ***Survival Cookbooks***

Another important item to keep with your food storage is a survival cookbook. These cookbooks provide recipes and cooking tips specifically geared to long term storage items. Buy a couple of these books now and browse through them.

The recipes found in survival cookbooks are perfect choices for when you practice your survival cooking.

## ***Crisis Cooking Tools***

In addition to a Dutch oven for survival baking, there are some other crisis cooking tools that you may want to consider adding to your emergency supplies.

- **Camp stove:** A camp stove is a small, portable stove that uses small propane cylinders as the heat source. A camp stove is a good addition to your emergency supplies because you can easily take it along with you should you need to evacuate. Of course, you'll want to keep extra propane cylinders on hand as well.
- **Charcoal grill:** A charcoal grill is a decent option for emergency cooking. If you plan to rely on this method for a longer period of time, you will need a place to store large quantities of charcoal where the charcoal will not get wet.

- **Gas grill:** Many people already have a gas grill that they use on a regular basis. While you cannot take this with you if you need to evacuate, it is great for cooking during an emergency while at home. Always have at least two tanks on hand. This way you'll always have a full tank which is great during an emergency but can also prevent you from running out of gas during a party.
- **Candle Heat Cookers:** With a few items, including a few small pieces of cardboard, a small can, an empty #10 can and some wax and you can make a small stove capable of boiling water and handling other small cooking tasks.
  - Wash out an old tuna can or other small can
  - Cut cardboard into strips and coil them inside the can
  - Melt the candle and pour the wax inside the can, leaving the top of the cardboard uncovered and allow to solidify
  - Poke holes in the sides of the empty #10 can to allow for ventilation
  - Light the cardboard and place the small can under the #10 can

Within a few minutes, the top of the #10 will be hot enough to perform small cooking tasks.

- **Flameless Heaters:** As mentioned above, MREs should not be the bulk of your emergency food supply. If you do keep some then flameless heaters are a quick and easy way to heat those meals. Flameless heaters are a small pouch that you simply add to water. A chemical reaction causes the water to heat up. Place the MRE pouch in the water, and you'll have a hot meal.
- **Collapsible Stoves and Stove in a Can:** These items are both readily available from businesses that sell emergency supplies. They are both compact and easy to use. They are great for camping as well as for emergencies.
- **Solar Oven:** You can buy a solar oven or even use simple plans to build one yourself. A solar oven is a fabulous option for crisis cooking because you do not need to keep any other supplies, such as propane, charcoal or even wood, on hand. The downside is that it can be challenging to learn to regulate the heat. You may need to move the oven around in your yard to find the best spot, which will vary based on the time of day. Still, you should definitely include a solar oven in your arsenal of crisis cooking tools.

It is best to have more than one option when it comes to cooking during a crisis. That way, if one won't work for some reason, you will have other means by which to prepare meals for your family.

## WHERE TO LOOK IF YOU'RE TOO LATE

So far, this guide has discussed what items to get ahead of a crisis because they sell out quickly after a crisis. But what if you waited too long? What if a crisis has occurred or is imminent and now the grocery store has sold out of the items that you most need?

This can be a scary situation, and if it happens to you once, you will likely take the necessary steps to be prepared for the next crisis.

Below are some options to explore if you did not adequately prepare and now find that you need items that you cannot find.

### *EBay or Craig's List*

Once the stores sell out of items, auction sites, such as EBay ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)) and classified sites, such as Craig's List ([www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)), can be a good source of finding certain items. This is especially true if the crisis is local to your area. In that case, it is very likely that people in other parts of the country will not only have what you need, but will be willing to sell it for a fair price.



When buying items from Craig's List, you will more than likely be dealing with an individual rather than a business. There are some businesses that operate on EBay, but there are also millions of individual who use the site to auction items as well.

Here are some things to keep in mind when trying to buy items from EBay or Craig's List.

- **Pricing:** When you buy items from an individual through an auction or classified site, understand that the seller can set whatever price he or she wants. A generator that may sell for \$500 in a store could be listed for \$1000 or even more if the seller thinks someone will pay it. It is the simple concept of supply and demand. For that reason, expect to pay much more for such items during a crisis.  
That being said, you should not settle for the first price that you see. Be sure to explore similar listings to learn the average cost of the item.  
On EBay you can bid as low as the starting bid. Just enter the highest amount that you are willing to pay and EBay will automatically submit your higher bid as the price of the auction increases.  
With Craig's List and other classified sites, you will have the opportunity to negotiate with the seller. Some items will be listed with a price and the words "or best offer". That is an indication that the seller is very open to negotiations. Other listings will say that the price is firm.  
Even in cases where the seller does not say "or best offer", and even in some cases where the seller states the price is firm, there is often still some room for negotiation.

Of course, the price that you are willing to pay is directly impacted by how badly you need or want the item. The seller knows this, so you'll need to keep a bit of a poker face when trying to make a deal.

- **Expired Items:** When you are buying food items, such as MREs or food canned for long term storage, you must be very aware of the expiration dates. One big problem when buying such items in this manner is that you have no way of knowing how the items were stored. As you learned in the section "Factors That Affect Shelf Life", the way an item was kept has an impact on whether or not the item will still be nutritious and even whether or not it will be edible.

You could buy MREs that were kept in a garage where the temperatures got up to over 100°. In that case, even if the product was only a year or two old, they could be inedible.

- **Broken or Defective Items:** When buying something second hand, there is always a chance that the item could be broken or defective. With EBay, you have the safety net of being able to review the seller's ratings. While not foolproof, if a seller has a history of positive feedback then that is a good indication that they make good on their word and will be likely to want to work with you on any issues so as to keep their good online reputation. Also, EBay has some built in buyer protection programs. These vary based on the specific item, so be sure that you understand the details of any possible guarantee before you purchase an item.

With classified sites, you will have no such assurances. For that reason, you should not buy something through a classified site that must be sent via the mail. Instead, you should see and test the product in person before handing over any money.

- **Payment Methods:** There are many payments when buying some from EBay, which is helpful in an emergency when you're short on cash. You will be able to pay via PayPal, which allows you to use a credit card.

When buying items from someone on Craig's List, or a similar classified site, you will almost always be limited to paying with cash. In some cases, the person might be willing to take a PayPal payment, but you only do this AFTER you have met the person and have the item in your possession.

- **Meetup Location:** When buying from Craig's List, it is best not to meet at your home. The reason is that you do not want the person to see your stockpile. Remember, parents will do just about anything to feed their hungry children. Inviting a stranger into your home – even if he seems safe – is a bad idea. If he so much as mentions what you have to someone that he knows then your family could be at risk.



## IMPORTANT

### NOTE:

*Inviting a stranger into your home – even if he seems safe – is a bad idea. If he so much as mentions what you have to someone that he knows then your family could be at risk.*

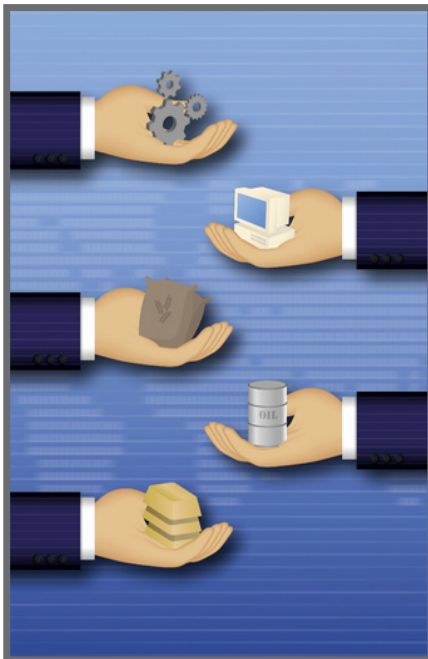
EBay and Craig's List can be a good way of buying some of the items that are sold out in the stores. Just be very careful that you get what you pay for and that you don't pay more than necessary.

## ***Bartering***

Bartering has already been mentioned in this guide, and it is another good way of getting some of the things that are missing from your own stockpile. It is very likely that someone has what you need, and that they will be willing to part with it if you have something that they need.

Here are some tips when bartering after a crisis.

- **Have a good supply:** The obvious key to being able to get the most from bartering is having desirable items that you can trade. The best bartering items were discussed in a previous chapter. How many of each item that you choose to keep on hand will have to be determined by your budget and, to some extent, how much space you have in which to store the items.
- **Don't overpay:** While it is easy to see when you are paying too much cash for an item, some people "overpay" in what they agree to trade. You should be making trades that are fair and beneficial to both parties. If someone is asking you to trade a generator for a box of candy bars, you probably need to end your bartering with that person and find someone who is willing to be fair in their negotiations.
- **Poker face:** When you go to buy a house or a car, you know that you shouldn't show the seller or the seller's representative how much you want it. When you act overly enthusiastic about an item, you give the other person the advantage when it comes to the negotiations.



On the other hand, you should never insult the items that the other person is using to barter. Be polite, but keep that poker face. Remember, the trade should be fair to both parties. If you show how desperately you want something, you are handing off the advantage to the other person.

- **Don't Bring Everything:** When you go to barter, do not bring everything that you have. You should have some idea what you are looking for, so bring enough that you think would make a fair trade, plus a little extra. You don't want to advertise how rich you are with goods. Be discreet and bring only what you think you will need for that day's trading.

Should the economy collapse, bartering will be the main form of buying and selling. That is why having some sort of renewable resource, such as a water filtration system or a thriving garden, is a good way to guarantee that you will have plenty of "currency" when paper money no longer has any value.

Another situation that could cause goods to have more value than currency is the very one being discussed in this book: empty grocery store shelves.

During World War II when important kitchen staples were being rationed, you could get more with a dozen eggs and a few sticks of butter than you could with money. When the shelves were empty, it didn't matter how much money you had. That is the situation that you will be facing during a crisis that endures for any length of time.

## ***Distribution Centers***

Distribution centers are where the goods go before they are shipped to the stores where you shop. Learn where distribution centers are in your area. Learn what kind of products each distribution center handles. That way, should you need a specific item, you will know which distribution center will be most likely to have it.

If your store is out of a certain item, you still might be able to find it by visiting the distribution centers. Of course, even distribution centers will have a limited supply of each item, so it is a good idea not to share this tip with too many people.

Some distribution centers might not sell to the public, but in an emergency or crisis situation, there is a chance that – even if they do not normally sell to the public – that they will make an exception based on the circumstances.

## ***Emergency Aid Groups***

A final option for finding the items that you need is emergency aid groups. Keep in mind that if this were an ideal option, there would not be much need for this guide. Emergency aid groups often have very limited resources. They may require that you do not exceed a certain income or that you have already suffered great loss due to a crisis before they will help you.

It is a good idea to become familiar with various emergency aid groups near you and learn their policies. If you find that a crisis situation has left you without the items that you need and the grocery store shelves are empty, these emergency aid groups are one more resource that you can try in an attempt to get the goods that you need.

Of course, proper preparation will eliminate the need for last minute, desperate searches for those last few items. That is why the best line of defense against the possibility of empty grocery store shelves tomorrow is proper preparation today.

## TIPS ABOUT YOUR STOCKPILE

Now that you have learned which items will sell out first after a crisis, and how important these items will be in a survival situation, you probably want to get started on developing your own stockpile of goods.

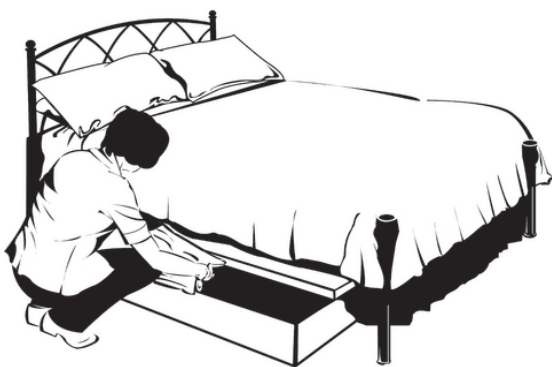
As mentioned above, the first tip is this: Start now. It may seem like a daunting task, and you probably have a lot to learn. Here are some tips about your stockpile to help you get the basic knowledge that you need to be sure that when the store shelves are empty, you will still be able to take care of your family.

### *Where to Store Your Stockpile*

Some people say that the reason that they cannot build a stockpile of emergency goods is because they simply do not have the room. The fact is that there are people who live in a one bedroom apartment that have found a way to maintain a decent sized stockpile.

Sure, it will be more challenging if you are working with very limited space, but there are ways that you can make room for your stockpile without giving over a big chunk of your home's square footage.

- **Under Beds:** One great place to keep some items when you are short on space is under the bed. Simply put some risers under the legs of the beds in your home and, presto, you have lots of valuable storage space without giving up one inch of your floor space.



- **Coffee table tricks:** Instead of a coffee table, use a piece of furniture that is similar to a hope chest. You can then fill the chest with items from your stockpile. Again, you will not be giving up any room in your home.

You can also use your end tables for storage. Just buy those cheap pressed wood tables with the legs that screw on. That type of table is used with a table cloth that goes all the way to the floor. You can then use the hidden space beneath the end table to store items.

One creative man skipped the end tables altogether. He placed some of his large buckets of wheat in the spots where an end table should go. He cut a square round to place on top of the bucket and covered the whole thing with a floor length table cloth.

When his guests set their drinks down on the end table, none of them ever guessed that they were actually setting their drink down on part of the homeowner's emergency stockpile.

- **Steal a foot:** While ideally you would not have to sacrifice any of your floor space for your stockpile, sometimes it is necessary to do so. Instead of giving up an entire room, however, you can just steal one or two feet.

Simply measure out one to two feet from a wall. Next, run a curtain along the ceiling in a manner that will hide that space from the rest of the room and you will have an instant "storage closet". Some people steal a foot from each bedroom and are able to have room for a very good size stockpile with only a small sacrifice of space. By stealing a very small amount of space from several rooms, rather than taking it all from one room, you may not even miss the space.

- **Unused spaces:** If you are lucky enough to have an attic or basement you can turn it into storage space – even if the space is in very rough condition or is not climate controlled.

If you have an attic that gets very warm during the summer, you will not be able to store food there, but you can certainly use the space to store other items, such as some of those on the bartering or comfort lists.

Basement spaces can be ideal for storage as they tend to be quite easy to keep cool. You will have to be mindful of moisture, however. As you read above, moisture can do as much harm to the items in your emergency stockpile as heat.

- **Build a storage section:** Whether you are fortunate enough to have an attic or basement or are just going to steal a foot or two, you will need to build a storage section. Whether you have all of the space in the world, or are working with very limited space, you want to make the most of the room that you have. One way that you can do that is by making sure that your shelves go from the floor to the ceiling. It doesn't matter if you can reach the top shelf with great ease. Just use the very top shelves for the items that



do not need to be rotated very often or at all, such as candles or extra pillows.

When you are stealing a foot, you can still build floor to ceiling shelves, but they will have to be narrow. The good news is that those shelves will be perfect for storing canned goods. You will even be able to fit #10 cans two deep. Consider leaving enough room on the bottom shelf to store large buckets or cases of water.

Once you decided where to start storing the items for your stockpile, you are ready to begin your emergency planning in earnest. There are some things that you should keep in mind that will help you to avoid some of the most common stockpile problems.

### ***Avoiding Common Stockpile Problems***

All of your planning could be for nothing if you do not work to avoid some of the most common stockpile problems such as spoilage. Below are four sections of tips to help you avoid some of the common issues that many have with their emergency preparedness stockpiles.

- **Spoilage:** The most common problem with stockpiles is spoilage. Some people buy items, toss them on the shelf and never think about them again. Fast forward a few years and they have shelves full of items that need to be thrown away. That is not only a huge waste of money, but it will leave them empty handed should a crisis situation arise and all that they have on their shelves are spoiled food items. There are some steps that you can take to avoid wasting any of the items that you stored.
- **Proper storage:** As you read above in the section titled “factors that affect shelf life”, how you store your food items has a direct impact on how long they will last. In general, you should store your items out of direct light, at room temperature or below and away from moisture. Proper storage is the number one way to extend the shelf life of your items and ensure that they will be there when you need to use them in an emergency.
- **Watch expiration dates:** While some items are good for decades, items that come from the grocery store typically have a shelf life of one year or less. For this reason, it is important



to pay close attention to expiration dates. One trick is to write the expiration on the front of the can or package using a black Sharpie.

That will make it very easy to see the date, and you will be able to tell at a glance when a certain item is going to expire.

- **Rotate:** When stocking your shelves, take the time to move the older items to the front and place the newer items behind.

When an item is close to reaching the expiration date, remove it from your storage and place it with your general use items in the kitchen. Make a note of what items you remove from the stockpile so that you can replace them.

- **Use it once open:** Some people like to try items in their stockpile, such as a new brand of powdered milk or a certain type of dehydrated entrée. While it is fine to test out new products to see if your family enjoys them, once an item has been opened, do not return it to the stockpile. Instead, just continue to use it.

Items that were intended for long term storage are packaged very carefully. Care is taken to remove oxygen so that microorganisms cannot grow and the cans are sealed to keep out all moisture and light.

Once a can is opened, it is no longer suitable for long term storage. Once an item is open, enjoy it and replace it with a new product.

- **Keep it a Secret:** Another common stockpile problem may not seem like a problem until AFTER a crisis occurs. Just imagine that you have done everything right. You learned which items sell out first after a crisis and through careful budgeting and planning, assembled an impressive stockpile.



Let's say that you have amassed enough goods to sustain your family for well over a year. So you did everything right except for one thing: You told too many people what you were doing.

Perhaps you just wanted to inspire others to start their own stockpiles. Maybe you were quite proud of your accomplishment so you'd show off your storage area anytime you had company over to your home.

You didn't think it was a problem, because they were all your friends. It not as though you were telling strangers. But the problem is that during a time of crisis, all bets are off. People will do almost anything if they think it will allow them to feed their families. The people who know about your stockpile will show up at your house, begging for some of your food and other items. Some may even take more drastic steps and try to steal from you.

While you would want to help as many people as you could in a time of crisis, if you give away a lot of what you have stored, then you won't be able to feed your own family. A stockpile that would last your family for a year is only going to be able to feed your entire neighborhood for a few days.

To avoid this issue, you should keep your stockpile a secret. You should tell as few people as possible. You should also make sure that other members of your household understand that they should not be discussing your stockpile.

If you have a survival garden, or any other survival components that are kept on the outside of your home, try to place them somewhere that they cannot be seen by visitors or passerby.

Many people who develop a stockpile purposely store extra so that they will be able to share with their neighbors and friends. Even in this situation, you should never reveal exactly what or how much you have.

Even if you completely trust the people that you are telling, you never know who they might tell. In a time of civil unrest and when all of the grocery store shelves are empty, the very last thing that you want is outsiders knowing about your stockpile.

This could not only mean losing some of your items, but it could also put your family in harm's way.

### ***Practice***

This has been mentioned already, but this bit of advice belongs in the section about common stockpile problems. If you only store items that you use on a regular basis then, obviously, practice is not needed.

If, however, your stockpile also includes unfamiliar items, then you should practice cooking with these items. If you do not, then you may be unprepared to use the items during a time of crisis.

### ***Secondary Locations***

During World War II, it was common for housewives to go to the store every single day rather than risk losing a week's worth of groceries should their home be destroyed by enemy bombs.

Imagine if, after all of the time and expense of building a good stockpile, every bit of it was wiped out by a storm, flooding or fire. This is a very real possibility, and one that has happened to many well-prepared people.

The answer is not to avoid building a stockpile. Instead, you should divide your stockpile between your home and at least one other secondary location.

- A second home that you own
- A home of a friend or family member
- A climate controlled storage unit

If you partner with a friend or family member, there are some things that you should keep in mind.

- Be sure that your survival partner understands the importance of not telling anyone about the stockpile
- When you have a survival partner, you can each split your stockpile between your two homes.
- Be sure that the home is far enough away that it would not be affected by storms, flooding or fire that could destroy your home yet close enough that you would be able to get to the home if needed.
- It is easy for the half of your stockpile that is kept at a second location to be sort of “out of sight out of mind.” You must be sure to keep track of your stock being kept at a secondary location and rotate as necessary.
- Be wise in how you divide your stockpile and keep a good mix of items at both locations. For example, do not keep all of your meat and protein and one location and all of the vegetables and fruit at another.



### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*The point of keeping some of your stockpile at a secondary location is so that if your home is destroyed, you still have some goods to help you get through the time of crisis. Pick your partner very carefully and discuss how you will handle it if one of you were to lose the stock kept at the other house. It is a good idea to become true partners, where you “own” the entirety of both stockpiles together. That way, should one of you lose yours, there is no question that all that is left is to be shared.*

## A FINAL WORD

### *It CAN Happen to You*

There's a story of a farmer who lived in an area that was technically a flood zone, but that had not seen serious flooding in at least 50 years. Every day after his normal duties, he would spend an hour or two adding sandbags to the perimeter of his farm. This was no small task as he had a pretty good sized farm, so for twenty years, every day he added sandbags.

His neighbors laughed at him, and told him he was wasting his time. Since the area hadn't flooded in so many years, surely such precautions were overkill. He



ignored their mocking and continued sandbagging.

One day, the river swelled and flooded the entire area. All of the farmers watched helplessly as their entire crops went underwater. All except one farmer. The efforts of the one who had spent decades sandbagging his land paid off, and the water flowed right around his property.

The point is twofold: First, don't ever think that a disaster cannot visit you. It doesn't matter if it's never happened before. It doesn't matter if you happen to be living a charmed life and ill never befalls you. It CAN happen. Secondly, don't let the mocking of others stop you from doing what you feel is best.

Many people think that accumulating a stockpile and having any type of emergency plan means that you are an alarmist or paranoid, but quite the opposite is true. When you are prepared, you have no reason to fear.

You are not being an alarmist; you are simply being wise and preparing for the possibilities of tomorrow.

### *Disasters Happen Everyday*

If you live in an area that is prone to hurricanes, tornadoes or other disasters, then you already understand that disasters happen every single day. Some come without warning while others may give you a few hours or days to prepare.

Today, tomorrow and every day after that, a disaster will take place somewhere in the world. It may be a "small" disaster, such as a hurricane that only impacts a small area and barely makes the national news.

It may be a huge disaster, such as the Asian tsunami or Hurricane Ike or Katrina that becomes the top story for weeks and changes the face of emergency preparedness.

In either case, someone will be unable to get the food and other supplies they need. In many cases, no aid will be available to them for days or weeks.

Their best line of defense would have been preparation. Will you be prepared when a disaster hits close to home?

### ***Non-Disaster Food Shortages***

A disaster is not the only reason that grocery stores will sell out of certain items. Something as simple as truck driver's strike can cripple the food supply chain and leave shelves empty in locations all over the country.

A Fox News story mentions that a lack of acreage has already caused food prices to rise, but could soon cause a worldwide food shortage.

In fact, one of the best ways to smell a food shortage disaster before it happens is to watch the supply lines. When you watch the evening news, listen for any talk of supply lines being interrupted. If such activity is making the news then there is a good chance a food shortage is coming, and it's time to stock up.

### ***Don't Procrastinate***

It is impossible to know when a disaster or other event will cause grocery stores to sell out of the items that you need. If you start today then you have the best possible chance of being prepared.

## RESOURCES

**Newsweek** article, “What it Takes to Survive” <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/01/23/what-it-takes-to-survive.html>

**FEMA Guide**, “Food and Water in an Emergency” <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf>

“What Your Grocery Store Will Look Like in an Emergency” [http://www.shtfplan.com/emergency-preparedness/what-your-grocery-store-will-look-like-in-an-emergency\\_03152011](http://www.shtfplan.com/emergency-preparedness/what-your-grocery-store-will-look-like-in-an-emergency_03152011)

**Be Prepared**, “Food Storage Shelf Life” <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=579&name=Food%20Storage%20Shelf%20Life>

**Be Prepared**, “Food Storage Analyzer” <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=903> **FEMA**, “First Aid Kit” <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/firstaid.shtm>

**Be Prepared**, “Garden Seeds” [http://beprepared.com/product.asp\\_Q\\_pn\\_E\\_FG%20S200\\_A\\_name\\_E\\_Garden%20Seeds](http://beprepared.com/product.asp_Q_pn_E_FG%20S200_A_name_E_Garden%20Seeds)

**Solar Power at Home**, “Emergency Solar Power” <http://www.solarpowerathome.com/emergency-solar-power.html>

**Cowboy Showcase**, “Dutch Oven Cooking” [http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/Dutch\\_oven\\_cooking.htm](http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/Dutch_oven_cooking.htm)

**YouTube, Texas Park and Wildlife**, “Dutch Oven Cooking Intro 1” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2iG4aMKBCQ>

**Solar Cooking**, “Build a Solar Oven” <http://solarcooking.org/plans/>

**The Ready Store**, “Cooking and Fuel” <http://www.thereadystore.com/emergency-preparedness-basics/emergency-need/cooking-and-fuel>

**Daily Planet**, “How to Survive in a Crisis? Insider Tips Offered at Preparedness Seminar.” <http://www.ashevilledailyplanet.com/index.php/News/How-to-survive-in-a-crisis-Insider-tips-offered-at-preparedness-seminar.html>

**Fox News**, “Puerto Rican Farmers Warn of Coming Food Shortages” <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/money/2011/02/03/puerto-rican-farmers-warn-coming-food-shortages/>

# **PART II**

## **ACTIVE SHOOTER SURVIVAL**

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**YOU SETTLE INTO YOUR SEAT AND ENJOY** the premiere of the latest Hollywood blockbuster. The action is thrilling and the cinematography is breathtaking. Out of the corner of your eye, a figure emerges from one of the fire exits. Curiously, the fire alarm doesn't sound. He's dressed in a peculiar fashion; he's got body armor on as well as some sort of armored leggings and a gas mask. He carries what appears to be a couple of weapons. You think to yourself – "that's a great costume" – because many other people in the audience are dressed the same way. The figure then reaches for a smoke canister and pops it off, causing smoke to billow out and your eyes to water. The last thing you remember is coughing on acrid smoke while gunshots ring out....

Another time, another place. You're seated in the classroom of your college while the professor drones on and on. Twenty minutes till the class ends – can't wait for the weekend. The classroom door opens a crack; an Asian student peeks in, surveys the classroom, and then closes the door. It happens so quickly that the professor doesn't notice. You say to yourself – "he's probably lost". You go back to listening to the lecture. Ten minutes to go. Suddenly, the door opens again, and the same Asian student peeks in – this time, he takes a longer look. The professor notices, and asks the student if he's lost – the student doesn't answer, only shuts the door. Weird - it's the middle of April, not the beginning of September. How could anyone be lost so late in the school year? You go back to daydreaming, and check your watch. You're about to doze off as you hear a popping noise down the hallway...wait – that sounds like gunfire....

The two scenarios above represent fictional representations of real events that actually occurred – the first one was the Aurora Theater shooting of 2012, in which James Eagan Holmes stormed a packed theater, set off a tear gas canister, and began shooting, killing 12 people and wounding 58 others. The second scenario is the Virginia Tech Massacre of 2007, in which Seung-Hui Cho killed 32 people and

injured 23 others while on a shooting spree at his college. In both of these cases, the perpetrators were labeled as *Active Shooters*, a term far too familiar to the American public today.

An active shooter can strike any place, at any time. They have struck restaurants, post offices, schools, theaters, shopping malls, and just about anywhere else you can think of. Their methods of operation are simple – in a nutshell, the active shooter seeks to trap as many victims within a contained area as possible, an area in which it's almost guaranteed that the victims will be unarmed. The shooter isn't looking for a ransom or hostages – he is looking for a high body count. Because of the tactics active shooters use, they are usually very successful in their mission, and thankfully, they don't often get to try it again as an active shooter incident usually ends with either the suicide of the shooter, his death at the hands of police, or his capture.

It might seem on the outset that it's almost impossible to survive an active shooter event. While there are definitely some unwinnable circumstances that victims find themselves in, realize that for every victim, *there are many times more survivors*. It is possible to survive an active shooter event – and even avoid one in the first place. Additionally, realize that the body count on active shooter events is relatively low compared to what it *could be*. While an active shooter event that results in death is an awful tragedy, active shooters are rarely efficient in terms of deaths per round of ammunition fired, which is another facet of these events to consider. Keep in mind that:

- Even though most active shooter events result in what is perceived as a high body count (i.e. Virginia Tech's 33 dead), consider that the shooter had over *400 rounds of ammunition* on his person, and expended some 200 rounds!
- Even densely populated venues such as the Aurora Theater shooting are survivable. There were *hundreds* of people in that theater, conveniently sitting mere inches apart. It should have been like shooting fish in a barrel, yet only *12 people* died.

- Active shooter events are often precipitated by a *single*, highly vulnerable person.
- Police tactics have changed to provide the most efficient response to an active shooter, meaning that you're most likely to receive a police response within minutes of such an event.

Take heart. An active shooter event is a traumatic, deadly scenario that no one wants to be caught in the middle of. You can, however, survive such an event if you know a thing or two about how these sorts of incidents normally go down – and *how survivors made it out alive*.

## A BRIEF NOTE

This manual starts with the supposition that if you happen to find yourself in the midst of an active shooter scenario, you will most likely be *unarmed*. This is an incredibly important distinction to make. There are several reasons why we chose to present this manual as such:

- Many states still have draconian prohibitions on concealed carry by normal citizens, so you may not be able to carry in the first place.
- While an armed response to an active shooter is optimal, your family members, such as your husband, wife, or children may not be armed. They still need to know how to respond to such an event.
- You won't be able to be legally armed in some venues. Areas like courtrooms, federal buildings, and sterile areas of airports are areas in which even legally carrying citizens may not enter. Such areas are magnets for active shooters – because they *know* everyone will be unarmed.
- Simply being armed is not the panacea for a response to an active shooter. While being armed is a definite benefit, it will not necessarily guarantee survival.



## ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENTS – A BRIEF HISTORY

The concept of a single armed individual entering an area where many unarmed and innocent people were congregating, then shooting up the place for maximum effect, is not a new one. Active shooters, although they were not always referred to as such, have been slaughtering innocent people for over a century. They all have extremely common methods they use and the results of their heinous actions are usually the same – the death of innocents. What are these common traits? Did the shooters compare notes or study each others crimes to better perfect their killing? How did the survivors make it out? What caused the death of the shooter? All these questions and more can be answered by looking at several of the higher profile shootings, and comparing them. If knowledge is power, then knowing what exactly happened in these events is the key to survival.

The active shooter events profiled below represent some of the worst active shooter events to happen within the last 25 years:

## ***SAN YSIDRO MCDONALD'S SHOOTING***

**When:** July 18, 1984

**Where:** McDonald's Restaurant, San Ysidro, CA

**Active Shooter:** 1 – James Huberty

**Fate of active shooter:** Death by police sniper

**Approximate number of persons present:** unknown

**Number of deaths:** 21

**Number of injured:** 19

**Approximate duration of event:** 77 minutes

**Gun Free Zone:** Yes, California had no provision for lawful citizen carry at the time.

**What happened:** Disgruntled gunman James Huberty entered a busy McDonald's restaurant and indiscriminately shot patrons, expending a staggering 257 rounds of ammunition. Victims ranged from 8 months old to 77 years. Due to police tactics at the time, Huberty was able to keep shooting people, unmolested.

**What worked for survivors:** Taking refuge in a barricaded room away from the shooter.

**What didn't work:** Police tactics at the time, which called for a cordon around the area. This allowed Huberty to kill people at will without being bothered by police.

## LUBY'S CAFETERIA MASSACRE

**When:** October 16, 1991

**Where:** Luby's Cafeteria, Killeen, TX

**Active Shooter:** 1 - George Hennard

**Fate of active shooter:** Death by suicide

**Approximate number of persons present:** 80

**Number of deaths:** 23

**Number injured:** 20

**Approximate duration of event:** 16 minutes

**Gun Free Zone?** Yes, Texas law at the time prevented citizens from carrying concealed.

**What happened:** Gunman George Hennard drove his pickup truck through the front window of Luby's Cafeteria, a busy restaurant, at the *peak of the lunch hour rush*. He emerged from the vehicle and started shooting patrons. All attempts to subdue him by patrons were unsuccessful. Some patrons escaped the kill zone when another patron threw himself through a plate glass window, creating a method of egress. Hennard systematically stalked and shot as many people as he could, finally shooting himself.

**What worked for survivors:** Creating an exit where there was none.

**What didn't work:** Playing dead – Hennard walked the restaurant, systematically shooting everyone to ensure they were dead.

## **COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING**

**When:** April 20, 1999

**Where:** Columbine High School, Columbine, CO

**Active Shooter:** 2 – Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold

**Fate of active shooter:** Death by suicide

**Approximate number of persons present:** hundreds

**Number of deaths:** 13

**Number injured:** 21

**Approximate duration of event:** approximately 49 minutes

**Gun Free Zone?** Yes

**What happened:** Klebold and Harris, armed with a variety of small arms and improvised explosive devices, stormed their high school. Initially, they had planted a couple of propane bombs within the cafeteria, and then the pair retreated outside to await the explosions, which never happened since the bombs failed to detonate. They then decided to charge the school, and killed a number of students indiscriminately. Most of their shots while proceeding down school hallways missed their intended targets. They then entered the school library, which was full of students who were hiding under desks and other furniture – Klebold And Harris were able to kill many by simply shooting under desks.

**What worked for survivors:** Fleeing the premises immediately.

**What didn't work:** Hiding in place – many victims were easily discovered and shot. Also, police set up a cordon that simply allowed the shooters to kill more people.

## **VIRGINIA TECH MASSACRE**

**When:** April 16, 2007

**Where:** Virginia Tech University, Blacksburg, VA

**Active Shooter:** 1- Seng-Hui Cho

**Fate of active shooter:** Death by suicide

**Approximate number of persons present:** hundreds

**Number of deaths:** 32

**Number injured:** 23

**Approximate duration of event:** approximately 20 minutes, two separate events, two hours apart

**Gun Free Zone?** Yes

**What happened:** The shooter, Cho, killed his first victims in a dorm room before returning to his own dorm room, where he changed his clothes. This distracted first responders, who were occupied with the first shootings. Cho then moved to a different part of the campus where he entered Norris Hall, chained the three main entrance doors shut, and then initiated a systematic massacre. Cho went from room to room, shooting as he went – in some cases he was denied entry into some of the classrooms by students who had barricaded the doors shut. He circled back to some of the rooms, killing even more people. Finally, he shot himself in the head, having expended hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

**What worked for survivors:** Escaping, barricading themselves inside of rooms, playing dead.

**What didn't work:** Some people within barricaded rooms were shot through the door because they were standing behind the barricade.

## AURORA THEATER SHOOTING

**When:** July 20, 2012

**Where:** Century 16 Multiplex, Aurora, CO

**Active Shooter:** 1- James Holmes

**Fate of active shooter:** Capture by police

**Approximate number of persons present:** hundreds

**Number of deaths:** 12

**Number injured:** 58

**Approximate duration of event:** approximately 10 minutes

**Gun Free Zone?** Yes.

**What happened:** Holmes, the shooter, purchased a ticket to view the premiere of a massive Hollywood blockbuster's midnight screening. He sat through the movie for approximately 20 minutes, and then exited the theater through an emergency exit door which he had propped open earlier. The alarm failed to sound. He went to his vehicle where he changed clothes and donned a bulletproof vest, bulletproof leggings, and picked up his weapons. He reentered the theater through the same door, deployed a tear gas canister, and began shooting audience members indiscriminately. Initially, audience members thought that he was part of the promotion of the film since other audience members were also in costume. Police later captured him without incident as he returned to his car.

**What worked for survivors:** Escape, hiding behind theater seats.

**What didn't:** Waiting to confirm whether the shooter was in fact a threat, or just part of the show.

## THE SUMMARY

First, before we jump to conclusions about the efficacy of methods to avoid an active shooter, we must keep a few things in mind. First, the shooter cases profiled above are only a *small sampling* of active shooter events. Many others have been left out due to brevity. Second, the examples used are large, mass shootings. Keep in mind that an active shooter can kill only a single person, and that person could be *you*. The number of victims doesn't make the event any less dangerous.

Active shooter incidents all have certain hallmarks and certain distinctive features that most of them share. In this aspect, they are unlike other crimes of passion, which seemingly have no rhyme or reason. Knowing what these traits are will help you understand the nature of these events, and better plan for them. Consider that in the bulk of American mass casualty active shooter events, the following precepts were found to be true:

**Planning:** Most all of the active shooter events profiled included heavy planning on the part of the shooter. Huberty (San Ysidro McDonald's) scouted out two other locations before deciding that the McDonalds' restaurant would reap more victims. Klebold and Harris (Columbine) attended the high school they attacked, and thus were intimately familiar with the layout of the facility. Additionally, they each practiced extensively with the weapons they used to perpetrate the massacre, and made detailed plans of how they were going to carry it out, including creating a diversionary explosion nearly a mile away. Cho, (Virginia Tech) had the presence of mind to chain the main exit doors to ensure victims could not escape. Holmes (Aurora Theater) scouted the inside of the theater before the shooting, and propped the exit door open. Nidal Malik Hassan, who perpetrated the Fort Hood shooting, extensively practiced marksmanship before the shooting, and equipped his pistol with a red laser sight to aid in target acquisition. Anders Breivik, the Norway active shooter who killed 77 persons, not only set up a diversionary attack, but also extensively used disguises to fool his victims into thinking he was a police officer.

The point is, an active shooter incident is not something that is a crime of passion. While there were some incidents in which a workplace altercation occurred and then the shooter went home and got guns, coming back and shooting his victims, most active shooter events of significant scale are carefully planned events in which the shooter *knows the layout of the building or terrain*.

**Deadliness:** Believe it or not, most active shooter events are not especially effective with regards to the number of persons present versus the number of persons killed. Although the body count of Virginia Tech (33) is a staggering number, there were *hundreds* of people present (thousands in the immediate area), and Cho had 400 rounds on his person. Most active shooter events have a similar pattern, which is why there are so many wounded people rather than outright deaths – the shooters just don’t have very good aim. This is mainly due to the pressure of the event, and the shooter’s adrenaline, which degrades the fine motor skills required to accurately fire a weapon. Even trained recreational shooters who spend a lot of time at the range will have difficulty shooting at moving targets such as fleeing persons. This is mainly because the training for such a contingency is hard to come by: one would need to have previous combat experience in actually shooting moving targets (none of the above examples had this), or spend time training with moving targets (paintball, simunitions). Fixed target training alone does not develop the skills necessary to reliably engage moving targets. This works in your favor, as will be discussed in the section on what you can do to avoid being a victim.

**Contained area:** Most active shooter events occur within a contained area where egress of the victims is impeded due to the layout of the building. People running away down a hallway, for example, as in the Columbine massacre, are funneled by the geography of the hallway into convenient groups. One doesn’t need to be much of a marksman to fire down a hallway and hit people. Additionally, the shooter will often try to lock himself into the premises, such as Cho, who chained the doors shut. The idea is to use the building(s) as a containment area for victims. Not all active shooters take place within buildings, however. Jared Loughner shot many victims outside

of a Tucson supermarket – in the open air – as they were gathered to hear Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords speak, leading us to our next point;

**Target rich environment:** A contained area is no good if adequate targets aren't present. Active shooters who are motivated by body count alone will seek out a target rich environment, and will plan two things carefully: 1) An appropriate venue with a sufficient number of victims, and 2) the appropriate time of day. Cho shot up Virginia Tech when the students were all conveniently in their classrooms. Loughner waited until Congresswoman Giffords' crowd had assembled to hear her speak. Holmes waited until the theater was full of moviegoers and the film was well underway before shooting. Hennard waited for the lunch time crowd to get into full swing before attacking Luby's. The point is, active shooters seek a target rich environment and choose the time and place for maximum effect.

**Gun free zone:** While the topic of gun control is beyond the scope of this manual, realize that active shooters will typically perform their shootings in an area with strict gun control. Realize that in all of the examples of active shooter incidents cited in this work, *all of them* were perpetrated in areas where either a) the personal possession of firearms was expressly prohibited by law or policy, and b) concealed carry by the citizenry was illegal. There is a critical point to be realized here: *active shooters never, ever plan for any armed resistance, because they know there won't be any.* The significance of this point cannot be understated. Active shooters usually plan suicide as the culmination of their rampage, so they aren't afraid of dying per se, but they do want to accomplish their goal of killing the maximum number of people possible, and armed resistance gets in the way of that goal. Also, most active shooters are aware that by the time police arrive, they will have killed a significant number of people, so it's safe to say that police presence, unless it happens to be already *within* the area they are planning to raid, *is not a factor for an active shooter!*

**Weapons used:** Contrary to public misconception, most active shooters mainly use commonly available handguns, shotguns, and rifles to perpetrate their attacks. There hasn't been a single case of an active shooter using a machine gun or any other automatic, restricted, or military weapon to carry out an attack. Active shooters overwhelmingly use what is commercially available.

## A PROFILE DEVELOPS

Taking the above points in mind, a profile emerges of a typical active shooter incident (if any of them can be called typical): **A single shooter, armed with commercially available weaponry, will strike a target rich, contained environment. He will extensively plan for the attack, and will strike an area where he is certain that he won't meet any significant armed resistance. He will usually not plan to survive the encounter.**

The above statement is staggering in its assessment and brevity, but we can use it to formulate a strategy to survive such an attack. Knowing the enemy and his tactics is key to surviving the encounter.

## WHAT THE POLICE WILL DO

Before you ask yourself what *you* would do, it would be nice to know what the police plan on doing. We are fortunate enough to live in a country that has rapid police response to almost any incident. Our policemen are highly trained and arrive with the finest and most technologically advanced equipment. The problem is, however, for decades, the only police response to an active shooter was to simply *wait the event out*.

Recall that in the case of Huberty, who gunned down innocents at the San Ysidro McDonalds, he had a mind boggling *77 minutes* to kill people. It's a staggering and shocking amount of time, and the results spoke for themselves. The police *gave* him that time due to their training. Before you go up in arms, realize what police doctrine was for the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

- Upon learning of an active shooter, the responding officer would call in the incident, and await backup.
- Backup would arrive, and a protective cordon was laid in a 360 degree perimeter to the facility. The cordon was to ensure that the suspect did not escape.
- Police management would be called in, often with a hostage negotiator in tow.
- The SWAT team would arrive, and augment the positions of the first responders; they would set up viewing and shooting positions on nearby rooftops and radio the actions of the shooter(s) back to higher headquarters.
- If the shooter proved incommunicative or violent, the SWAT team was ordered to take him out. Oftentimes, this occurred in one of two ways; 1) the shooter would be shot by a sniper (i.e. the way Huberty died), or 2) the building would be stormed by the team.

While all of this sounds like a reasonable, solid plan, it had only one problem: it took time. Lots of time. By the time a perimeter was set up and the SWAT team arrived, you could be looking at half an hour or more. Hostage negotiators would try desperately to make contact with the shooter, but there was a little problem: *the shooter wasn't negotiating!* He didn't want to negotiate! His goal was to kill as many people as rapidly as possible, and police tactics at the time helped him do it. While the cordon was being set up and higher management was being informed of a shooting, the shooter was killing. While the SWAT team was gearing up the shooter was killing. While the negotiators were trying to contact the shooter, the shooter was killing.

It took some time for police doctrine to accept the fact that an active shooter's goal is to simply kill people and then kill himself. No ransom, no demands, no plane ride at the nearest airport, no suitcase full of money. Just wholesale slaughter.

## MODERN POLICE RESPONSE TO AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

Thankfully, the old method of policing with regards to an active shooter is dead and buried (pun intended), and a newer, more practical method is in active use nation wide. Currently, if an active shooter incident unfolds, the following will occur:

- The responding officer will arrive on the scene of an active shooter.
- After a rapid assessment of the situation, the officer will usually arm himself with a high powered patrol rifle, which most policemen carry in their patrol cars these days. No longer are police under armed when dealing with a shooter.
- He will make every effort to *immediately* enter the structure by any means available. He is usually equipped with bolt cutters, and sometimes, breaching rounds for his shotgun.
- The officer will charge inside, moving in a tactical fashion *towards* the sound of the gunfire.
- His goal is to immediately make contact with the active shooter and engage the threat.
- His number one priority is speed, and the minimization of loss of life.

This new doctrine has already helped to save many human lives. While it does put the individual officer at elevated risk (as opposed to waiting outside until backup arrives), it has more or less been universally accepted that risking the life of an officer or officers versus potentially dozens of innocent victims is a worthy compromise. If in an active shooter situation, you can now expect immediate and direct police assistance by the first responding officers. While they will still set up a perimeter and call the SWAT team, no longer will they wait to make entry and contact the shooter. It's a good compromise that seems to be working well thus far; it most certainly would have prevented the sheer number of victims that the San Ysidro shooting produced.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

You are now armed with the knowledge of what an active shooter is after, what sort of targets he will choose, and how he will carry out his wholesale slaughter. You now know what the responding police will do. Now its time to learn about what *you* should do during such a situation.

The first and painfully obvious rule of active shooters is to *not be there when they strike*. For better or worse, some people have just sworn off of visiting the busy, public places favored by active shooters. Places like restaurants, shopping malls, public gatherings, and demonstrations are magnets for active shooters. These target rich environments are the stomping ground of those who desire mass casualties. Whether it's feasible to give up public life is only answerable by you. Living in fear and avoiding public places is not necessarily the answer, but it is a viable choice if you absolutely, positively never want to encounter an active shooter.

Okay, so maybe you really don't want to give up public life. No one will blame you; after all, if you give up going out into public the shooters and all of the other boogey men will have won the battle. What can you do to prepare for an active shooter? What can you do to build up some tactical awareness? Here are ten things you can do *right now*, next time you go out, to be prepared:

1. **Keep your back to the wall, cowboy:** This may seem like an old western gunslinger practice, but it is very useful and might just save your life. Where you happen to be during an active shooter scenario is sometimes the difference between life and death. All shooters must use a method of ingress into the building, and this is usually the front door. Whenever you visit a restaurant, theater, or public place, pick a seat that puts your back to the wall. This relieves you of having to cover your six – one less direction to worry about.

2. **Position yourself so you can see the front door:** If at all possible, with your back to the wall, pick a spot where you can comfortably see the main entrance to wherever you happen to be. Make sure that you only see the door, rather than sitting in the *direct line of fire* to it. Having visual contact on the entryway from a 30-40 degree angle is optimum.
3. **Watch the doors:** Actually watch the people coming through. Learn to observe without staring. See who comes and goes, and what they look like and how they act. Realize that most active shooters *have already been to the place they intend to shoot*. You might just observe one casing the place. If the same guy comes in twice within a short period of time and leaves both times, consider it a warning and stay alert. Might just be innocent, but might not be!
4. **Keep an eye out for open fire exits:** An open fire exit with no alarm sounding should make alarm bells ring in *your* head! Tell the staff that they have an open door. It could be a maintenance issue, or it could be the method of ingress for an active shooter. Report it!
5. **Do a mental survey of the place:** Note the entrances and exits. Note the back door, if there is one. Keep an eye out for opening windows, and if you are on anything but the ground floor, look out the windows and see what is below. Many people have jumped out of windows during active shooters and have either plunged to their deaths or gotten badly injured. Know what's there.
6. **Look for heavy objects that can be used as improvised weapons:** This could be a brick, heavy sugar shaker, broom handle – anything. The active shooter will not be expecting any serious resistance. Be prepared to provide some!

7. **Always have a method of communication:** And be prepared to use it! During the Aurora Theater shooting, many people texted and tweeted the fact that there was an active shooter rather than phoning the police! Make sure you have a cell handy, and when in doubt, call 911 immediately!
8. **Carry a backup weapon allowed by local law:** Whether you are allowed to carry a handgun, pocketknife, pepper spray, or what have you, carry it. Realize that some resistance is better than no resistance. Remember, you don't necessarily need to have these to engage the shooter. Even if you have a handgun on your person, simply using it to shoot out a plate glass window and escaping is better than nothing.
9. **Be an observer of people:** Look at people, actually look at them rather than being oblivious. Look for signs of nervousness or the look of a thousand yard stare. Look for signs of intoxication or drug use. Dilated pupils and profuse sweating on a cool day is a sure sign of trouble to come.
10. **Be prepared to act:** Most victims will simply sit there and await their fate. Temporary paralysis when confronted with a grave threat is normal, but it should pass quickly. Act immediately, and realize that even momentarily remaining stationary could mean death. Act. Run. Engage. Alert someone. The key here is to *do something*, not freeze.

## IT'S TOO LATE

Someone is in the building you're in, and they're shooting. You hear gunshots – something is definitely amiss. Assuming you are not the first one to make contact with an active shooter, you have a precious few moments to figure out what you want to do. ACT NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

So what do you do when the threat is real? What can you possibly do to avert this situation and come out alive? Here are ten tactics that you can use, ten things to keep in the back of your head during an active shooter incident:

1. **Escape:** If you remember one thing and one thing only, remember this. Escape, plain and simple. Many active shooter deaths have come about because people were trying to do something other than trying to escape. Like what? How about like trying to help others, trying to find a hiding spot, or trying to barricade a door. When you have the opportunity to escape, you must take it. Escape to the outside deflates the one weapon that the active shooter has against you – *containment*. You are no longer trapped inside a small room or corridor. You are a harder target to hit when running away. Escape becomes more complicated when you have loved ones or friends with you. Urge them to do the same – the natural human reaction is to cower and hide, but fight the urge to do so and put escape first on your list.
2. **Don't run in a straight line:** If you make a break for it, the worst thing you can do is to run in a dead straight line in front of the shooter. Running in a straight line makes you an easy target – zigzag instead. It has already been proven that due to adrenaline, the shooter's fine motor skills will be degraded, and he needs those skills in order to shoot you while running in a zigzag pattern.
3. **Make an escape where there is none:** Bust out a window and jump, if you can. Smash through the drywall and get into an adjacent room. Crawl up into the drop ceiling. Now is the time to think unconventionally – you need to outsmart the shooter. What if you're too high up and can't jump out of the window? Consider breaking it anyways, then hiding in the room somewhere. The shooter might just think you actually did jump and move on to the next room.
4. **Erect a barricade:** If you're in a windowless room or are way too high up to consider going out the window, erect a barricade to block the door. Use everything at your disposal here, but *build it quick and get out of the way!* Many people have been shot trying to physically block the door, or while standing just behind the barricade. The shooter will often shoot right through the door in anger – don't be standing behind the door. Let the barricade block it for you.

5. **Never lie flat on the ground to avoid gunfire:** If someone is shooting, the best position to be in is crouched down low, balancing on one or two feet, with your arms around your knees. You want as little of your body touching the floor as possible. This is because *bullets travel along floors*! A bullet that is shot down low will hit the floor, bounce off, and travel parallel to the floor, a few inches above it, until it runs out of energy and strikes something. That something could be you, lying flat on the ground! Stay off the floors!
6. **Keep off the walls:** As stated above, bullets are funneled by floors; yet they are also funneled by walls. If someone shoots down a hallway, the bullet might impact the wall, bounce, and travel parallel to the wall only a few inches off of it. Stay off the walls!
7. **Do not attempt to engage the shooter:** Unless you are a peace officer or highly trained, your mission is to escape, hide, or barricade. It is best not to engage, unless a spectacular opportunity presents itself. Put as much distance between you and the shooter as possible.
8. **Hide:** This one is a mixed bag. Make sure your hiding spot is a good one and you will not easily be spotted. The human psyche has a tendency to introduce wishful thinking into a high stress situation. People will often hide under desks and other furniture where they are clearly visible in an almost ridiculous manner, and then be shot. If you have to hide, make sure your hiding spot is a good one, and preferably, behind a barricade.
9. **Stay alert even after the shooter has passed:** Keep in mind that in many active shooter cases, the shooter has gone room to room, killing as he goes. But in a sickening and cruel twist, the shooter will often return to rooms he previously was in, shooting again. If you are hidden, stay hidden until the police arrive! Don't make the mistake of getting complacent – realize the shooter can and often does return. Keep your barricade up and stay under cover until the police arrive.

**10. Improvise a weapon:** If contact with the shooter seems likely, you need to improvise a weapon, and fast. Normally, you'll do everything you can to not engage the shooter. Escape, hiding, and barricades are always best, but if you find yourself cornered with no chance for escape or hiding, you must act. The shooter will not usually expect resistance – if he did, he wouldn't undertake this rampage. Almost anything can be used as a weapon! Pick something up, and strike, going for the face and the weapon hand. If you are about to die, it's best to go out fighting rather than cowering – you might just surprise yourself and save the day, as most shooters simply don't have a contingency plan for any sort of resistance.

## QUESTIONABLE TACTICS

There are some tactics that have worked for some people, but not for others, and therefore they really aren't viable. If a given tactic works only *half* the time, it doesn't make sense to use it *all* the time. There are many stories of survival from horrendous active shooter incidents in which people have survived through questionable means, but that doesn't mean you need to try these things. Here are a couple:

**Playing dead:** The jury is still out on this one. In the San Ysidro shooting of 1984, at least one individual survived by playing dead. Same thing goes for the Columbine Massacre; one teenager happened to find himself behind two dead bodies and he was covered in their blood. The assailants passed him by. On the other hand, there are countless examples of active shooters making sure the people are dead by shooting them execution style as they lay there. This is really tragic, because the people were alive and well up until the point where the shooter ended their lives. Playing dead is a passive resistance tactic that may or may not work, and is probably only good for the old and infirm who don't have any other options. Remember, playing dead is a form of doing *nothing*. These could be your last moments on earth. Do you really want to spend them doing nothing, or do you want to go out running, fighting, or something else more active?

**Begging for your life:** Begging for your life or otherwise attempting to reason with the shooter has also worked in some cases, but not in others. Anders Breivik, the Norway shooter that killed 77 people, let some individuals go after questioning them. The Columbine perpetrators did the same. In other cases, however, the active shooter attempted to question the victims, but shot them anyways. Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter, called out many taunts to his victims, some of which attempted to answer or reason with him. He shot them anyways. The bottom line here is to not have any contact with the shooter or engage him in any way. These are people who have lost all sense of reason; they are past the point of listening to rational arguments or pleas for life. If you must do something out of necessity and lack of other options, attack them with all the ferocity you have.

## IN CLOSING

An active shooter scenario is perhaps the most shocking and scary thing that could ever happen to you in your life. Nothing you do and no amount of planning will make it any less scary. However, experiencing the feeling of fear is not a weakness. Realize that you can still be scared and make good tactical decisions. You don't need to be a victim or remain paralyzed – you can act right now, and save yourself and your family, while others cower and beg for their lives. Being a survivor is a state of mind, and ethos. The sooner you embrace that, the better off you'll be.

# **PART III**

## **RIOT SURVIVAL**

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## INTRODUCTION

SURVIVING A RIOT IS A SCENARIO that didn't once apply to the United States. Riots, mob violence, and mass protests were once the fodder of third world countries. We would sit comfortably in our homes eating TV dinners while watching robed militants chanting slogans in a foreign language while waving Kalashnikovs in the air. Now, however, it seems more likely than ever that wide scale rioting may in fact be coming to America in force.

One need look no further than the "peaceful" protests of the Occupy Wall Street movement that suddenly turn ugly when the protesters are forcibly evicted from city hall grounds and parks that they have taken over. Developed countries are now seeing more and more riot activity in places that were frequently relatively calm. Sports riots, for example, once relegated to fanatical South American countries, have now come to Vancouver, Canada. After the Canucks failed to win the Stanley Cup last year, a massive riot formed in downtown Vancouver; cars were overturned, buildings were set afire, and millions of dollars worth of property damage occurred in hours. In Greece, disputes over austerity measures have plunged the country into almost continuous riots causing the infrastructure of the country to nearly grind to a halt. The common theme is that riots aren't for third world countries anymore.

## WHAT IS A RIOT ANYWAYS?

The phrase “you’ll know it when you see it” more or less covers it. But what is a riot legally defined as in the United States?

**Riot:** 18 U.S.C. § 2102.

*A public disturbance involving,*

*(1) an act or acts of violence by one or more persons part of **an assemblage of three or more persons**, which act or acts shall constitute a clear and present danger of, or shall result in, damage or injury to the property of any other person or to the person of any other individual or*

*(2) a threat or threats of the commission of an act or acts of violence by one or more persons part of **an assemblage of three or more persons** having, individually or collectively, the ability of immediate execution of such threat or threats, where the performance of the threatened act or acts of violence would constitute a clear and present danger of, or would result in, damage or injury to the property of any other person or to the person of any other individual.*

As one can see from the legal definition, relatively few persons are required to meet the legal definition of a riot. Additionally, there’s a line of demarcation between a protest and a mob. Riots have several common ingredients.

Take a group of peaceful protesters who gather at a venue to demonstrate, for example. They are committed to a more or less peaceful presence even though their rhetoric might be heated. Many demonstrations in the United States start this way – and actually end this way as well, with thousands upon thousands of people assembling and then dispersing without trouble. During our riot scenario, however, something goes wrong. The crowd is turned to violence by either an external force, and internal force, or a combination of the two.

An *internal force* is composed of people that are within the crowd that incite the crowd to act violently. These people are referred to as **agitators** – an agitator can be a random occurrence in a pre-riot crowd; a single, disgruntled person who acts out and causes others to do the same, or, agitators can be seeded within a crowd *on purpose* by an external faction bent on causing a revolt. If you think this is rare, then you don't really understand the forces at work in America today. Movements like Occupy Wall Street are carefully formed and planned by a group of ringleaders and professional agitators who incite followers through careful recruiting and agitation. There is nothing whatsoever random about them or their gatherings.

An external force is typically a group of people that act upon a protest from the outside to turn it violent. This can be overzealous policemen who start clubbing unwary protesters, inflaming the rest of the crowd, or it can be a rival faction who “crashes” the first group of protester's peaceful demonstration. An example of this might be an African American demonstration crashed by white supremacists that turns the whole thing into a violent riot.

## **EITHER WAY, THE RESULTS ARE UGLY**

Once the crowd has been incited to violence or heated protest, very few remedies are available to both people trying to control the crowd and those within who want no part of it. The human condition is such that when others around start to do violence, wreck property, set things afire, and pelt people with stones, everyone else starts to join in to do the same. This is why riots are such powerful forces to contend with. Riots usually include the participation of people who *otherwise would not be caught taking part in illegal acts* – some of them are simply victims of opportunity, looting a nearby shop simply because the glass was already broken by someone else. Riots temporarily relieve us of the burdens that come with civilized society – rules, regulations, laws, and most importantly, order. We all have a degree of anarchy within us and when others start engaging in violence it is all too easy for us to pick up a rock and do the same. It would be foolish to think that it's simply criminals who participate in riots – normal, everyday people get swept up in the violence as

well, even though the agitators are usually comprised of a criminal element. It's classic herd behavior!

There are several types of riots:

### ***Peaceful protest turned ugly***

Just like it sounds, a peaceful crowd agitated into a mob by either an internal force, and external force, or both. The results are usually the same – many injuries due to thrown missiles, clubbing from riot batons, inflamed mucous membranes from CS gas, and the

occasional broken bone. Usually, there are no casualties due to the fact that it is unpalatable in modern policing to kill rioters even if they are being violent.



This is the classic scenario you find when the Occupy Wall Street movements are kicked out of the parks they take over – they're peaceful, then they have to leave, so they begin throwing trash and debris at police who club them back,

resulting in more hurt feelings on the Occupy side. Subsequently, small pockets of resistance ensue, followed by brief fisticuff melees and the whole thing eventually collapses under it's own weight and disperses because no one really likes to get hosed down from a fire truck, beaten with a riot baton, or sprayed with CS gas.



### ***My team didn't win***

Once only confined to rabid European soccer fans, this phenomena is spreading to the United States and other civilized countries. With the grim economy and more and more people seeking temporary escape through entertainment, the smallest spark at the stadium can incite a full scale riot which often leaves people dead due to the overcrowding in most sporting facilities. Death through trampling is extremely common in these riots and they are tough to control since an adequate array of first responders is rarely standing by to quell the fray. Also, the sheer population density in a stadium, a place where over 100,000 people can be gathered elbow to elbow makes these riots extremely deadly and tough to avoid.

### ***Flash mob***

Brought about solely by the advent of instant messaging technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, and texting, one can now send a single message and have three hundred of one's closest friends converge upon a location in minutes. Authorities are becoming increasingly concerned with flash mobs as they are impossible to predict, form up

and disperse quicker than law enforcement can react to them, and seemingly have no common theme or goal other than to inundate an unsuspecting venue with people. These are seldom violent occurrences, although they usually cause plenty of property damage due to the sheer volume of people that show up on short notice – part of the novelty.

### ***Riot with a cause***

Otherwise known as a grievance riot - this was never a peaceful protest to begin with, but rather a concentrated reaction to a single event or series of events. Something happens, and then a group of people retaliate en masse. This usually leads to an instant police presence and sometimes a military presence to put the civil disturbance down. These riots are extremely deadly because the initial agitators go out angry from the outset, wanting to cause violence as retribution for some perceived wrong done to them. Oftentimes they will not disperse, leaving law enforcement with the sole option of simply containing them until natural forces such as sleep deprivation, injury, or hunger take over to put the riot down on its own. Riots such as these are costly both in damage and human lives – a classic example of this type of riot is the Greek austerity riots.

### **LOS ANGELES, 1992**

To really appreciate the destructive power of riots, one needs look no further than the LA riots of 1992. In many ways, the LA riots are an archetype of the grievance type riot – the granddaddy of them all. The riots had their roots in the brutal beating of Rodney King, a black motorist who led CHP officers on a high speed chase. When his vehicle was finally surrounded, CHP officers apprehended King and placed him in the back of their patrol car. Minutes later a contingent of LAPD officers arrived to take



custody of King, and during the transfer into their vehicle, a scuffle ensued. The net result was that King, unarmed and crawling on the ground, was beaten with batons, tasered, and kicked in the head by five white LAPD policemen for several minutes in a most brutal and unnecessary fashion. While most likely a relatively common incident in Los Angeles at the time, the white officers had the misfortune of unknowingly being videotaped, and the footage went viral over the news media and television, being broadcast nationwide.

King's beating would go on to incite all sorts of Los Angeles activists to complain and even lightly protest. The media picked up King's story and ran with it as an example of police brutality and the predominance of racial tensions in an era where race was not supposed to be a factor anymore. Most people believe the LA riots were a direct result of the beating of Rodney King by white officers – an incorrect supposition. It would take another event entirely to incite some of the worst riot activity in American history...

The Los Angeles District Attorney was quick to charge the five officers with the use of excessive force and assault, and a trial was quickly scheduled – except for the media blitz surrounding the incident forced a change in venue from mixed race Los Angeles to extremely white and conservative Simi Valley, located in nearby Ventura County. After seven days of deliberation, the jury acquitted all five officers of assault, and only charged two with the use of excessive force, which amounted to not much more than a slap on the wrists for the officers involved.

Within minutes of the verdicts being broadcast, protesters formed outside of a host of well known Los Angeles landmarks, and the makings of a riot began – it was not the beating of Rodney King that had incited them – *it was the acquittal of his white tormentors* that had sealed Los Angeles' fate. Within hours, violence erupted – the ensuing chaos, concentrated in the South Central area of Los Angeles, was to be one of the costliest manmade events in US history; over \$1 billion worth of property damage, 3,600 individual fires set destroying over 1,100 buildings, and 10 deaths with hundreds of injuries reported. The riots lasted for over five days and resulted

in the call out of National Guardsmen, Army soldiers, US Marines, and law enforcement agencies from across the state in one of the greatest peacetime mobilizations ever seen. Curfews were enacted, martial law was declared, and yet, during the events, control was barely maintained. One need only consider that over 20 million people live in the immediate area compared to several thousand law enforcement and military personnel to control them all.

The LA riots were a time in which society in the affected areas broke down. Firefighters would no longer respond to calls for fear of being shot. The streets were choked with roadblocks and burning debris. Most first responder vehicles needed armed escorts for protection. A group of Korean merchants had to fend off looters by themselves, shooting at them while emplaced on the roofs of their own businesses. In the end, the riots had nothing to do with race – to wit, half or more of the participants were Hispanic – most people simply did not have a dog in the Rodney King fight. The lesson learned here is that a riot is a time of opportunity for a criminal element that is normally suppressed by law enforcement – and in the case of South Central Los Angeles – barely suppressed even in good times. Added to this was the overflowing of all sorts of unrelated grievances from poor residents of Los Angeles, everything from lack of employment to withheld welfare checks due to the mail being stopped added and fueled the tensions.

A riot on the scale of Los Angeles leaves one to more or less fend for themselves, as there is no outside support to be had – you’re literally on your own, pal.

## **WHAT TO DO?**

Firstly, you need to understand the mentality and tactics of the three components or classes of participants in a riot the size and scope of one like the 1992 LA riot. By understanding and predicting what these three groups will do, you’ll be able to avoid the danger that will ultimately ensue when something of this scale goes down.

## ***The Rioters***

Rioters are more or less the same regardless of the type of riot. The agitators will be the ideological force of the riot – they will be the ones who start it as well as the ones who are doing it for a particular cause. In the case of the 1992 LA Riots, these were a small pocket of African American activists angered by the acquittal of the white officers. Realize that the agitators are usually a tiny percentage of the actual force of the total riot. After the agitators comes the bulk of the riot's muscle – the mindless *participants*. These are groupies and hang-arounds that have no real ideological connection to the riots – they are just at the right place at the right time for it all to go down. Additionally, many of these people will not know why they are rioting or even what the original cause of the unrest stems from. They are opportunists who will quickly devolve into looting and other criminal acts, sometimes even turning on the agitators themselves when their purposes conflict. These participants are highly mobile and will often disperse quickly, only to reappear somewhere else engaged in still more criminal activity. It is interesting to note that riots are almost always leaderless – a riot is a collection of many individuals and factions acting in unison when their purposes align then quickly separating. In the LA riots of 1992, the bulk of the participants weren't even African American!

## ***Law Enforcement***

A citywide riot such as the LA Riots will quickly overwhelm even the largest police department (LAPD has over 10,000 officers, not to mention LA County Sheriff's department, with over 10,000). What will happen during a large riot is that the local police department will immediately activate its mutual aid compacts – the net result is that police officers from the surrounding area will come and help in the defense. A side effect of this activation is that many different officers with all sorts of training will be on the scene – during the LA Riots, officers were called from such places as backwoods Inyo County – the entire population of the massive 10,000 square mile Inyo County is less than 18,000 people; Officers like these were simply unprepared for what they saw and had virtually no urban experience.



Law Enforcement riot control tactics are fairly standardized throughout the United States. Conventional wisdom will be to contain the riots, and let them fizzle out naturally. During the LA Riots, the police played a much more defensive role than normal, frequently coming under attack and having to retreat, thus increasing the size of the area that could be plundered by the rioters. Typical tactics used by police will be to set up a series of roadblocks and checkpoints to deny access to hot areas. Depending on the severity of the riot, police will have a certain element in the rear that is armed with firearms, but most front line officers will have full riot gear, face shields and batons and will form up in what is called a skirmish line. This line will have a fearsome appearance and is purely psychological to deter rioters from advancing. They will either stamp their left foot while marching, or if equipped with shields, tap the shield with the end of their baton on every step to create an intimidation factor for the rioter.

Riot control really is all about less than lethal weapons, and police love to use things like rock salt, rubber bullets, bean bags, water cannons, Tasers, and batons. The logic here is that although they are temporarily unruly, these are after all, American citizens and thus

police are loathe to open fire on a crowd since that sort of thing is wholly unpalatable to the populace in this day and age.

There are, however, some exceptions. Should the crowd put the officers in peril of life, they are allowed to defend themselves. Self defense is an inherent right in police and military rules of engagement, and deadly force will be authorized if the rioters begin using what constitutes deadly force against law enforcement. If the rioters begin hurling Molotov cocktails, rocks, missiles (arrows, sticks, pipes), or firing conventional firearms – expect the use of firearms in retaliation. Initial strategy may attempt to disperse the crowd with CS gas (aka tear gas) that is designed for one purpose and one purpose only – to get someone who is standing in a cloud of it to move somewhere else. CS gas produces overwhelming lacrimation (tearing) and is nearly impossible to breathe in. A person's initial reaction when exposed to CS gas is to simply run – it provokes a powerful reaction due to its immediate suffocating power.



Just in case things really go south, police will usually have a line of designated marksmen or snipers far in the rear, over-watching the whole event through a ten power scope. These people are expert shooters armed with precision weapons and upon command, can be used to eliminate violent agitators one at a time. They are seldom used and kept in reserve for true ugliness. A more common way to deal with individual agitators is to form up an arrest or *snatch team* – a group of heavily armored officers who will emerge from the wall of

shields that is the skirmish line, subdue or club a particular agitator, then pick him up, dragging him back behind the skirmish line and thus removing him from the crowd without killing him. The goal here is to remove the negative influence much like removing the fuel from a fire.

Conventional police riot control strategies work well for small and medium size riots but lose effectiveness for anything approaching something like the LA Riots of 1992 simply because the police are undermanned and ill equipped to deal with rioters who are returning fire. Remember, the presumption in most North American police agencies is that they will not expect to come under fire from multiple armed assailants in a coordinated fashion...that is the job of the....

## **Military**

The nation's first line of defense from a military perspective will be the state's National Guard. National Guardsmen form part of the country's military force and are a reserve component of the United States Army. They appear identical to the Army in every way, attend the same schools, receive the same training, and use the same equipment. It used to be that the National Guard was strictly a



*Army National Guard photo/Sp. Eddie Siguenza/Released*

stateside force, but nowadays, over 50% of American combat power in Afghanistan or Iraq is comprised of Guardsmen. These citizen soldiers work normal civilian jobs until they are called up for a natural disaster or riot.

The problem with National Guardsmen (or any military force for that matter) is that the bulk of their training is combat oriented. Most Guardsmen deployed during the LA Riots were either Infantry or Military Police troops. You may not understand what the significance of this means to you as someone trapped in a riot, but it is very important to understand their mentality.

An infantryman's prime objective on the battlefield is to close with the enemy, engage him in close combat, and destroy him using any means available from crew served weapons all the way down to bayonets. A military policeman's duty on the battlefield is to provide route security, conduct convoys, take enemy prisoners, and run prisoner of war camps. As you can see from their job descriptions, none of these two types of soldiers are particularly suited for civil disturbances such as riots. They just don't think that way, nor should they.

Of course, all Guardsmen receive a degree of riot control training using much of the same tactics that police use, and using much of the same equipment such as batons and shields, but it really is a sidebar to their normal missions. It's safe to say that when the military is called in to suppress a riot, a group of professionally trained killers is being brought into the equation, temporarily being told not to kill anyone unless absolutely necessary. Sometimes, breakdowns in communications occur because of this different mindset.

During the LA Riots of 1992, a squad of Marines was accompanying two LA Sheriffs on a patrol. As is typical in this scenario, the police are in charge and call the shots – the military is only there for protection. One LA Sheriff noticed a suspected looter who dove into a nearby building to hide himself. The officers quickly told the Marines to take up positions around the building and await instructions. The Marines took up their positions, watching the building. As the LA Sheriffs moved in to apprehend the suspect, one of them said to the Marines "Cover me!"

The Marines did as they were told, and the entire squad opened fire on the building in force. The police waved their arms frantically, “Cease fire...Cease fire!” – asking them what the heck they thought they were doing. The puzzled Marine squad leader responded – “We were covering you!” Unbeknownst to the civilian policemen – the command “Cover me” in military speak means to lay down a wall of suppressive fire. Thankfully, no one was hurt!

It is precisely this disconnect that makes the military an imposing force and potentially dangerous foe in a riot – even if you happen to be caught in the middle of it and are blameless. Understanding their mentality will go a long way in knowing how to deal with them should the day come when they are deployed in your neighborhood.

## **RIOT SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

Obviously the best way to survive a riot is not to be caught in one. While this mainly applies to smaller, localized ones, realize the following:

- No matter how strongly you feel about a cause, it’s never a good idea to be a demonstrator when the potential for violence exists. The more heated you feel about a particular cause or movement, the more you should avoid a demonstration where tempers might flare.
- Avoid participating in demonstrations, sit-ins, rallies, or similar when an opposing faction is scheduled to be there to counter protest your cause. These sorts of events are usually peaceful but may turn ugly very quickly.
- If a demonstration is scheduled to take place near your home or place of work that you have no part in, consider leaving for the day, just in case.

In a riot that is the size of the Los Angeles Riots of 1992, there may be no way to escape. Tons of innocent people were exposed to the violence and mayhem that the riot caused simply because they lived in a particular area. True widespread civil unrest requires a completely different strategy and a good solid plan.

## RIOTING ON A CITYWIDE SCALE

The first thing to consider if you live in an urban area that is at risk from excessive civil disturbance activities (most large American cities are!) is to have a plan of escape. As with an impending hurricane, plague, nuclear strike – whatever – the best plan of action to ensure survivability is to *get out!* Since many thousands of other people will have the same idea as you, it's important to have a preplanned method of escape and multiple routes out. You need to:

- Have a means of escape that is not dependent on freeways or major interstates.
- Have a place to go to, a preplanned rally destination where you can meet up with loved ones or allies.
- Have a pre packed bug out bag with food, communications, and supplies for 72 hours as a minimum.
- Have a concealable method of self defense at hand.



- Have backups to all of the above!

There are also several reasons why a riot is a much more challenging scenario to escape from than any other natural disaster:

- Police and military have no way of knowing if you are a good guy or bad guy – everyone will more or less be treated equally – with force, increased scrutiny, and mistrust

- Other citizens who are rioting may just wind up being your enemies and you might just fall prey to people who have been temporarily relieved of their sanity – people who might be your neighbors!
- Opportunists will be looting in full force and may see you – the fleeing innocent – as a target of opportunity.

All of these considerations aside, it's still a good idea to attempt escape if it's early enough and you can manage it.

## I'M STUCK, THE ROADS ARE SEALED- WHAT NOW?

You need to hunker down and wait it out. What you do next could decide whether you live or die! The most important strategy at this point is a complete, utter, and absolute low profile. As the old Japanese proverb goes, the *nail that sticks up will be hammered down*. Here are some tips:

- If you must be on the streets, make sure your clothing is anonymous and blends in with the surroundings! No tactical gear, no camouflage, no cargo pants or military boots. As one US Marine said of the LA Riots – “a pair of Adidas track pants may just save your life!” Avoid the image of the stereotypical prepper or tactical survivalist at all costs. You will be viewed as someone who could be a threat and most likely has weapons and supplies on his person!
- If you're at home, a World War II blackout mentality will reign supreme. Do not run generators, even if the power is out. Black out all windows and observe strict light and noise discipline. Keep all doors and windows locked and ensure your home looks boring, average, and a bad target for looters. This may involve parking expensive or desirable vehicles inside the garage.



- The key is to blend in. Do not let your appearance or your home's appearance be unique in any way. Don't give rioters or looters a reason to hit your house.

Should the need arise to defend your home, ensure the following preparations have been met:

- Your home defense weapons should reflect the targets you wish to engage. This means rifles for medium ranges, and pistols and shotguns for short range work. Ensure you have plenty of ammunition since resupply will not be possible.

- Make sure you have at least 72 hours worth of food at home – preferably, much more. Don't advertise this fact to your friends – they will remember it when push comes to shove! Remember



that civil disturbances in cases like the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina lasted for weeks...

- Scout out firing positions and fields of fire within your home well in advance of having to use them. Know where you can position yourself to see the streets, your front and rear doors, and the extents of your property.
- Band together with your neighbors before a riot or civil unrest and have a coordinated plan for mutual assistance – you cover my house, I'll cover yours!
- Keep documents on hand identifying yourself and the ownership of your property in case the military or police show up. They will have no way of knowing if you are legitimately occupying the property!

Surviving a riot is just like surviving any other natural disaster with one added element – police, military, and other civilians may just be against you, temporarily. Self sufficiency and keeping an ultra low profile is the key here – the longer you can wait it out with your family without having to scour the streets for food or supplies and thus expose yourself, the better off you will be. Resist the urge to devolve into the looter mentality, even if the mall across the street is being ransacked. Not only do you run the risk of being shot or arrested as a looter, it's also not the right thing to do from a morality perspective.

Realize that civil disturbance can come to your city and can start for even the most trivial of reasons! Be prepared!

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