

Preparing Yourself

By Thomas Brooks, KG5ZSU

June 2023

What Everyone Needs

Humans require four things to survive: water, shelter, food, and protection. Generally speaking, all of them are equally important, and humans need each of those things if they are to survive any length of time. These are requirements for life.

Lack of water will kill or seriously injure you in a day or two, depending on the climate. Lack of food can cause health problems, including poor thinking skills and lethargy, and death after prolonged starvation. Lack of shelter will cause anything ranging from severe sun burn to hypothermia to insect bites, potentially very quickly. Lack of protection makes one vulnerable to disease, physical attack from wildlife or people, or emotional trauma from anything imaginable.

Understanding Threats

Threats: dangerous people, places, locations, or things, are what causes an inability to fulfill the requirements for life. If any one of those four necessities are unobtainable or unstable, lives are on the line. Threats may take the form of severe weather conditions, storm damage, riots, power outages, or people, just to name a few examples. A threat materialized and active is a situation: new threats may present themselves here.

Threat analysis is a complex subject. In certain situations there will be needs which aren't clearly explained with a bulleted list. However, water/shelter/food/protection are required for all situations. As a result of preparing to meet those requirements by oneself, an increased potential to survive a variety of situations is developed, even though many variables were not evaluated before hand.

Training and preparing to survive three days without external input, using only what one has stored away, is a good foundation to build on. Without a solid base of the necessities, nothing else really matters. As skills develop, so should the ability to analyze threats and situations in order to evaluate more variables so that they can be prepared for as well.

Always bring the constants, not the variables, to the equation.

Why Everyone Should Strive for Resiliency

“Preparing” is making sure a person has what they need for a specific duration (length of time), at a certain time (season, day/night, holidays), in a particular space (immediate surroundings), at a

given location (a point on a map, considers geography, demographics, etc.). “Prepared” means that for a given situation (consisting of a duration, time, space, and a location), one has a reasonable expectation of meeting all four necessities of survival. This means that their probability of surviving—getting our alive and well—is high.

When someone can plan to meet these requirements before meeting the threat (severe storm, riots, etc.) and getting caught in a dangerous situation, it is significantly safer and easier to survive. Moreover, it becomes much easier to return to normal after the event, if one’s “normal” is deviated from at all. For instance, fuel is often scarce before, during, and after, man-made or natural disasters. One can circumvent the shortage and continue life as normal if he keeps a reserve of fuel in stock. The same applies to bottled water and canned goods, or other food sources. The best preparations and plans should make the effects of threats on our lives as insignificant as possible.

The result is resiliency. It allows one to be a stable aid to others in need: the very thing amateur radio operators, first-responders, and disaster relief workers should strive for.

The Essentials List

The following websites are good resources for basic check lists:

Ready.gov <https://www.ready.gov/>

FEMA: What Goes Into an Emergency Kit

<https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20210318/how-build-kit-emergencies>

FEMA: Basic Preparedness

https://www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/basic_preparedness.pdf

The American Red Cross: How to Prepare for Emergencies

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies.html>

Please note that these are reputable websites that share very similar guidelines to those discussed above. They should be studied for more complete lists than shown below.

For water, at the very minimum, every person should have three days of water in storage. (Rotate your stock! Bottles break and decay.) Multiple sources must be obtained as quickly as possible. Catching dew or plant moisture isn’t going to help you. Water mains and well pumps are not 100% reliable and may fail. Keep a filter (like a Sawyer Mini) and bleach for disinfecting water from ponds or tanks if you have to—this is a very complex subject, research it. Personal water filter bottles are great additions. GRAYL bottles are excellent. Keep a kettle or pot or something to boil water in, along with at least one heat source capable of boiling it.

As for food, numerous companies manufacture emergency ration bars. Datrex and SOS are two notable brands. The bricks last for years and are compact, but the Mylar can be punctured, so handle with care. They are very, very dry. Keep at least one of these, and a box of good protein/granola bars. Canned and dried foods store well, but once again, rotate your stock. Keep three days of food per person whenever and wherever possible. Anything past three days takes some careful study to do right.

But, its not unheard of for stores to be closed or out of food during emergencies, which means three days is the bare minimum to keep on hand.

Shelter isn't hard. Just remember that homes and buildings are frequently destroyed in severe weather. A good sleeping bag will be a lifesaver in cold weather, especially if the power goes out, or you have to sleep in your car. Add a waterproof bivy cover and the kit should handle rain and wind. Pack a tarp or two whenever possible, along with some 550 cord and tent pegs to tie it down. Shelter also includes clothing, like boots, gloves, hats, etc. Dress for the weather, in layers, and keep extra gear on hand in case the weather conditions change or clothing needs changed. Always pack a few changes of socks. Mylar blankets and large trash bags are good to have as well. Don't forget some duck tape.

Protection comes in various forms. First and foremost, the mind needs to be conditioned and hardened such that it is not easily disturbed or disquieted. Strong trust in God is one aspect. The second is careful and consistent training: this allows one to follow rehearsed sequences without exerting much effort and develop a familiarity and comfort with his skills and equipment. Security systems, door locks, and self defense tools (force multipliers) are physical aspects of the puzzle, among other things.

Protection also includes first aid supplies: they keep you from succumbing to disease and infection. Every IFAK (individual first aid kit) should include: haemostatic gauze (QuickClot) and or powder (CELOX), gauze, a compression bandage (Israeli or OLAES modular), a few adhesive bandages, iodine swabs, antibiotic ointment, antihistamine tablets, NSAID tablets, anti diarrhea tablets, tweezers, a small vial of hydrogen peroxide, and perhaps a dose or two of potent colloidal silver. Add a tourniquet and chest wound seals if you're ambitious.

Identification, titles/deeds, cash, communications equipment, and tradable items are also necessities in most situations. For instance, at least one local town was left with no ability to process credit card transactions after severe weather in June of this year. One may need to trade with other individuals for necessary supplies, like food. Just remember that in a bad situation, help may not come, and you are competing with a very large number of people who expect help from police, AAA Roadside Assistance, or fire departments.

When That Isn't It

Every human has unique needs. Some need medications, others need a chocolate bar. Babies and children have special requirements as well, which may include dietary needs, physical/emotional support, etc. These needs must be met during emergencies or damage will be done. Some people will need to prepare for themselves and others; other people will need someone to prepare for them.

Remember, plan to get out for alive and *well*. If this stipulation isn't made, than according to the plans, it doesn't matter if someone is traumatized, worn out, sick, or injured.

Of course, once provision have been made for the primary requirements (water, shelter, food, protection) one can focus on plans for communications, transportation, disaster relief efforts, and contingencies for those plans and so on. He can even add "niceities" to his supplies if they don't detract from the over all utility of the kit. But unless each person makes sure he can survive without extra aid, then he is a vulnerability to other efforts whether he has a radio go-kit or not. Each person should have

his or her immediate safety and the safety of their families at the highest priority on their list. All other planning and preparing is of little to no importance if lives are lost or scarred in the process.

Pets and livestock should also be considered, and they have the same necessities humans do. One rancher has contingencies in place to move all his livestock into pasture with ponds for water if the power goes out. Shelter is available under trees, and grass grows on the ground...most of the time, he says.

Always remember to focus on the necessities for survival. If they aren't kept in mind, people will panic and over buy things like toilet tissue and chips rather than bottled water and canned goods.

Evasion and Escape

Lastly, if at all possible, avoid dangerous situations completely. Identifying what puts lives at risk can allow people to avoid the resulting bad situations entirely. If you aren't there, then the threat can't hurt you. Go out of town if severe weather is rolling through. Don't put yourself in any risky situations unnecessarily. Obey evacuation orders or shelter warnings. Be proactive!

Study so that you can train. Train so that you can prepare. Prepare so you can avoid.

Until next time,

keep your powder dry, your Bibles open, and your hands folded in prayer.

73 from KG5ZSU