

# **Empty Shelves:**

*Organizing your corner of an American Apocalypse*



**Mark Sargent**

***Summary:***

A quick, “how to” guide that helps the **average American** weather the storm of a national crisis.

It's a workday afternoon and the power has just gone out in your city. You have no cell phone, a quarter tank of gas, and you don't know how to contact your children. You haven't done a single pushup in the last five years. The radio in your car is only picking up emergency broadcasts. You have some difficult decisions to make in the next 48 hours that will change your life forever, and you're not ready. Don't worry. You're not alone. You are about to become an “armchair survivalist.”

If you are like a lot of Americans who work behind a computer, this is your worst nightmare. What you only thought could happen in the movies is your new life. You're not nearly resourceful enough to go to the woods and "live off the land". Forget all that nonsense about skinning your own rabbit and eating insects. You're going to go back to your home and be with your family.

So make the most of it. There are plenty of supplies within walking distance of your house that will help make life bearable during the dark hours. You will learn to move without the mob, to band together with friends and neighbors if possible, and to keep everything you hold dear safe from the raging population that will develop into a destructive mob before your eyes. You can do this. You now have help.

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## **Preface:**

The text you are about to read was initially designed for the worst case scenario, one where the power goes out, leaving the average person “in the dark”. The full version covers everything leading up to that point, and a lot of theory regarding the current state of the country and what the average citizen would see during a severe national crisis.

After the initial text was completed, I started working on an audio version which was accompanied by a slide show for effect. This was eventually going to be uploaded to Youtube as an instructional series.

Then I read a very disheartening news story about how 75% of the people that went back to New Orleans after Katrina didn't bother to keep emergency supplies on hand. Let me say that again. The city drowned and many people suffered greatly because they didn't have a backup plan. When everything dried out and they went back to their homes, they STILL didn't prepare for a worst-case scenario.

So this project was shelved until the 2008 financial crisis got into full swing. Friends encouraged me to start it up again, despite my objections that a “financial crisis” is not the end of the world.

Or is it?

The United States power grid is run mainly from a combination of coal, hydro-electric, and nuclear plants. If all the banks fail at once, the lights will still be on. You may not have a job, but the television stations will still broadcast. The internet will still be up.

It's the things we **can't think of** that worry us. What if there is another severe oil shortage, or massive terrorist attack, anything large that disrupts food or energy supplies? That is the risk that you have to decide for yourself. Your family, your friends, your lifestyle is important to you. If you went out of your way to get life and homeowners insurance, maybe you should think about taking a few extra steps to insure you and the ones you love can weather the unpredictable storms, in whatever forms they take.

What you will read starts with a basic scenario, just to give you a frame of mind. It then covers bare bones needs, what you can do to make things more comfortable, and how to protect it. After that comes some advanced urban survival tricks, along with a longer term plan, all in language the average American can understand.

If you are reading this during an actual crisis, then God be with you,

Mark Sargent

## Chapter 1: Hell in a Hand Basket

**"In every American there is an air of incorrigible innocence, which seems to conceal a diabolical cunning."**

**-A. E. Housman**



No matter what crisis develops, you are at best, an "armchair survivalist". The country you live in has so many layers of convenience, so many basic needs that are taken for granted, so many interconnected systems of daily living that we are dependent on, describing them all would take volumes. Suffice it to say that we are a land of luxurious, easy to use, hands free, soft touch product users. It has taken us about 80 years to reach this wonderful pinnacle of "runaway consumerism". Our Internet is tied to our phones, which is tied to our banks. We can now use the cable company to watch television, use Internet, and phone lines, all on one bill. With even a moderate amount of money, and some online shopping, we now never have to leave our homes to survive.

Even though I grew up when the CD and computer were new, it is still a marvel to watch the new technological toys we are putting out every year. Our businesses are tied to elaborate wireless email and networking systems. Our cars now have built in DVD, GPS, and push button roadside service. Our boats have the ability to determine global location at all times. You can track your loved ones plane flight from gate to gate. Packages can be rerouted in transit, with a single text message.

America has, for all intents and purposes, made it as easy as it's going to get. Congratulations red white and blue, you have done what all other nations have aspired to achieve! You've created a society of out-of-shape, lazy, Madden playing, pizza ordering, latte chugging, "text anywhere" zombies who at the first sign of trouble will probably just start chewing off their own arms for food.

Maybe I'm being too critical. Americans can deal with a crisis, as long as it's small, and the inconvenience is short. Several years ago, in Boulder, Colorado I witnessed my first "true" power outage. The entire Western United States grid had gone down, and our software office had gone dark. It was the middle of a summer afternoon; the sun was still beaming through most of the windows.

Our office phones were dead, along with the Internet. Cell phones were up, for a while anyway. With the systems down our office manager didn't know what to do with the employees, so we were given the rest of the afternoon off. I took a short walk down to the main drag where the highway ended and Main Street began. I watched, as cars in a large intersection didn't know exactly what to do. The stoplights were out, and it was hard to tell who arrived at an intersection first, what with six lanes on each side. Some cars just went for it, some stayed longer than they should. Tempers were raised, and honking horns were frequent.

Bank employees just stood outside in the parking lot. The grocery stores were forced to let people abandon their carts while they escorted them out of the store. The aisles were too dark to see where to put back the items.

The city of 90,000+ was at a standstill, and it stayed that way for the next 4 hours. In less than an hour local police went to the busiest intersections within the city limits and directed traffic by hand. It had probably been a while since any of them had used their whistles, but they did a pretty good job.

Store managers stood in front of their shops and turned people away. Some simply locked their doors. Everything went fairly smoothly. I did see a few people try to enter the grocery store closest to me, each time the manager explaining that the cash registers couldn't ring them up. Not that it mattered; the back of the store was pitch black.

Sometime later that afternoon the lights came back on, and everyone went back to what they were doing. In some ways it felt like a large fire drill. Everyone calmly walked outside, milled around quietly, and waited for it to be over. What makes this situation different from the nasty version that starts looting and puts human life at risk?

Most of the people in town didn't know **why** the power went out.

It's the unknown that gives people pause. It's the **mystery** that forces people to stop and think about their decisions. Within an hour after the lights stopped working, people in their cars listening to radio stations still broadcasting found out the entire Western power grid was in the middle of a rolling blackout. There is still some debate on where exactly the breakdown occurred. The important thing was that the authorities didn't tell anyone exactly what happened, or how long it would take to fix. It's good policy. Never give the public information they could use against you.

To put it another way, if a teacher walks out of a classroom, the kids will have one impression. When that same teacher **runs** out of the classroom, and is then seen getting into their car and

driving away, the children then develop a very different attitude.

Compare the West Coast grid failure, or any East Coast Blackout, with one where the *reason* is exposed immediately like the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake.

Watching CNN during the first few days after that particular California quake was surreal. There was some stunning video footage. Dark beauty as water mains gushed from the streets, fire burning in the middle of the water through an ignited gas main. I sat in mild shock as I watched Korean gun shop owners standing on the roof of their store, firing wildly at looters that came within 100 yards, the police nowhere in sight.

And then there were the shopping mall videos. In any modern structure, there are some backup systems when the power goes out. Hospitals have generators that can keep a surgical team going for a short duration. Many buildings have some sort of emergency lighting, and a few select ones have cameras with battery backups, catching everything that people do when they think they aren't being watched.

The Northridge California earthquake proved something we all know, but rarely admit. For a great many of us, we do what we *can get away with*. Cameras caught the looting action as it unfolded. The earthquake hits, the lights go out. Within *seconds*, the inner hallways of the shopping malls erupted in chaos. People of all ages ransacked the shelves with greedy abandon. What surprised me wasn't that they did it, but the **speed** at which everything escalated. The looting was immediate, reckless, and illogical. Electronics, shirts, shoes, alcohol, everything stripped from the stores **except** the basic necessities.

No one stole water or food. They stole cigarettes and alcohol. They didn't steal batteries, they stole cell phones. Why?

Because the public was armed with very valuable **information** and then their short-term instincts took over. They knew *eventually* the city would get the power back on. The gas and water mains would be repaired, and sooner or later, the police would be able to protect the stores, just not right now. The looting masses knew that this crisis was limited to their part of California, and it wouldn't last forever.

Food, water, anything that might help them in a real emergency was the furthest thing from their minds. The luxury items were the main target. Anything that was expensive or sellable was priority. These items were important because they knew the currency would still be valid when the lights came back on. The physical dollar would still have value because only part of California was affected. As long as the currency remains intact, there is a good chance that normal life will continue, provided of course that active food distribution lines exist.

The aftermath of Katrina showed us an even darker aspect of economic disruption. The earthquake was replaced with flooding, and again, the power was out for an extended period of time. The city population realized that the hurricane and large amounts of standing water caused the blackout, and looting began immediately. The same patterns started, but then evolved.

At first, the looting, like in Los Angeles, started with luxury items. Electronics, shoes, cigarettes, liquor, and firearms, were taken quickly. After a while, as the water didn't subside, and there were no signs of National Guard, the basic items became much more attractive. Food, water, batteries, the things that could keep you alive, **these** replaced everything else.

Law enforcement officials were overwhelmed, and the water hindered their mobility. In LA, most of the streets were still drivable after the earthquake. In New Orleans, some of the streets had water higher than the roof of a truck. On foot, the police and sheriff's department became fatigued quickly. A number of them just gave up and deserted their posts, or worse, they joined in with the looters.

Some of the authorities did have a plan. Before the winds had even died down, a local SWAT team had been dispatched to an outlying Sam's club with orders to secure it for "local forces". During a state of emergency, authorities have broad powers to take private supplies and buildings for their use. The storeowner was contacted and a list of all supplies taken was to be billed back to the New Orleans police department. This debt was eventually forgiven once the extent of the disaster was known. While some would condemn this law enforcement unit for what could potentially be branded as a "selfish act", it hardly compares with a different division of the same police department, which was accused of breaking into a local Cadillac dealership and driving out of the city with 40 new cars while the city quickly filled up with water.

At night, gangs roamed the dark streets, creating anarchy wherever they went. During the day, the masses emptied the stores of anything and everything. It was a limited exercise in chaos management. What would a general population do if left on their own without outside help for an undetermined period of time?

The only thing that couldn't be measured was the same population 'without hope.' All the New Orleans residents who gathered around the superdome had some faith and were counting on aid. There was a small army of reporters on the scene who had flown in on helicopters. The news teams and camera crews constantly reminded the people that help was eventually coming. This and the fact that the cameras were recording many sections of the city probably helped save it.

What would happen to that same city if the reporters weren't there, and the citizens knew that the National Guard wasn't coming?

It's the one thing in America we haven't seen yet. What happens without help from the outside? Everything we have dealt with until now has been contained, been compartmentalized. An Earthquake happens in San Francisco, we send help. The Mississippi overflows and we send help. Like a giant immune system, we absorb and adjust. The question still remains: At what point are we stretched too thin, and can the American culture pull itself back from the brink?

To be sure, not all of America is vulnerable. For sake of argument, we're going to leave out all the remote farming communities because they are remarkably self-sufficient. If you live in one of these very small agricultural groups, you still might be able to get something out of this, such as what the nearest large town closest to you might be going through, what random groups of cars might be thinking as they drive up your long country road, or more importantly, what kind

of essential goods you might be able to trade for, and where the nearest place to get them could be.

In a long-term environmental disaster, farms stand to lose more than others, depending on the situation. If the natural catastrophe in question were a comet, it would suggest that crops would have a hard time growing. If that's the case, then livestock and perishables should be traded away as quickly as possible. A farm has a lot of assets going for it, though most would be short term.

If you happen to have a survival cabin somewhere in the North West states, such as Montana, Idaho, or the Eastern part of Washington, then you already know this drill, and quite frankly, have probably spent a huge amount of time preparing for the worst. You are therefore excluded from most of the chapters. Enjoy your powdered milk and cured meat sitting next to your propane or wood stove. I'm sure you're very content.

The only other people I have to exclude is anyone currently living or about to move to Utah. For those of you who don't know, "practicing Mormons" keep at least a year's supply of food and water on hand for each member of their family. It's a religious obligation. Sounds a bit strange I know, but from a "survival" standpoint, I can't really argue the logic. With this in mind, and I can see some of you cringing already, if America starts collapsing in on itself, Utah will most likely be the last to go quietly into the night. It's simple math. They already have an extra year's supply of food right out of the gate, in non-rationed portions.

The rest of us live in a suburb, our own version of "Elm Street." You have at least one strip mall close by and maybe a full size indoor shopping center down the road. There are fast food chains within a mile or two, and then the usual restaurants like Chili's, Cracker Barrel, etc. Outside that you have a bulk store like Sam's Club or Costco, or both. The neighborhoods interconnect endlessly, and gas stations are plenty. You know the names of some of the neighbors on your street, the name of your children's school, but probably couldn't say who the mayor was.

Most of your bills are paid online, and most of your direct purchases are done by credit card, which by the way is carrying a balance most months. You have car payments, a mortgage (or two), and have either been divorced, separated, or are seeing a marriage counselor.

You have a 20% of being a smoker, and a 67% chance of being at least 20 pounds overweight (33% that it's 50 pounds or more).

You could have some relatives in state, some out of state. You may have a pet, probably at least one dog, or a few cats. If your yard is big enough, it's possible you plant a small garden when the weather is nice. You have a favorite restaurant or bar that you frequent.

Your office is 10-20 miles away. You either have a large cubicle or a smaller office with no windows. You work hard, but think you're underpaid. This may, or may not be, your life.

What do all these things have to do with the scenario? In a major crisis all of these little details will affect your outcome in one way or another. These are the cards you have to play with. The

dealer now shows their hand.

**Chapter 2: The cards you've been dealt**  
**"He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened"**  
**- Lao Tzu**



You are at your office. The power has just gone out. Cell phones work, but you are having a hard time getting an outside line. You leave your cube, walk down the aisle, and look out the window. All the office buildings next to you are out as well.

If you are like many offices, upper management will assume that the outage is limited to a few blocks. They will wait a while to see if things come back on. The emergency lights in the bathrooms, as well as the plumbing, still work. Everyone at the office is bored, because all computers and phones are down. A few people try their laptops, but they can't get out to the Internet.

Boredom turns to annoyance as an hour goes by. If it's before lunch, management may wait another hour. If it's after lunch, they probably just call it a day and send everyone home.

Traffic is a little slower on the drive back. Rush hour will be staggered because of the outage. All stoplights are down, and single police units direct the cars through busy intersections. You get home. The lights are of course, out, but the water is running. You have natural gas, but the power to run the furnace isn't on. You have a wood stove, but only a few logs.

Your spouse isn't home yet. Maybe he / she went to get the kids. The dog looks at you for attention. Another hour goes by. Your family arrives. The kids go upstairs to their rooms, which are lit through the windows by the afternoon sun. They try to entertain themselves using portable electronics. It wouldn't have been their first choice, but at least it's a distraction.

Two more hours go by, and you start to get curious.

There are no portable radios in the house, so you use the one in your car. Most of the stations aren't broadcasting. The few that you do find are playing an endless loop of the emergency broadcast system. There are a few other people on the block doing the same thing. You tell your spouse. The kids overhear, but don't understand. The dog still wants attention.

These are the cards you've been dealt. You have some decisions to make, and they can't wait. Don't worry. You'll be fine. Follow the steps.

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### **Step 1: Gain some confidence, right now.**

Get yourself in the right frame of mind, and do it quickly. Don't assume the worst, because it will eat you up. Try not to cover all your bases right away. Organize your priorities. As of right now you don't have any appointments or meetings. You don't have any flights to catch.

Your primary concern is the comfort and safety of your immediate family. They are looking to you for support, for reassurance, for guidance. Show confidence at all times. The old military posture still applies: For good or bad, be confident in your decisions. If the decision was wrong, then change direction, but do it with confidence. Nothing makes people lose faith quicker than watching their leader waiver when important things are on the line.

Confidence gives you strength. Confidence gives you the ability to do things without much question from others. Confidence allows you to walk the edge, or cross the line if needed. If you're committed that it's a good decision and you can confidently explain why, there is a solid chance that others will follow you, back you, and defend your ideas in your absence.

### **Step 2: Don't rush.**

In the long term, seconds aren't going to make that much of a difference. Moving faster than normal gets the blood levels up, and teases the adrenalin factor. It also helps induce panic, and with it some bad decision-making. Don't do it. Be brisk, but be calm. Keep the energy levels at a managed pace. Don't drag anyone anywhere. Speak to your family in low tones, but be serious. Don't yell. It doesn't help. If your children don't want to listen, try to explain what's going on, but do it logically. "Just because I said so" probably won't fly. Think of something else.

### **Step 3: Should you stay or should you go?**

It's a difficult choice, and you may or may not have to make it. Is there somewhere you would rather be? Do you have family members that live within driving distance, and by that I mean how far you can go with **the gas that's in your tank right now**. If they aren't within range, you're not going. If you're thinking of a round trip and you don't think you'll make it back, you're not going. The only exception here is if you have a neighbor who you're close with, someone you can borrow a vehicle from.

There is some breathing room here. If you have a pretty good idea that your tank will run dry within a few miles of your destination, and you have no intention of coming back, then discuss the plan with your spouse and make the call. Keep in mind your betrothed may want to go to his / her relatives house, or have them come to you. This needs to be decided first thing. The window for these options gets closed fairly quickly in the grand scheme of things. Deciding in the next few hours will make the situation a lot easier on you.

If you do decide to vacate your house, there are a few things you need to take care of. Assume that you won't be coming back for a while. This means you should take everything that you might find useful. Leave a few lights on so that if the power comes back there will be light if needed, and contrary to what others may tell you, don't lock anything. The average house is designed to **deter** crime, not prevent it. If your door is locked, and someone really wants to get in, they will just choose a window, or sliding glass door.

You're not prepping your house for when you go to Europe. When you're touring France, neighbors and friends back home don't usually ransack your home looking for supplies. When these groups eventually figure out that it is vacant, they are coming in, locked door or not. If it's unlocked, and you do return, at least you won't come back to broken glass and shattered deadbolts.

Think carefully of other family members who might be in driving distance. Will they be trying to get to you? Do you have close friends with no family in the area who might look you up? If you answered "maybe" to the question, then play it safe and leave a few simple notes. One on the kitchen counter is good. If you want to give the neighbors a heads up, tape a quick one to the door. Something like:

*Went to parents farm in Arlington,  
451 East Maple Drive  
Left May 14<sup>th</sup>  
Jason, Carol, Timmy, Julie*

The names may seem unnecessary, but it's good to let people know who was in the group.

So go already. Load up the family and pets. If the pets aren't that important, leave a back door open so they can come and go as they please. Animal's survival instincts are honed a lot sharper than yours oh balding monkey. They also don't have a conscious to deal with.

Good luck in your journey, and when you get there, read on!

#### **Step 4: Taking stock.**

At this point you've either decided to stay, or have already arrived at your destination. See? You're making decisions already, and you haven't even thought about eating people!

Seriously, you're doing great. The next step is figuring out what you have, and in most cases, what you don't have but need. This is probably the most time consuming part of the beginning,

but it doesn't have to be full of anxiety. To make it easier, I've come up with a few easy to follow lists. These lists include a comprehensive set of "must haves", "should haves", and "why nots" that you should be at least thinking about **prior** to this day of reckoning. Before we get to that though, let's see if there is anyone close by that can help you in acquiring the items on your list. It may be time to make peace with the lady who consistently lets her lab take a big dump on your lawn.

### **Chapter 3: Band of Neighbors** **"True friends stab you in the front"** **– Oscar Wilde**



A survivalist in a suburban setting, is a strange paradox. On one hand, standard *Rambo* type doctrine preaches that the survivalist *must* be alone, because there is no one that can be trusted. They should live a solitary life, filled with religious discipline and sacrifice. They are a human fortress. They are a piece of metal. They are emotionally devoid of mercy and kindness.

I appreciate that the "true survivalist" is committed to their trade, much like a serious method actor. You are not this person. You are a social creature. After half a day sitting home alone you are climbing the drapes, looking for some interaction with the rest of the community. Then again, maybe you just play computer games all day long.

For you people who consider solitary confinement the ultimate torture, I will share a secret with you. The chances of you and your family living longer than the lone individual increases dramatically if you can get by with a little help from your friends. There is safety in numbers. You will find a better variety of skills with a group. A group has a collective mind, and if set on

a goal, can come with creative ways of accomplishing it.

But there's a catch. You have to pick the right people, and after that, no one joins the club unless the entire group is in agreement. Trust is **everything** here. The wrong people join the group, and it can fall apart. I'll use a friend of mine as an example. Her approach to the neighborhood group is a good model of what can be expected.

### **The neighborhood of Renaissance, Colorado**



The power goes out, and right away it looks like it could be a long time before it, and order, is restored. A single mother in her late 30's starts the chain. She only contacts people she can trust, and all of these people have a useful skill that can benefit the group. She looks up a contractor to improvise repairs when things break or are destroyed. She finds a doctor to treat minor wounds, and assess major ones. She tracks down a good friend who is handy with firearms, because not everyone knows how to shoot. She contacts women who have a strong survival instinct. These are women who would fight to stay alive. No "girly girls" or useless "blob men" allowed. Everyone in this ensemble is motivated, and willing to do what it takes to weather the storm. Everyone chosen has something to bring to the table. In this situation, everyone's got game.

They all meet at one house, and decide the best place to "hold up." They decide to pool their resources and take shifts sleeping. Most importantly, they form a pact, and swear never to turn on each other, no matter how hungry, or how tired. Without this pact the group is vulnerable from within. There can be no "secret stashes" kept by anyone. To function as a single unit, everything has to be laid out on the table, right now. Any personal issues should be cleared up within 24 hours. They agree on a total of 8 people. This group could function as well with even 12 if needed. If members are added, and the social dynamics take a downward turn, then it needs to be changed, but done fairly.

They end up combining supplies from two houses that reside next to each other. They have battery powered 2 way camping radios, and use them frequently. At night, the groups are split evenly, in case of an emergency. Things work better than they had hoped. One of them gets an older power generator working, and another finds a way to hook it up to the direct TV. The doctor breaks into his own hospital and gets enough medical supplies to hold them for the duration. The gun enthusiast teaches everyone how to shoot with purpose.

The group decides against trading with other neighbors to increase inventory. It was a close vote, but in the end, the added risk of unwanted attention outweighed the additional supplies it generated. Their strategy is simple. Gather as many supplies as they could in the first few days of looting, then barricade themselves in their homes and keep a very low profile. Create the illusion that they are as desperate as anyone else. Giving the rest of the hungry community a small target is a solid plan. The neighborhood leaves them alone for the most part. Confidence is high that their friendship and wits will get them through this, and they may be right. It's a good start. - - -

I'm not going to go so far and say something cheesy like "with friendship anything is possible". It does help. I suppose a better saying is: *People are sometimes at their best when things are at their worst.* How I wish that were a consistent theme. There are a hundred things that could go wrong with the Renaissance group. There could be a hidden affair between couples. Someone with a criminal past could be exposed. There could be a psychological disorder that has been buried. There could be a unknown pregnancy.

There are also the routine survival problems. One couple is hoarding food for the kids; accusations of not giving their share, letting someone get hurt, etc. Any situation involving drama is possible, but then again, it could happen in a single family as well. The odds say that in the short term, the group scenario has some great advantages, both in resource gathering and protection. As supplies get thin, it can get more difficult. If the bonds of friendship are strong enough, the group has a chance of staying together to the bitter end, a great testament to the human spirit.

If you really want to be multiple steps ahead of the pack, then talk about this very scenario every few months over drinks during a neighborhood party. Feel the different people out, and see who would be up to the task. Make a mental note of whom you would choose, why you would choose them.. Ask them about what they would do in a major crisis, and where would they go. As long as the topic doesn't have a dark, brooding tone, your run of the mill neighbor will probably have an opinion on the subject. No need to be secretive, those not chosen will probably ignore this little "block conspiracy." Even if they do remember, they will be in no position to take advantage of it. You will have the better numbers.

A little trick would be the "bar fight buddies" scenario. Imagine yourself walking into a strange bar far out of town with a small group of people. Suddenly, a mild misunderstanding turns into a full-blown fight, and everyone in your party is going to get roughed up. Who would you want to be there with you, and why? Try not to think about who throws the *best* punch, but who can handle the stress without being traumatized. After the fight, who tries to take charge and who comforts whom? Look past the action; see who the best under stress. This should help.

## **Chapter 4: The important things**

**"Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. Scratch where it itches"**

**-Alice Roosevelt Longworth**



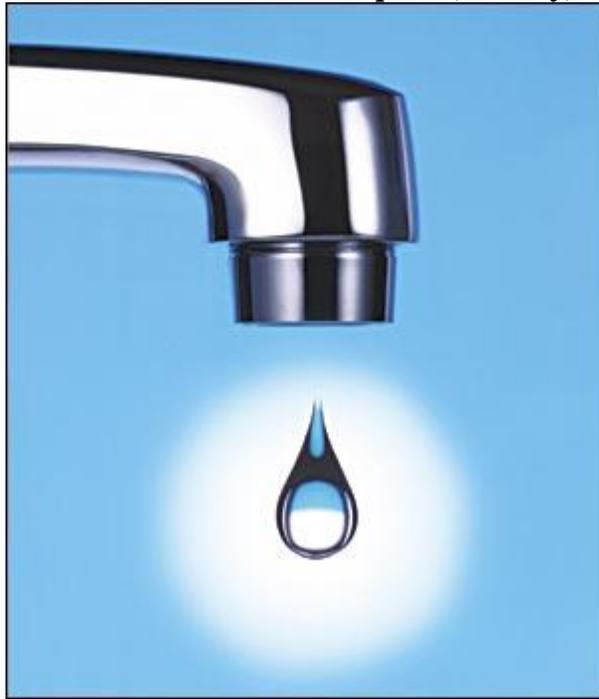
Over the years I have poured over many different survival lists for just about every disaster known. Aside for the ones that deal with different types of terrain, they share a lot of common threads.

We're not going to touch different types of landscapes and what you might need for each one. You're not in the mountains, or in a deep forest, or walking around in some high desert. You're probably in an average wood framed two-bedroom house with an unfinished basement at the end of a cul-de-sac. If your surroundings are more urban, you might be in a condo or apartment building. If you're a business traveler, you're most likely in a hotel. The dynamics are still the same. It's America, and there is a huge mish-mash of resources scattered for miles around. Some of these resources will be in your residence, and many will not.

There have been countless debates about the priority of "the survival list". The top ten, the top 20, what resource counts more? To make it easy to read and understand, I will cover each topic and group it into one of three levels (**Priority**, what you need right now), (**Secondary**, quality of life items), and (**optional / tradable**, which covers just about everything else, including things that aren't on my list, but could be on yours)

Each item or group of items will be given a detailed explanation and some will have examples. The hope here is to allow your mind to think of things as "resources" rather than items. Things that may not be of value to you may be in high demand by others. Each explanation will also cover where you can acquire the item in question, and when it might be available. Please keep in mind that in your environment, there will be many other people who will eventually want the same things you do. The difference here is that you will know exactly what you want before it happens, and you will have a very good idea of Where to get more **before** others do. Timing is important.

## 1. Water / consumable liquid: (Priority)



Yes it's obvious. Yes, it's critical. It's number one with a big bullet. You've heard it mentioned in movies, television, and books. We're made up mostly of water, and without it we won't last long. It's also taken for granted, and in many reported survival cases, overlooked early. Don't just skim past this, there are some things you need to know about the most common element on the Earth's surface.

The human body is basically just a large contained mass of water. All of our functions, from blood flow to digestion to neural activity, are encased in it. Water consumption is of course based on your weight, metabolism, and diet. Environment will also factor in to some degree. The basics remain the same.

You can only be away from water for about 72 hours, give or take. It is the one resource that is highly recommended **not** to be rationed. There have been many studies suggesting that drinking a normal amount and then running out is much easier on the body than cutting your drinking in half, then half again. When it comes to water, it's better to just pull the band-aid off quickly than to peel it slowly off your skin.

Water consumption is also affected by humidity. If you live in a really balmy environment, say, Florida, you will be breathing in water vapor as well as expelling it, so there is a little wiggle room. In an average urban environment, water is your prime concern. Everything else comes second.

*The good news:* Even if the power goes out state wide, a lot of water stations are tied into backup generators, and some even directly to the source, like a dam or power plant. These generators can keep things moving as long as the fuel holds out.

*The bad news:* Eventually, if the grid isn't repaired, the water will stop, and you will have to get more.

There are two paths that need to be considered: Is the water still on, or has it stopped? If it's still on, then that's fantastic news for you. This gives you a chance to create reserves. Fill up every plastic and glass container you can think of with water and put a lid on it. If there's no lid put some plastic wrap over the top. If you have containers in the garage, fill them up, and label them "do not drink". These can still be used to run toilets if needed (See chapter X). If you have 2 bathtubs, put a rubber stopper in one and fill it up. If you don't have a rubber stopper use anything to make it watertight. The bathtub water can be used for various things, but I wouldn't necessarily use it for drinking or cooking, unless your tub is spotless. If you're like me, it's not often.

Once you have filled up everything you can think of, go back and see what you left out. Cups, sports bottles, empty soda or wine bottles. If there is a residue that excludes it from cooking or drinking, label it. Don't forget your washing machine. It may be a bit awkward to get to, but it can hold quite a bit.

This is your base, your backup, and your insurance. If the tap is still running, then rotate water supplies slowly every few days. Water is life, and you now have a good supply. I'm not going to regurgitate all the other guides that want you to use the water tank at the back of your toilet or from your hot water heater. You're not a caveman for Gods sake.

The taps still running, which means you can be liberal with other things. You can flush your toilet as usual. You can take cold showers. If you don't like cold showers you can fill up your other tub half way with water, let it warm up a bit, then use a washcloth. You can wash dishes, pots, and pans in the kitchen sink.

Life in this area is just a notch or two below normal, until...

"Honey, there's no water coming out of the faucet".

You knew it was going to happen sooner or later. If the water was off when you got home, or just stops, or more than likely, the flow becomes weaker and weaker until it's just a few drips, then you're going to have to see what consumable liquids you have in the house, and then start planning on where to get some.

Search every cupboard, every cabinet. If it's drinkable, it's useful. Bottled juice, seltzer, and diet soda. It doesn't matter if it tastes good; just find out how much you have. Chances are, it's worth something. Some exceptions would be liquids that contain a large amount of salt, like spicy tomato juice or bloody Mary mix. It may taste good, but the added salt will increase the rate of dehydration.

Note: Alcoholic beverages have some water in it, but probably not enough to counteract the dehydrating effect of the alcohol itself. The only exception that you can pull off for a while is beer with its low alcohol content. A case of juice is worth a lot more than a case of beer.

Rationing: None. Don't do it. Drink your normal amount on a daily basis and try to find more. Keeping your body running at regular levels is very important. Also, don't eat anything if you have no water. Your body needs water to digest food and it will only dehydrate you further.

Where to get more: There is an entire section dedicated to looting, so techniques on acquiring it, as well as keeping yourself safe is covered later. For the sake of the list, the "where" is almost entirely centered on locations close to your home. *How* you get in and what you might face is later. You will start forming these questions on your own as you work your way down the items.

Where: Numerous places, in many forms and in different levels of usage. One rule of thumb is that closer is better. This is because water is heavy. Surprisingly heavy. You're made out of water, think of how heavy you are, cow. Now try carrying someone like you for a few blocks.

The water next door: No you can't kill your neighbors, yet. Find out who's not home, and by that I mean who's left with a note on their door. Search the house the same way you searched yours. Organize your supplies in the afternoon. Carry them back at night.

Your subdivision may have an artificial lake or pond. It's probably not safe to drink, even if attempts are made to purify it. If you want to boil it or better yet, boil and save off the steam into another container, it may be ok. Water from a neighborhood pool is a little better. Water with chlorine isn't supposed to be consumed regularly, but it will work in a pinch.

I mention these not-so-attractive options because they are closer than the nearest strip mall, convenience store, or gas station. For higher quality *consumable* water, you will need to explore these other locations.

The obvious choices: Grocery stores, bulk food stores, pharmacies, the corner gas station, convenience stores without gas. All these places will have pure water, consumable liquids, or both.

Secondary choices: Restaurants, Athletic clubs, office water coolers, commercial building vending machines, educational cafeterias.

Alternates: Collected rainwater. There is no real trick to this. Any plastic sheeting, tarp, even your gutters will work. Rainwater can be pretty clean, depending on where you live. All you have to do is hope for rain. If there is a concern about any contamination, it can be boiled, or partially purified by adding 4 drops of bleach per gallon.

## **2. Food (Priority)**



Water may be life, but food is energy. Calories are literally units of heat. Food keeps your body warm, it drives your system, and it gives you the strength to endure in times of stress. Unlike water, the average human body can go without food for quite some time. Even a fit person with a small amount of body fat can survive for 30 days or more on just water.

Question: Does this mean that fat people will live longer during the apocalypse?

Answer: Unfortunately, **Yes**. I can't tell you how much this upsets me. Overweight people have a pretty good chance at living longer than your fitness instructor neighbor!

However,

Like many things, there's a catch. For those of you who are say, 50 pounds or more overweight, there is a flip side to this coin. If you have a large supply of water and no food, your body will start tapping those vast fat reserves of yours, and you will start to lose weight instead of dying, **but** your energy will drop dramatically, to less than 20% of their current levels. You will be colder, because there is nothing in your stomach to generate heat. You will have a constant headache, because your blood sugar will be at an all time low, and most of all, **you'll be really hungry**. I mean really starving. Your thought process will be skewed and blurred. In short, you'll survive, but suffer the entire time. You'll look at everything and everyone and see food.

My only hope is that if you do outlive all your friends and get rescued by the government, you'll be grateful enough and use the respect of your loved ones to have a salad every once in a while!

That being said, food needs to be gathered, counted, and estimated. Even 1000 calories a day can keep you around for a long time. Do the math, and figure out how long you can keep going with what's in your house.

Eat all perishable foods first. These include fruits and vegetables, anything in your deli shelf, milk, anything that will expire in the next week. Then, eat everything in the freezer. Cook what you can, use a pan in the fireplace if you have to. Once these items expire, they are useless to you, so eat and overeat (the only time I will endorse this).

Have all perishables been eaten? Good. Now you can spread out your canned goods, the rice, flour, popcorn, oils, condiments, anything with calories counts, and the higher the better. Sweets too. I could break down the food into smaller groups, but eventually, it's all going to be eaten.

*The good news:* Starvation fools the palette. Up until now, eating for most Americans has come down to: "What am I in the mood for". There is so much cheap food in this country it just staggers other nations. There are many tasty varieties in unlimited supply; it's no wonder we've been blowing up like balloons over the last 30 years. Maybe this "end of the world" situation is a good thing. Maybe a good chunk of the United States population will make it through this tribulation because we've neglected our bodies for so long.

When you get really hungry, just about anything tastes good, so if you want to have a bowl of rice with a mix of mayo and ketchup, it will do just nicely. Old candy? No problem. Your body will adjust and every meal you have will have the most vibrant flavors. This won't apply to foods you already hate.

Try to mix fats and proteins and carbohydrates. Your body wants them. Mix the basics equally if you can. Try not to spend a week eating nothing but canned beets. Your body will not be happy with you, and really, eating beets for a week is just weird.

Be a member of the clean plate club. Eat everything out of the can. If there is some packing water, see if you can cook with it. Lick everything clean as soon as you can. Don't get caught going through the leftovers later.

Food requires water to digest. If you are going to finish off the last of the bread, be prepared to have a generous amount of water. If you don't have the water, don't eat until you find some. Salty foods require even more water. Look at both your water and food supply before you go to town.

Store your food in a cool dark place if possible. Heat tends to shorten the expiration date of anything, including canned food. I know the powers out and the only light is the sun through your living room window. You can sort them there; just move them into the shadows when you're done.

Keep a list of your food. You should really keep a list of everything, but at least do this for food. This is done for two reasons. 1. You can do some math in your spare time, and figure out at length how long it will last you and your family. 2. You can see if any food is being consumed outside of your knowledge.

Put your empties in trash bags, just as you do now. No reason to change your patterns there. Keep the full bags in the garage if needed. They will be fairly light and will take a while before they pile up.

Rationing: Almost limitless. Your energy levels will be reduced the more you ration, but you can greatly extend your time by rationing.

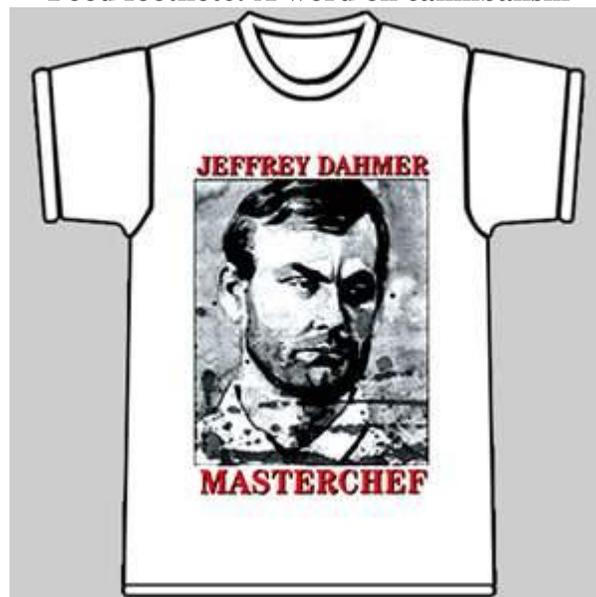
Where to get more: Abandoned homes, Grocery stores, bulk food stores, pharmacies, the corner gas station, and convenience stores without gas.

Secondary choices: Restaurants, Athletic clubs, office water coolers, commercial building vending machines, educational cafeterias.

Alternates: Places you wouldn't expect like arts and crafts stores, specialty shops that have chocolate. Any shop that you can remember that has candy at the front for the kids will work. Gift shops and novelty stores are good examples of these. The average office or cube drawer has a variety of snacks that should keep for at least a few weeks.

Note: Food manufacturing plants are a source of supplies, but will be covered under looting: What **not** to do.

#### **Food footnote: A word on cannibalism**



There is a nearly 100% chance that you will **not** become a cannibal during the apocalypse. You are a good person and don't like to eat people. You do not have peer pressure from friends who

eat people. There is a lot of cheap flavorful food available in America, most of which tastes better than people. Also, in order to eat another person they have to be either dead or held hostage. One way or another, you have to start with murder or kidnapping. Things tend to go downhill from there. You are neither a heartless killer nor a terrorist. You are also not a vampire, and receive no mystical powers from consuming human flesh and drinking human blood.

That being said, human flesh is edible meat like any other mammal, and does contain a generous amount of calories that your body can digest. Gross right? You would never in a million years, no matter how much money, no matter what the situation, eat your friends. I agree, I would rather resort to suicide rather than eat another person. The human drive to survive is extremely strong, and can in some cases, override the dignity in taking ones own life, instead turning to an act that even now I can only describe as "barbaric".

In most cases, an excruciating, drawn out physical hunger that blinds the palette and appetite, precedes the act of cannibalism. In these circumstances, people have been known to eat rotting food out of trashcans within one week. During the 900-day Siege of Leningrad (World War 2 Russia), people first turned on pets, birds, and rats. After this supply was exhausted, groups of starving Russians sought out lone individuals. These unlucky souls were then killed and summarily eaten. The city police had to form special units to deal with this problem.

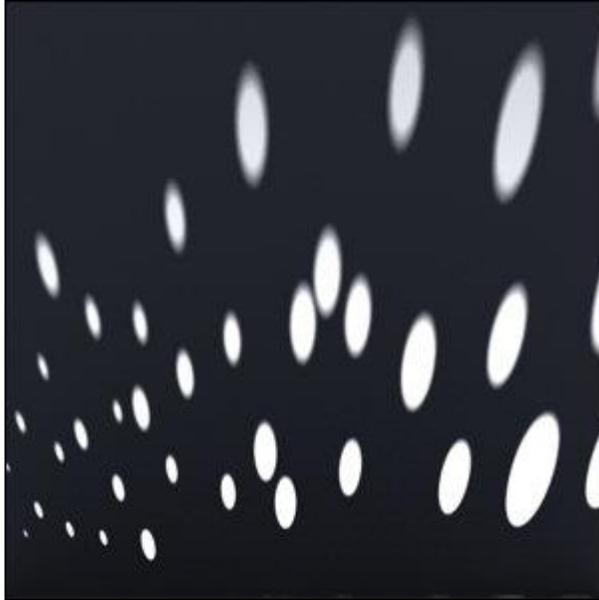
The slippery slope from rats to people happens in a relatively short amount of time. A Rugby team crash-landed their plane in the Andes mountain range with no food, but they did have an unlimited supply of water in the form of snow. They remained there for 72 days. After several weeks they realized the search parties weren't coming. After a while longer, with no other resources, some turned to the frozen bodies of their dead teammates. It kept them alive long enough for the season to change. A small group then ventured out of the mountains to the nearest town. The movie based on the true story is called "Alive".

**Tips for eating people:** *Try to do it in a cold environment. Snow is especially good for preserving all meat. Cooked meat keeps longer than raw, and can be stored for a short amount of time. I don't have any tips for curing human meat.*

**Question:** If I do actually eat my neighbor, what will they taste like?

**Answer:** From documented reports, people taste almost identical to veal. Remember that the next time you're at a restaurant.

### **3. Light Sources (Priority)**



There are many survival guides that will tell you the third most important thing is either medicine or weaponry. I consider this to be utter crap. The third most important thing is a light source. You are in the dark. Without light you will be handicapped during the day, and crippled at night. You need to read labels, to read numbers, put things together, let alone see your family's faces. Light is critical. Light is reassuring. We are drawn to it instinctually, and it makes us feel better to have it around. Light is great for morale, and morale is key during a time like this.

It's why you have nightlights, streetlights, and hall lights. People don't like the dark, the blackness. The darkness reminds us of the unknown, it feeds on our imagination, and not in a good way. Horror movies take place mostly at night. Where do monsters and bogeymen jump? The black of the shadows.

If the power goes out, there are several places in your own home that will very dimly lit, even during the middle of a sunny day. Interior bathrooms are normally dark, so are closets, basements, some entertainment rooms. Bigger houses have even more dim places. You need light when you search for supplies, no matter where you go.

And this is just during the day. At night, you will be totally dependent on artificial light.

So don't let the lights go out. Even low light is better than no light. Today you're in luck. While America is known for its ample food, it is also known for its plentiful array of portable light sources.

Light comes in many different forms, both bright and dim. Some are mobile. Some are not. Since some light sources are good trade material, we'll look at each one individually and you can determine what value can be placed.

### **Flashlights**



Portable. Powerful. Directional. There is a **huge** amount of high quality flashlights at reasonable prices, most of which use LED bulbs. LED's, or "light emitting diodes", are a heavy-duty solid-state bulb, which are technically classified as a low-level laser device. They never burn out, are practically indestructible, and draw much less power from the battery.

Because of this versatile technology, LED flashlights have exploded in recent years. There are basic lights, lamps, headgear, penlights, key chains, they're everywhere! And they're all good! Lucky you, it's a great time to be alive in the world of portable light.

The only drawbacks to this kind of light, (you knew there were going to be some), are 1. The light emitted by an LED is more of a "moon light" rather than sun, so colors won't be as true. 2. As mentioned above, LED's are considered to be a laser device, and shouldn't be used to look into people's eyes, nor should they be looked directly into. Long-term exposure may be hazardous.

Everyone should have at least one good flashlight lying around. The more common the battery it needs, the better. One theme that will be stressed both here and in several other item descriptions is "common usage." The majority rules, and you should follow it. This means that whatever most people use in their house, like the basic battery types, you should use as well.

When it comes to flashlights, the most common batteries are: D (Toys, radios), C (toys, radios) AA (remotes, small toys), AAA (thin remotes, very small toys, laser pointers)

Most people will have some or not all of these battery sizes. Pick one or more types and buy a good flashlight, either LED or standard

Where to get more: Hardware stores, pharmacies, grocery stores, convenience stores, Sporting goods, outdoor stores, ski shops, novelty stores, the sharper image, gadget stores, just about everywhere! Getting a flashlight shouldn't be that hard.

## Lanterns



A good second choice for light sources, and they also come in wide ranges, some for camping, and others for in house use.

For a long time, lanterns came in only one flavor, which was the oil and wick type of the 1800's. Some of these are very collectable now. These shouldn't be your first choice because of their mostly glass housing. If these tip over and break, well, then you've got the Chicago fire all over again.

Since the 1970's, lanterns were also built to run off butane and propane. In the 80's fluorescent bulbs were introduced. Now, we have LED lanterns added to the list.

A lantern's main purpose is to have non-directional light for a wide area. This is good for just sitting around, going through inventory, and in some cases looking into dark places. The only drawback for a lantern is that the light shines everywhere, including into your eyes, which makes looking into distant dark places a challenge.

It also illuminates your face, so people can see who you are sometimes before you can see them. This can either be a good or a bad thing, depending on the situation.

Lanterns also have a wide base, so you don't need to be holding it for maximum effect. Flashlights can be awkward if you need both hands. Lanterns are a good tool to fill this gap.

Where to get them: Your choices are pretty limited for this type of item. Camping and sporting goods stores are the first choice. Some bulk and general stores may carry them. The occasional specialty store that carries some random camping gear isn't bad either.

A secondary source if needed is abandoned houses. Lucky for you, a great deal of Americans try camping at least once, and then store all the sleeping bags, tents, and lanterns, in the attic, garage, or basement.

### Candles



Ah, candles, the most romantic of the survival items. It's also the oldest type of lighting still around. The light is hypnotic, and nothing soothes the nerves quite like the light of a solid candle flame. The candle and all its variants have followed the human civilization through the centuries. If there is one thing you can say about the candle, is that it is universal.

They are a solid replacement for the lantern, last a lot longer, and many give off a pleasant scent that can help mask some of the unpleasant aroma of the apocalyptic world. The only real drawback to candles is the ones we always see in the movies or on television. The candle is a mobile open flame, which can ignite other materials. It also can be blown out without much effort. This is by design, but it can also work against you.

A candle should be your last resort if you are searching a dark area and need a mobile lighting device. Because your forward motion produces a relative wind, your speed is limited. No one gets to run away with a candle. It goes out, you trip and fall, and the masked serial killer gets you from behind with an axe.

Also, searching with an open flame can be hazardous: "Oh look! A gas main!" Queue explosion.

In America, good candles have gotten so trendy in the last 15 years that large stashes of them can be found in just about any decent sized town. They come in many different sizes, from tapered table to Giant five wick monstrosity living room candles that can burn for weeks. Chances are, you have candles tucked away in drawers that you don't even know about. Go look!

Where to get more: Grocery stores, drug stores, department stores, general stores like target, wall mart, exotic furniture stores. There are even certain stores that sell nothing but candles!

Secondary choices: Abandoned houses should have a small supply of candles, whether it be dinner, table. Even birthday candles have some value!

### Light sticks



This type of technology is only a few decades old, and in my opinion should be further along than what we have today, but any light is better than no light, and the light stick does have a few advantages that no other one has.

For those of you new to this light source: A light stick is a chemically created light encased in a clear flexible plastic tube. The tube is filled with one chemical. A second chemical is inside a small glass vial within the liquid. When you bend the plastic tube, the glass breaks, and the two chemicals mix like epoxy adhesive. Presto! Hours of low level, usable light.

They currently serve some specialized functions. One being they can be thrown into dark areas and stays lit no matter what. This can be helpful if you do not know how far down the rabbit hole goes, or even how deep a particular dark body of water is. They can also be hung off of items as markers. If storage is limited, a bag of these can be very handy.

I'll admit, they science part is very cool. The drawbacks of the light stick are too many to consider it a primary light source. The light only lasts a short time, and is color skewed similar to the LED. The light isn't very bright and would be difficult to read by. They stick itself isn't rechargeable and has to be disposed of entirely.

However, having a few around isn't a bad idea, and here's why: Ease of use. Bend and shake. That's it. No switches, no flame, no batteries.

Note: White should always be your first choice. Also, their chemical compounds break down over time. Treat them no different than batteries. Check the expiration dates and replace them every so often. *The reaction in light sticks is temperature sensitive. The warmer you make the stick, the brighter it gets. This will diminish its glow time however.*

Where to get more: Some camping stores, hardware stores.

## Road flares



Standard issue road flares are more useful than you might think. Road flares have a limited range of environments. As a light source, they aren't the best because of the dark red flame, which is deliberate as an emergency warning sign during traffic accidents.

They also can't be used indoors because of the substantial smoke that is generated from the pyrotechnic compound burning. One exception to this would be in starting a fire in the fireplace. The smoke just goes up the chimney. As an ignition device it is pretty handy. 30 minutes or so of high temperature flame, which can be positioned by holding one end of the flare.

It is also the only flame-based device that can be waved back and forth safely if you wish to signal someone. You can also run with a flare if needed. Remember to hold the flare to the left or right of you while moving forward, to keep the smoke away from your face.

Road flares are also one of the only flame-based items, which need no ignition device. The top is like one giant match, and just needs to be rubbed briskly against something. This can be invaluable if water has drenched everything and you can't get a dry fire started.

In a pinch, road flares can be used as a poor mans fuse. The flare burns uniformly at a steady rate. Attaching an item at some point on the flare will ensure that it will ignite. Keep in mind that the flare is bright, so if you are planning on using this as a timing device to "blow something up", you may want to conceal it.

Note: Road flares shouldn't be confused with "Marine" or underwater flares. Marine and underwater flares burn much hotter and give off a brighter light, sometimes being white rather than red. These flares create more smoke and if dropped in water, will keep burning. They can be extinguished by impacting them heavily onto a hard surface like cement, the hope being to knock off enough of a chunk of the burning tip that the underlying surface doesn't catch. Road flares are not waterproof, and will go out if doused in water.

Where to get more them: Hardware stores, auto part stores, some general goods like target, Wal-Mart. Grocery stores with an automotive section, although some automotive sections are of

the light variety and only carry things like air fresheners and quarts of oil.

Marinas will carry marine flares. Specialty shops that deal with scuba supplies will also have marine flare and underwater flare devices.

### **Lighters / Matches:**



In most cases this will be your last source of light. We take matches for granted. The self-striking match has been embedded in our culture, especially when it comes to the smoking population. Because of them the apocalypse will most likely never be without matches. Thank you smokers!

Who cares about matches? You do if you don't have any lying around. This shouldn't be a problem. **Everyone** has matches, or lighters, or both. Even if you don't smoke you probably have candles, which by default need matches. Older model gas fireplaces and stoves need matches. Birthday candles need matches. Fireworks need matches!

So if you smoke, and this is the only time I will encourage you, good job! You've got this one covered!

Lighters and matches are basically short-term candles, and the same rules apply. Don't go wandering around a big closet filled with fireworks with a box of matches. Don't crawl down a badger hole with a lighter. These are bad ideas.

Where to get more: Grocery stores, drug stores, specialty stores, restaurants that still allow smoking, general stores, convenience stores, all gas stations and truck stops, most bars.

Secondary locations: Abandoned houses, abandoned factories, abandoned meeting places of every kind. Special bonus hiding place: office drawers. You've got a 1 in 5 chance of finding

some there. In the end of the world, those are good odds.

Note: Some matches will be more valuable than others, such as waterproof camping versions, or water resistant military version. The actual value may be off set by the huge abundance of lighters. Current estimates of lighters in America range from 50-200 million.

Still, even with the large numbers of lighters produced, it can't hurt to several fire making materials. Pick up a few extra when you get a chance.

### **Vehicle headlights**



The common automobile headlight is a paradox of sorts. It is by far the most powerful lighting device you own. It can light up a broad area for hours, it has a huge long life battery, and it recharges itself!

All that doesn't do you much good while it sits inside a garage or out on the street. If you want to light up your basement, headlights aren't going to help. Vehicles are mobile, which can give you some breathing room if needed. You have an outside project, which needs to be done at night. Using the headlights will be much more efficient than rigging up something with a lantern or series of flashlights.

Headlights are also great for security if the need arises. Criminals by nature tend to avoid bright light areas. Maybe a large beam of white light conjures up images of God exposing their sins. Nothing scares away intruders quite like high beams at short range. If you have a decent sized yard, the average vehicle can be moved into different positions facing the house, and can be used to illuminate areas that are next to a large glass door or window. Remember to run the engine every so often to keep the battery from running down. Low beams uses less energy than high beams, and will do the job just as well. High beams are good for illuminating large areas at some distance. Keeping your lights on is recommended if you are going to be using your vehicle for

sleeping. Intruders are less likely to approach a well-lit vehicle.

Tip: When sleeping in your car, set an alarm every two hours. You can use the lights without a running engine for the first two, then turn on the engine for the next two. Repeat as necessary. Your battery will stay charged. This is important in case you need to make a quick exit.

### Fireplace



It's unlikely, but there is a chance you don't have any portable light sources at all. The fireplace will have to do. It can also supplement your light if you are low on batteries, candles, or other devices. If you haven't used it in a while, make sure the check that the flue is open. If it's not, the first few minutes of your fire will be filled with smoke and coughing. Using a fireplace screen is always recommended to reduce the chance of embers popping out and burning things close to the brick.

**Fireplace Tips:** *You're using your fireplace as much as possible. You've gone through the logs, and the lower branches on your trees, and your neighbor's trees. You need something to burn! If it's heat and light you need, and you absolutely have to have it, then you will have to turn to paper products first, then possibly furniture you don't care about.*

*Look first to your recycle bin. It's ok; the truck isn't going to pick it up this week. Roll up the paper first. If you have rubber bands, you can make small paper or cardboard logs. If rubber bands are too small, try string or wire. Paper products will create more ash; so make sure to clean the fireplace more often. Other paper products you can use: Catalogs, the yellow pages, and older books. I wouldn't recommend burning the Bible, God hates that. Go through your closets, your basement, and your attic. Maybe you have a collection of National Geographic.*

*Note that if you have Pornography tucked away, chances are someone in your family is going to find it. Better burn that when they're asleep.*

*After paper start looking at wooden shelving. Most of it is made of particleboard anyway. It should burn quite well. Try to stay away from plastics. They have the potential to create toxic smoke, and I don't want to see anyone hurt. Do not under any circumstances try to burn old tires. Tires create a huge amount of black smoke, they don't fit well in the fireplace, and they are difficult to extinguish. Burning a tire in the street as a distraction is ok, and would give you a real good idea of what it could do in your living room.*

## Generators



WT-11

This fits into the light source category more than others, mostly because anyone that fires up a generator will probably try to get some electric lights working first.

Pros: The obvious. You have light again. You have power again. At the very least you can plug in multiple electrical items, like a freezer, a microwave, floodlights, power tools, air compressors, etc. In a best-case scenario, you could have your generator hardwired to a fuse box, and if there were enough power, you'd hardly even know the lights went out in the first place. The power is yours, but how long can you hold onto it?

Cons: Generators use fuel, which is limited. How long you can use it depends on the fuel supply on hand, and what you can acquire. Generators can be noisy, and in a very quiet neighborhood, absent of all the white noise that used to drown out something like a generator, you will stick out like a sore thumb.

Drawing attention to your house isn't exactly a good thing in a tense situation. People covet, people envy. Your neighbors want what you have and they don't. Generators have to be placed in well-ventilated areas, which usually means they are outside. They are also fairly light. Two people can walk at a good pace carrying a generator. They can be disconnected easily. These things mean that yours will be outside, making noise, and giving you light, which also draw attention. Potential predators can see this from literally a mile away.

This isn't to scare you or make you paranoid; it's just the facts. Anyone with a generator has to acknowledge that it is a target of theft, or maybe worse. A smart thief will know that anyone who prepared enough to have light and power will also have other things, and now this motor running outside your house is covering the sound of their footsteps.

Where to get more: Hardware stores, some camping store, some bulk stores.

#### 4. Batteries (Priority)



Like ammunition, batteries could be lumped with their main flashlight counterparts. What makes them different is that batteries have multiple devices that can be used. This item listing was created to define types, brands and potential devices, as well as the best place to find them.

Top 2 things you will be using batteries for: 1. Flashlights. 2. Portable radios.

Batteries equal light, and as discussed above, light will be a hot commodity, one that can be bartered for. Batteries are based on metal and dense chemicals, so they are heavier than other supplies. Keep this in mind before throwing a couple hundred D cells into a large container. Try

picking **that** box up quickly without using your legs.

Batteries hold a charge for a limited time. The technology has gotten better, and right now the average lifespan of a good battery is about 6 or 7 years. In some cases a high-powered battery can go a year or two past that. Battery type means everything when it comes to lifespan. The more power the battery claims to have, the better it is. Your lights will be brighter, and your radio will last longer.

Brand names count for a lot when it comes to batteries. You get what you pay for. This isn't like knockoff designer jeans where a fake can look almost like the real thing. Look for batteries by name. The two brands that quickly come to mind are Duracell and Energizer. Both are outstanding, and in blind taste tests, really can't be told apart from one another. Everything else is a distant cousin, such as generic Eveready, ray-o-vac, and Kodak brands.

Many electronic manuals will tell you not to mix high power with low power batteries. While this is true in the civilized "why doesn't my DVD remote work from the kitchen" world, it doesn't hold water now. Mix away. You can even combine dead batteries with live ones in a pinch. You will get lower performance, but it's better than nothing at all.

Batteries seem to get cheaper every year, and bulk packs are everywhere. Having some spares in the basic four flavors is recommended. The most popular being D, C, AA, and AAA.

Tip: Battery testers can be found in a variety of places now, and can really be handy in an emergency situation. They usually run about \$15 and can tell you if a battery is holding high, medium and low power. The testers run off of calculator batteries, which are quite common as well. In a *trading post* scenario, they are essential, because the average person can't tell good from bad when it comes to batteries, unless you were thinking of having a series of flashlights, and can judge based on the light output how valuable the battery really is.

Where to get more: Look around your house first. You will have some of what you need. Most of your remotes will use either AA or AAA. Large toys will use D and C. Small toys will use AA and AAA. Adult toys will use either AA or C.

Secondary choices: Grocery stores, Hardware stores, pharmacies, general store, bulk food outlets, electronics stores, toy stores, any place that sells any electronic devices will carry a supply of batteries.

## **5. Receive only radio (Priority)**



What's going on in the world? Don't you wish that, somehow, you knew the answer to that question? World events don't mean much to you right now. You're sitting comfortably on your plush sectional, flipping between stations on your digital cable, knowing with reassurance that at any time you can go to one of 50 different channels dedicated to the freshest and most interesting stories. You literally have news on tap, 24 hours a day.

And what if you don't have access to the TV right now? Maybe your family is hogging the remotes, pouring over entertainment delights. You still have the high speed Internet, with millions of different pages, telling you within seconds what's going on in every part of the globe.

If and when the power goes out, all that changes. Some of you may have already experienced this once or twice in your life. In those situations a radio or portable television is your only lifeline to the outside world. This is the information that could affect your course of actions. People will crave it more than the season finale of American Idol. It is the one constant source of hope. You must find the signal, the message that lets you know the government is coming to help, keeps people going, keeps people motivated, and most importantly, helps keep people from turning on each other.

This is the one item that you won't have to worry about. If you don't want to spend any effort, money or thought on a radio, then you don't have to. There is a 95% chance you already have one, specially built with a rechargeable battery, multiple bands and preset stations. Heck, it's even got heated seats! Yes, your car / truck radio is the easiest choice to find out what you want, when you want. Just get in, hit scan, and keep one ear glued to the dash.

The drawbacks for this convenience are glaring. You're now in your car, and not in your home. Cars can be vulnerable, especially if they are parked in the street. All vehicles have the ability to

run the radio from inside the garage. This will be a relatively safe place to listen to world events. Remember to charge the battery by running the engine every so often. The radio doesn't draw much power off of a large car battery. Running the car for 20 minutes once a week should be fine to keep the energy level high.

Again, if you run the engine in the garage make sure that either the garage door is open, or you leave the garage while it's running. The carbon monoxide that a car exhaust creates tricks the brain into "not panicking" when your body starts to run out of oxygen. In short, you would just go to sleep and never wake up. It's estimated that around 1800 people a year, mostly intoxicated, accidentally fall asleep when they return home to their garage, with tragic results.

A car is the easiest of all radio solutions, but it is far from optimum. There are hundreds of different *portable* radio devices, some designed specifically for survival situations. The best radios cover frequencies other than the basic AM and FM. If you get a chance, pick one up that can deliver basic television audio as well.

Portable radios extend their battery time by using a small earpiece instead of a speaker. Ipod type headphones also work well with portable radio jacks. Having a few different radios gives better coverage when scanning all frequencies. They also come in handy if you are looking for something constructive your children can be involved with. A radio is after all, media based, and your kids will be anxious to hear about what's going on as much as you.

If you have the extra money, picking up a digital radio with auto scan (similar to scan in your car) is worth the extra effort. Scan means more hands free time that you could spend doing other things. Very helpful if you're alone, or when everyone else is asleep.

Where to get more: Electronics stores, general stores, bulk stores, camping stores, hardware.

Secondary locations: - Office buildings (most will not have batteries inside), Abandoned homes, look for small radios such as I pods or older Walkman types.

## **6. Fire Extinguisher: (Priority)**



This device is constantly overlooked, but in an emergency situation it's potentially a lifesaver. If you still have water pressure during a fire, then using water to extinguish flames isn't a big deal. If the water is off however, the last thing you want to do is use up your remaining water supply to fight a fire. Chemical fire extinguishers can put out the flames without any liquid, saving you resources. If the fire spreads too quickly and you're pretty sure that you won't be able to contain it, then move what supplies you can out of the house, because there won't be any fire engine sirens in the distance.

Fire Extinguishers can also be used as a non-lethal weapon in a desperate situation. Pointed at the face, it can temporarily blind or disorient the attacker. Note that it isn't tear gas, and after the person takes a few moments to clear their eyes, they will most likely be even more enraged, so hit them with an iron skillet or get the hell out of there!

The supply items mentioned so far are essential, and if you have a decent amount of all of them, you can keep going for weeks, months, or more until help arrives. Congratulations, you get to live longer than your neighbors! Now it's time to look at items that add to the quality of life.

**Chapter 5: One mans trash**  
**"Wealth is the slave of a wise man. The master of a fool"**  
**- Seneca**



Once the priority items are taken care of, you need to look past just "living" and see how close you can get back to "normality". It's never going to be exactly the way it was, but with a little creative thinking, and some luck, you may be able to forge a comfortable niche for yourself. This is relative contentment. All the items in this next section fit this bill in some fashion. Again, these are not listed in any particular order, because the level of importance will depend on the group or individual. For example, first aid has been burned into our brains since childhood of being a necessity, and it can be, for small pain relief or minor injuries. A first aid kit is going to do little against a deep cut, let alone a bullet wound. It does however offer some psychological comfort and reassurance that someone can be helped if injured.

Others who are very "bathroom conscious" may see a portable toilet as holding a higher rank than say, a power inverter. After all the "creature comforts" come the vices, which again, depending on the individual, may be ranked number one. This is due mostly to the huge psychological impact of their addiction to the substance, for it provides distraction and comfort in real life. In a crisis situation like this, the level of comfort will be magnified many times, distorting the decision making process.

Cigarettes for example, slightly dull certain pain centers of the brain. Alcohol can repress short-term memory, judgment, and make pressing matters seem rather trivial. Prescription painkillers can alter reality to where the individual has forgotten their current situation entirely. As illogical as it seems to be taking these substances in a crisis situation, their value is considerably high, especially for those who have lost hope.

## A word on Recreational Vehicles



For the suburban “armchair survivalist”, this represents the ultimate in apocalyptic luxury living. This was going to be a miscellaneous item, but it covers so many needs, both primary and secondary, that it’s considerable value in a crisis situation needs to be addressed.

The “RV” has evolved over the decades from a meager bed and chair to what now resembles a “rolling house”, fully equipped with multiple bathrooms, very comfortable seating and sleeping quarters, kitchen, and a myriad of electronics.

If you have one of these vehicles, or know a good friend close by who has one, consider this the primary living quarters for the duration. The recreational vehicle has several advantages over a house during an “end of the world situation.

**Built in power conversion:** All late model RVs have an advanced power grid, which converts electricity from its petroleum engine to regular current. Everything you need is already hard wired into the bus. As long as the engine has fuel, everything will function like it does in “normal” life. This is what the RV was designed to do, create a home like environment in places where there is no power and plumbing.

**The metal home:** Except for the fuel supply, RV’s are much more resistant to extremes than homes. They are designed to hold up well against wind, rain, and heat. They are also made of metal, which means the chances of an exterior fire breaking out are reduced.

**Advanced information:** In addition to the standard radio frequencies, many RVs have communication bands. Higher end models may even have a direct television dish, which can run if a neighborhood power grid is disabled. This will give the RV owner visual news that other homeowners will not have access to.

**Hot meal ready:** Mobile homes like the one pictured above have a self contained cooking facility which will run on either electricity or gas. Meals can be cooked at leisure. If the gas runs out, the on board microwave can be a suitable substitute.

**Extended lifespan:** It is true that RVs get terrible gas mileage, and the fuel can be used up quickly if there is no place to refill. If the vehicle is running the engine without moving, the fuel will be consumed at a much slower rate. An RV tank is generally many times larger than that of a common car. This will provide power over a long period of time if rationed wisely.

**Mobility:** In the event of an added emergency, like a fire, earthquake, or flood, the RV can be moved to a safer location. This can be very convenient if a neighborhood is located with better protection than your own.

**Entertainment:** A minor benefit in a crisis situation, but always good for morale. The RV's entertainment systems, be it music, DVD, or video games, are still functional as long as the battery and engine have power. These things can significantly lower stress levels of yourself and your family.

Note: RVs are not bulletproof. Their metal skin can slow down and sometimes deflect small caliber ammunition, but it will not protect you against larger caliber rifle rounds.

### First Aid (Optional, but important)



You're out of your element, out of your routine. You and your family will be doing things inside the house they don't normally do. Lifting, pulling, dragging, sorting, opening, filling, all the while in environments that are different than what they are used to. Mistakes will be made. Someone will drop something, run into something, or more likely, something will run into him or her.

Cuts, bumps, bruises are all part of the game. A first aid kit helps not only physically, but also psychologically. A band-aid does wonders for the soul, especially in children. Now if they could only package a kiss to make it better.

First aid kits vary in size from the pocket version to a full blown med kit, which can treat moderate wounds. Pick up a few, one for the home, and one for the car. Good ones include multiple size bandages, gauze, some aspirin, alcohol pads, and maybe a few lower end surgical tools.

Where to get more: First aid kits are limited in general population. General stores, camping stores, anything dealing with the outdoors.

Secondary choices: Most companies, regardless of size and type, will have at least one first aid kit on the premises.

### **Light Pharmaceuticals (Optional)**



Never underestimate the power of low-grade painkillers. They take them for headaches, backaches, stomachaches, arthritis, joint inflammation, and sometimes even stress. Speaking of stress, did I mention that you are involved in what could quite possibly be the end of civilization as we know it? Something tells me that the over the counter painkillers are going to be a popular item.

Brand names will matter at first, but will lose their preference over time. Start out with the well known. Tylenol, Excedrin, and all their variants. Aspirin will never go out of style. Antihistamines, allergy relief, stomach relief, anything you can remember seeing a commercial for has value in this bizarre reality you now live in.

Where to get more: The usual suspects, grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, general stores, gas stations. Should be easy to find in generous quantities.

### **Power inverter (Optional)**



For those of you who haven't seen these, they are a great substitute for a full-blown generator, and here's why: The power inverter plugs into the cigarette lighter of your vehicle and converts it so that you can plug in regular household items. The premise is that your car / truck already has the engine to generate the juice; all you need is the adapter. They cost about 1/4 the price of a generator, and weigh about the same as a laptop computer. I can't say enough about this option. If you want quick power, without worrying about theft, this may be for you.

Let's look at it a little closer. Say you need to use a power saw to cut or build something critical next to, or in your home. You just start the car in the garage (garage door open), hook up an extension cord, hit the car alarm and away you go. If you have to go some distance, you just get in the car and drive there. Generators need 2 people to carry it easily. Best of all, you can use the power even if the car isn't running. Be careful though. Once your car battery is drained, you will need to jump it from another vehicle.

Where to get more: Very limited supplies. Specialty camping stores, RV dealerships, some boat dealerships. Your best bet is online.

Secondary locations: None. You're best bet when the power goes out is to steal the whole RV or large boat, because they have them built in!

### **Water purification tablets (Optional)**



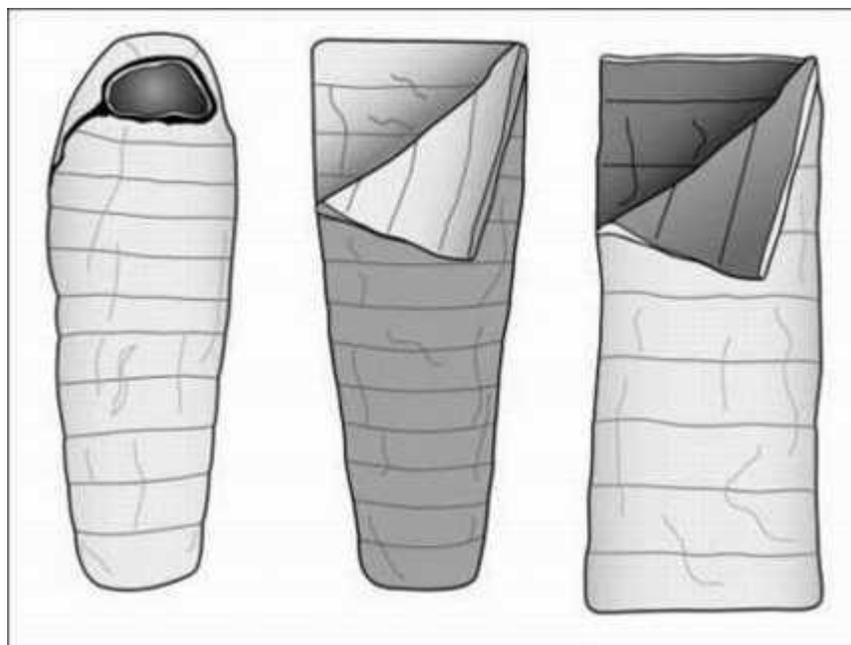
Water purification tablets are small aspirin size tabs that can be added to a suspicious water source, killing most of the harmful germs that can lead to some intestinal problems. The value of these won't be high during the first week. Most bottled water and confirmed safe water will be used up first. After that will be rainwater. This should be purified just to be safe. Drinking your rainwater today might be completely harmless. A few weeks after a crisis situation, without accurate news to tell you of potential contaminants, can produce problems.

Purification tablets are a good trading item. Everyone will want piece of mind when it comes to drinking water. It's a safe bet that if you stock up on these, they won't go to waste.

Where to get more: Very limited supply. Camping stores, hardware stores, and some general stores.

Substitutions: 4 drops of generic laundry bleach per gallon of water, mix well. Boiling water can help in a pinch. In a perfect world, everyone would own an old type still, used to make moonshine. This still can make purified water (with a heat source to boil), hence the term, distilled water. Distilled water creates no residue when it dries, because the particles are too heavy to be carried with the water vapor that is created.

### **Sleeping bags (Optional)**



Bedding in America is plentiful. Sleeping bags fall somewhere in between optional and priority, especially with families. We learn as both children and parents that when things get scary, the family likes to sleep in the same room, most commonly the parent's bedroom.

This instinct will be even more prominent in a long-term power outage. A good place for the entire family to sleep could be the bedroom, but more likely it will be a living or family room, wherever the fireplace is. People sleep around campfires, and the light from inside the fireplace will have the same mental effect. It's light, it's heat, and it's reassuring.

Sleeping bags have different temperature ratings; so pick one that is suitable for your climate. Most homes without heat will drop to near outside temperatures within a few days, regardless of the type of windows. An active fireplace will help, but if it's 55 degrees outside, expect 59-60 inside.

Sleeping bags are also portable. They can easily be moved from one house to another, or from a house to a refugee center. Bags that can withstand lower temperatures will be thicker and heavier to carry. Keep that in mind if you plan to travel anywhere on foot.

Where to get more: Limited locations. Camping stores, some bulk stores, some general stores.

Secondary locations: Abandoned homes

Substitutions - Bedding from existing sleeping quarters, extra blankets lying around.

Tip - If you use existing bedding, don't bring everyone's mattress into the living room. It will make it difficult to walk around during the day. Try to treat this area like a camping situation.

### **Tents (not recommended)**



Tents always seem to pop up in survival documents. I agree they have usefulness, if you're in the woods or other environment without pre-built structures. This isn't that place. You're an average American. You've most likely been camping what, once or twice in your life? No need to start going down that road now. Tents provide no protection in a suburban environment. I don't even recommend them if your house has a big hole in the ceiling and it's raining on you. You simply can't see enough once you're inside. With the front flap closed you are blind.

If you're huddled on the side of a mountain, hoping to reach the summit in a few days, then great, a tent is just what you need. I still think you're a little nutty for going up the mountain in the first place, but then again, I can't understand ice climbers either.

### **Gasoline (Optional)**



I've had a few people ask me if I was going to add this to the list. I had mixed feelings about it. It is by far and away the most important resource from an economic standpoint. Gasoline is a strange product, almost ethereal in a way. It isn't electricity, but it can generate it if needed. It's not a battery, but it can charge one. It can be both used to make medicine and weaponry.

It is the sole reason our civilization, especially the United States, has achieved so much growth over the last 100 years. In a severe crisis situation, it will probably be consumed so quickly, be used up at such an alarming rate, that within a few weeks, only very small pockets will exist in an average American city.

But then again, maybe the decrease in supply will be slower, more methodical. It all depends on what the average Joe does. As mentioned earlier, you will either stay or leave your current location in favor of one that gives you a better chance. If you go, the fuel in your car, which is the only fuel you have on hand, gets used during the drive. If you stay, you will have anywhere between 1 to 20 gallons of gasoline sitting in your vehicles tank.

Other than power generators, which will be few and far between, this gas, will be used to power your vehicle. It can be transferred to another car via a siphon (hose). It can also be stolen using the same siphon (see looting). Cars mean mobility, and this mobility has value. Gas can be stored in a car without any problems for 6 months or so. By then there will be a lot of siphoning going on. I'm still trying to work out the potential logistics because there is a real unknown factor to be considered. Where would you go if you had a full tank of gas? If family were more than a tank away, then it would have to be local. There is no work commute. You aren't dropping the kids off at school. Most looting is done on foot, unless you have a group to do it with.

Gasoline is the unknown factor in the grand equation. There will be a large supply available, but

it will be broken up into hundred and thousands of smaller supply groups. If a trading post could be established, gasoline would still be the most sought after resource. People would trade things for gasoline, and fill their vehicle. They would then have options and the freedom to go places. They wouldn't have direction though. I suppose they would be trading for the mobility option alone. In case they needed to take off, they could. There will be some people who will create Molotov cocktails (glass bottles filled with gasoline, a small piece of burning cloth attached to the bottle) they have very few practical uses in an apocalyptic situation.

Where to get more: Gas stations (good luck getting that with a siphon), marinas, private airfields, any abandoned car, truck, boat, or plane.

Tip: Airplane fuel is a higher octane and shouldn't be used in car engines if possible. In a pinch it can be mixed with regular gasoline. Your engine will run hotter, and should not be used to tow objects or climb steep hills during that time.

Tip: Larger trucks run on diesel fuel, which will not work in regular gasoline engines. Diesel fuel smells much different than gasoline. It is still valuable for larger vehicles.

### **Gas Siphon (Optional)**



Gas Siphons haven't changed much over the years. In the old days, and by that I mean ever since the car was invented, people used a short length of hose to siphon gas from vehicles. All you need is suction (usually human powered) to get the gas flowing, and then you could run it into a container outside the car.

The unpleasant drawback is that the person doing the sucking is going to get a mouthful of gas when it first clears the tube, no matter what. No one tells you that part; sort of like the person getting CPR has a 90% chance of throwing up in the mouth of the person resuscitating them. Gross. Gasoline won't kill you, even if you swallow it. I don't recommend drinking it. It tastes terrible, much like a bad moonshine! Gas Siphons are built with a small hand pump, which does the sucking for you. If you don't own one already, and you think you will be using or trading gas, you may want to invest the 20 bucks. If not? Get a short piece of garden hose and get ready to start sucking.

Tip: **Do not** think you came up with a clever idea and use a wet / dry vacuum to start the suction process out of the car. The vacuum does suck liquids, but it also runs on a motor. The motor has internal sparks. The gasoline vapor may catch fire, burning up the dry vacuum and spreading to the car.

Where to get more: Auto parts store.

### Gas cans (optional)



This was going to be included with the siphon, but there are some important tips here that should be mentioned separately.

Tips: Proper gas cans will either be heavy RED plastic or metal in nature. Look carefully at the container to see if it has warnings about storing gasoline. If it does, you CANNOT use it to hold fuel for extended periods of time. Here's why: Petroleum is one of the major ingredients in most plastics. Because of this, it has a tendency to break down and dissolve lower level plastic containers. Tupperware will not work. Milk or water jugs will buckle and burst. You should only use "marked" gasoline containers.

Where to get more: Auto parts stores, some general stores, any store with an automotive section. Gas stations will have a limited supply of mostly 2-3 gallon containers.

Substitutions - Any metal container with a small top opening. I do not recommend large 5-gallon metal paint containers because they have such a large top lid.

### **Cash (Optional)**



Even in the late 1970's, cash was one of the top ten things to include in a survival pack. Today, it's value declines to almost nothing within 72 hours.

Here's why: Most stores, no matter what type, run on advanced electronic registers. They use laser bar code scanners and registers that calculate tax automatically. When the power goes out, the stores will be crippled. A Mom and Pop shop may run manual calculators and take cash. The problem is that no one will have it. People rarely carry any substantial amount of physical currency. Credit cards are the rule of the day. The ATM machines need power to run.

I still don't keep any cash lying around. I do this because the grocery store, pharmacy and gas station within walking distance will just shut down in the event of a power loss. Everyone will just wait. The only situation I can think of where money might be helpful is using the cash to bribe someone who 1. Works at a place that has something I need, and 2. Is dumb enough to take it, not knowing that within a week, food and water will be the new currency.

If you doubt this, and some will, try this exercise. Imagine you had \$500 in 20 dollar bills tucked away in a shoebox. Try to spend all of it in the first 72 hours of a long-term power outage. Then try to spend the rest of it a week later.

Where to get more: Just find a cash register, and open it. Banks are good too. If I see someone actually looting a bank a week or two in, I'm going to ask them what exactly are their long-term

plans. Chances are they won't have any.

### **Extra clean clothes (optional)**



All your disaster movies seem to have the heroes looking dirty and tattered after a short time. Real life news stories seem to mimic this in different ways. The point is people get grubby in a hurry. The world is full of dirt and grime. Your everyday clothes are vulnerable. They can get wet; suffer smoke damage, and get covered with mud. Don't let the end of civilization stop you from looking your best!

That's not just shallow advice. People feel better when they're clean, except for maybe football linemen, mud wrestlers and bikers. Keeping a few changes of clothes in a sealed plastic container is always a good idea during situations like this. You've just been running away from zombies for the last 2 hours, you stink! How do you think your self esteem is going to hold up when you try to hold your son or daughter and they say, "Mommy, you smell like ass".

Even a few outfits, something simple like jeans and a t-shirt (always a good apocalyptic classic), some socks, underwear, would be enough. Put them in a garbage bag; store them in a box or high shelf of a closet.

Where to get more: All clothing stores.

Secondary choices - Abandoned houses will have lots of extra clothing, although you may end up wearing a God awful Hawaiian Muumuu or a t-shirt that says something like "I'm with stupid", which is oddly appropriate now. I think entire families should wear those shirts, would be a great gag.

### **Backpack (Optional)**



You may need to make a quick exit. A backpack is just common sense. You only have two arms, and that Batman style utility belt isn't going to hold everything and the kitchen sink.

Lots of kids carry backpacks now, from primary on up through college. Go take theirs. It's not like they were learning anything.

Tip: When loading a backpack, try to keep the heavy items at the bottom, and things you need to get to quickly towards the top. A weapon doesn't do you much good if you're doing that whole back scratching movement, flailing to find something you can't see.

Where to get more: Camping and outdoor stores, some general stores, some bulk stores.

### **Toilet water (Optional)**



Remember that toilets work on gravity. They don't need incoming water to function. Without running water they will need to be filled up. It may seem like a luxury, until you're copping a squat in a bucket. Do what you can to keep the toilet working. Trust me, it's the little things that matter.

The good news: You can use just about any liquid to fill the back of the toilet. Pond water, stream water, rain water, you name it. Just get a container and fill it from time to time. I know it's heavy, but you're motivated.

Tip: If there is a large supply of pond water, get it during the day, and let your neighbors know what you're up to. They may follow your example, and their houses will smell a bit better too.

Tip: Conserving water is a good idea, but don't wait too long to flush. Your mood will already be bad enough without having to flush an apocalyptic toilet. Ick.

Where to get more: Any place that has a generous amount of non-potable (not drinkable) water.

### **Toilet paper (Optional?)**



Logic dictates that you *should* be eating less as food resources start getting scarce, but you will need to use the lieu from time to time.

Someone once wrote: "the apocalypse doesn't officially start until the toilet paper runs out". I love that quote. It's meaning is simple: We take for granted the little conveniences that make our lives easier, and when these things are removed, it just pisses us off. Toilet paper is one of these. We use it every day for various tasks. We fight over who left the empty roll on the holder. We laugh as the cat discovers that it spins! We watch Seinfeld as Elaine asks if she can spare a square.

You've just run out, oh crap! There are no easy answers here. You either have it or you don't. Ration out your squares people!

Where to get more: General store, grocery, pharmacies, bulk stores, some convenience.

Secondary locations: Abandoned homes, any abandoned building with a bathroom.

Substitutes:

Sub 1 - Kleenex type tissue. This type of tissue is softer than toilet paper, but doesn't dissolve well in septic systems. You are now free and clear to use these at will.

Sub 2 - Paper napkins / Paper towels. Depending on the type and brand, tend to be rougher than normal TP. They also don't dissolve well in sewer systems.

Sub 3 - Any other regular paper product from newspaper to copy machine stacks. Brace yourself. If you are the *tender backside* type, it is going to be an eye opening experience. The good side is that you will *never* complain about generic toilet paper again.

Advanced tip: If you absolutely cannot find any paper products, you can use small squares of

cloth, but don't flush them down the toilet. They tend to jam up pipes quickly. Treat them like dog poop in a city. Put it in a small bag and tie it off. After a while you may think about burying or burning it.

### **Sponges (Optional)**



After a few days of not taking a shower, you're going to start getting pretty gamy. A few days after that and your dog is going to think about rolling in you. Do yourself and the people around you a favor, and wash up. What? No running water? No problem! This is a very old trick taken from the healthcare community. Sponge baths! Bucket of water, some soap, and of course, a sponge.

Go into the bathroom with maybe a candle, preferably scented, and scrub yourself down. This may even be fun with a spouse involved, or maybe not. Get the kids washed up too. You don't want them catching anything. Just about any sponge will do, big ones hold the most water. You can also use them to get water on top of your head. It's soothing, relaxing, and gives you a chance to unwind a bit. Yes you are vulnerable while partially or completely naked. If you're worried about a break in, consider that the least amount of crime occurs at sunrise and sunset.

Where to get more: General stores, some convenience stores, some bulk stores, any place that sells cleaning supplies.

Secondary locations: Abandoned homes (Make sure to rinse out any sponges that smell like cleaning products), any company's janitor closet.

Substitutes: Washrags work just about as well, but don't hold as much water.

### **Portable stove (Toasty)**



You can eat your food cold, but why? There is a reason why they call them *hot meals*, it's because they taste better than cold meals. Heating up food is a time-honored tradition. It improves morale. Imagine smile on your children's faces as they are eating a hot bowl of raccoon casserole. I'm kidding. It's squirrel.

A portable cooking station is a great way to bring people together. The heat lets the aroma out, gets peoples appetites up, and even makes the food seem better than it really is. Think of all the fond kitchen memories you have of someone close to you cooking a delicious meal and the smells surrounding it.

Anything that runs propane is a great choice, because it can be set up anywhere. If you do acquire one, make sure to get extra fuel for it. This is by far the most relevant *quality of life* item, because even though rations will keep you alive, it's little things like hot cooked food that make life worth living.

Where to get more: Camping stores, some bulk outlets, some hardware stores:

Substitutes: You have a couple, so no excuses; fix your family a hot meal!

Sub 1. Gas grill, if you have it. The propane in those tanks should hold you for a week or so. Use pans on top and cook with lid closed to increase heat efficiency.

Sub 2. The fireplace. Burn the wood or paper *under* the grating, and use a pan with a lid to keep any stray ash out.

### **Portable toilet (Smelly)**



These vary in shapes and size, but the cheapest and easiest to make and use are standard 5 gallon buckets with a cheap plastic lid in the shape of a toilet seat. The portable toilets are meant mostly for hunters who think it's fun to spend their Fall days getting drunk in the woods while sitting in a deer blind. Good times! They work with a garbage can type liner that collects the good stuff. You then tie off the bag and bury it. I recommend burying it somewhere the dog can't get to it. You'd rather have your canine rolling in an old moose carcass than bringing one of those bags back into the house. "Daddy, the dog's breath smells worse than you do"!

This is a "just in case" item. If the power runs out your toilet will still work as long as the water is on. When the water is off you can still fill the tank. All well in good, but maybe there is an earthquake, and the toilet cracks, making it unable to hold water? That is where the portable version comes in. Let's hope you never have to use it.

**Where to get more:** - Camping stores.

Secondary locations - Abandoned houses of people that hunt.

Substitutes: Does a yuppie crap in the backyard? They will if they don't have a toilet.

**A good hat (hats are back in)**



This may seem like a ridiculous item. It's not. I don't have a lot of hair and I still bought one. I'm not thinking of me here, I'm thinking for those people with **good** hair. You know who you are. I hate you, and yet, I still try to help. You *good hair* types are going to be taking sponge baths now, and washing your hair isn't going to be high on your list of things to do. Fend off zombies, check. Steal gas from neighbor's car, check. Wash hair, nah.

Hats get hair out of the way. Hats let you do more active things without worrying about it. Ever been river rafting or seen pictures of people river rafting? People wear a lot of hats. Hats give you some protection. You could go with something more elaborate, like a bike helmet, but then people will just ask "where ya headed"? You could wear a plastic construction hat, and then people will ask you to help them with their water or power because they think you work for the city. How about an army style helmet? Eh, probably too militant for your neighborhood. Stick with something simple. Your kids may also like hats; it's like dress up!

Cloth baseball type caps are good. Try to stay away from the nylon and foam types. Darker colors are better because they don't show grime as much. White foam caps that say "keep on truckin" or "best friends forever" are right out. I will be looking for you people. Black hats with a Harley Davidson eagle are bad ass.

Where to get more: Sporting good stores, camping stores, clothing stores, especially towns with a college. College kids love hats.

Secondary choices: - Abandoned homes, Some companies will give these out as promotional materials to clients, although, the more I think about it, don't loot a company warehouse just for hats, that's silly, unless it's a Harley Davidson hat. That's bad ass.

**A good pair of work boots (butch)**



Good shoes. Should I say more? A good pair of footwear can mean all the difference. The world is burning around you. Those 8-year-old flip-flops with the broken strap aren't going to cut it. Neither are those 4-inch pumps. I don't care if they're more comfortable than they look. It's dark. You're going to be stubbing your toe into all sorts of new things. You're going to drop a variety of items from chest level, and they are going to land somewhere near those *oh so delicate clodhoppers* of yours. Protect them, with a solid pair of shoes.

Pretend you were going to go camping. You never go camping, I see. Just pretend! What would you wear? Put those on now, and keep them on. No, snow boots are not the same thing, neither are galoshes. High top basketball shoes are better; something with a steel toe would be nice. Of all the items of clothing, this should be the first choice when looking around.

Where to get more - Shoe stores, camping stores, some hardware, some ski shops.

**Police scanner (because you are a bad person)**



Some years ago I ran into a group of guys who on a regular basis, would get drunk on happy hour martinis, eat a bunch of oysters, and talk about robbing a bank. Invariably, one of their items in this robbery fantasy was a police scanner.

This is a *very* optional item. As mentioned earlier, local law enforcement is going to go offline within a few days. There may be a crusader or two out there trying to keep the streets safe. This device allows you to listen into all emergency band frequencies within the city limits. It's a pretty safe bet what you will hear is an increasing level of activity immediately after the blackout, which keeps building until there is a head to head conflict with a mob of some sort. This is where the intensity peaks, followed by a sharp decrease as law enforcement either deserts or moves to a safe location. After a while, you might hear some civilians on those channels as police units are stolen.

It's an intriguing item. They are pretty expensive for what you get out of them. Tapping into the emergency bands of a town could tell you a great deal about where trouble is, and more importantly, where emergency vehicles are. You could use this information to find the nearest fire or police vehicle in case you had injured or sick people in your party.

**Or**, you could find out where the police and fire units were **not**.

Where to get more: Specialty electronic stores, Radio shack, some pawnshops.

### **Earplugs (What?)**



Soldiers wear them. The firing range requires them. Your long-term hearing is important. Then again, so is your short term. Anyone who has ever fired a gun without hearing protection, or had a very loud explosion noise go off next to their head doesn't need an explanation. To the rest of you, I'll explain. A firearm round is not only propelled by a small *explosive* charge, but most bullets break the speed of sound right out of the barrel. Sound travels like ripples on the water. If they are used outdoors, the sound disperses quickly, depending on obstacles next to you. Inside a house, they dance around and play havoc with your eardrum.

Trust me when I say this. Firing a shotgun in a hallway or bedroom has a chance of disorienting you. The sound will bounce off the walls and seem to come at you from all sides. Your ears will ring loudly, and that ringing won't fade for some time. Make it easy on yourself and take the sound out of the equation. You don't need the added distraction of a temporary hearing loss. The flash of the gun, the shock of it pushing against your hand or shoulder, will be quite enough.

Having hearing protection also can give you an added advantage in a gunfight that takes longer than 10 seconds. If your opponent isn't using any, he / she will be hearing impaired after their first shot. You will be able to hear their footsteps or their weapon action. They may even be dumb enough to yell over the ringing at anyone behind them. I recommend wearing them every time you're carrying a firearm. Can't be too careful.

Where to get more: Hardware stores, some auto parts stores.

Secondary choices: Manufacturing plants, shooting ranges.

### **Manual Can opener:**



At one point I think I had five different can openers in storage. Over the last ten years, food-packaging technology, especially in convenience-oriented America, has gotten a lot better. Most soup cans now have pull-tab tops, which require no tools whatsoever. This is the same for some canned meats and vegetables, tuna fish, etc. I would expect that within the next five years, just about all cans to have this type of opening system.

However, this is not necessarily true for large bulk food can items you might find at Costco or a restaurant supply house. These items haven't seen an increased demand for ease of use. As long as there are regular can tops out there, you should acquire one or two can openers. Why?

Because your electric can opener doesn't work any more.

Where to get more: Hardware stores, Grocery stores, some bulk food stores, some camping supply stores.

Secondary choice: Abandoned homes.

### Two way radio



Two-way radios have improved a great deal in the last 30 years, with some models running up to 25 miles or more. They're small in size, and usually come with cool extras like power saving features, hands free talk options, and multiple channels for security. In short, they are cell phones that can be used within city limits.

If you plan on being alone the whole time, the two-way radio isn't going to be of much use, unless you're really bored. If you have a friend, and I really hope you do, then you now have long distance communication that can be helpful during scout missions, looting, defending, just about anything. Don't overlook this item. All law enforcement units, including special weapons teams use them. You should too.

**Deck of cards (Go fish!)**



There is something I need to tell you about the apocalypse. There is no net flix. You can fiddle with your Play station controls all day; it's not going to work. Americans are addicted to entertainment that is based on electricity. Without it, some people will really think the world has ended.

It's times like these we have to return to the basic forms of entertainment that kept all the generations before us occupied. Board games, physical games, and of course, cards. There are hundreds of different card games and some believe or not, are pretty engaging! It wasn't that long ago that my family spent the evenings teaching me all the rites of passage in *old school* entertainment: Yahtzee, Boggle, Sorry. Maybe those are too easy. How about Trivial Pursuit or Pictionary? Want something that takes a long time? Get the kids into a 4-hour marathon of Monopoly or Risk.

A little leisure goes a long way. It distracts you from the rest of the world. Who wants to think about giant radioactive spiders all day? Games are as old as humanity. The only difference in this type of world is that we have to take a step back and adjust to having fun *without* electronics. Oh yes, there will be holdouts. The game boys will be used until the little screens go dark. Some people will fire up generators just to play Madden 2010.

This is especially for the kids, who are going to create their own games if none are provided. You do not want them making up stuff like “pin the tail on the giant three-headed rabbit” or “who can hit the mutant with the most flaming tennis balls”. It just angers the mutants and that's not fun for anyone.

Keep your urchins (and yourself) busy with a wholesome family game. Winners get extra rations. Losers get a cold sponge bath, or have to use bathroom tissue made out of copy paper. Let them pick. It adds to the fun.

Where to get more: Toy stores, general stores, any place that sells games. Some convenience stores.

Secondary choices: Abandoned homes.

### **Chapter 6: Smoke em if you got em:**

**"There are two infinities: One is the Universe, and the other is mankind's stupidity, and I'm not sure about the Universe"**

**- Albert Einstein**



No list would be complete without a small group of bad habits. In most end of the world movies where human vices survive, there is still a high demand for them. Why? Because they're addictive! They're bad for you. In a world where people are scrapping to live to the next day there is no logical reason for these things to exist!

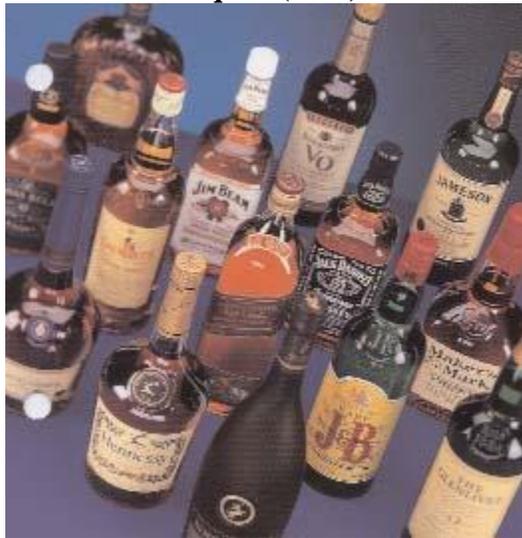
Some of you will argue whether or not this section has any value. Who does it benefit? Today I can say with a great voice of confidence that it benefits you! Here's why. You don't have a vice. Fantastic. The opportunities for you and your family are nearly endless.

In times of high stress people turn even harder to things that make them feel better. In a situation where the stress never ends, the breaking point for people with addictions will be much quicker. When they finally snap, they will turn to whoever has what they need for help. If the people holding what they need are weaker, they will be overcome. If they are stronger, the addicts will barter. The addicts bartering abilities won't be done with a clear head. They will be desperate, and in some cases will trade almost anything. Use this to your advantage, and bring them to their knees!

You feel sorry for them. There is nothing wrong with that. Pat yourself on the back, because you're a good person. If you want, go ahead and give them some sensible words of advice, but do it after the trade. Don't feel bad because they're walking away with a few moments of relief, while you just gained weeks worth of supplies. You were more prepared. You were "stronger willed". You are the ant. They are the grasshoppers.

It's the vices that will be snapped up first, grabbed off the shelves in a mindless fury by the desperate. Your best chance at taking the upper hand here is to buy some now and store it away. These bottles and small boxes could mean the difference between starving and salvation. They could buy the time you and your family need.

### Liquor (Vice)



Government sanctioned, population approved. Alcohol has been by our side for thousands of years. It is the cause of, and solution to, many of life's problems. It is sought after by the young, and used as a crutch by the old. Almost everyone I know has a good (and bad) alcohol story.

Alcohol itself, in whatever form it takes, is by definition a depressant. It dulls the senses and reaction time. It dissolves the edge off of urgency. It impairs judgment. It has been called "liquid courage".

It really has no place in a pure, organized survival structure. The last thing you want is to have alcohol mixed in with a group of people carrying weapons. The results could be disastrous. It ebbs the chain of command. Orders are ignored, respect takes a back seat, and basic instinct takes over.

My favorite alcohol based saying is from old Russia. "What's on a sober mans mind is on a drunk mans tongue". Drunk people say things they shouldn't, and lose perspective. You don't want tempers flaring. Not now. You and your group are barely holding on as it is. Trade the alcohol off to the masses, otherwise known as the *morons*. Choose your trades wisely. Keep it away from people you like.

There is a time for everything, and I agree that people should eventually get a chance to cut loose. Alcohol does facilitate that. If you want to use it yourself, then save it for later, after the dust finally dies down.

Alcohol's strength is based on **proof**, or measurement of alcohol content. The closer the proof number is to 200, the more pure alcohol it has. The higher the proof, the more potent the beverage is. As the potency gets higher, it takes less to get someone intoxicated. A bottle of whiskey is more valuable than a case of beer. It weighs much less. You need to drink less to receive the desired effect. For this reason alone I recommend sticking to *hard liquors* as a trade material. Any hard liquor is worth more than a bottle of wine. And to a lesser extent, a bottle of wine is worth more than a few cans of beer.

Note that all alcohol *tricks* the body into releasing excess water through urination. This is why you feel dehydrated later. **Alcohol can never replace actual water.** The low alcohol content of beer means you can drink more of it, but you're still going to be thirsty afterwards.

Advanced tip: The most *valuable* alcohol in this situation has seen a recent comeback. It is government-sanctioned moonshine called **Ever clear**. Some of you will remember the name from social gatherings of your youth. It is 190 proof, the highest alcohol content available for legal sale, and about 10 states still aren't allowed to sell it. It cannot be consumed without a mixer. It must be diluted with something else, like water, juice, or tonic. It has no smell or taste. Ever clear can be purchased at most liquor stores, and is inexpensive at \$15 for a large bottle.

What makes Ever clear different from all other alcohol products is its ultra refined properties. It is pure alcohol, and is extremely flammable. It can be used in certain camping stoves. It can be used to start fires. Ever clear is sterile, and can be used to treat wounds if needed. Because of its very high alcohol content, it cannot ever freeze, and can be used to de-ice metal parts. One bottle can last a long time, in more than one capacity.

Where to get more: Depending on what state you live in, Alcohol may only be sold in liquor stores, or it could be sold in grocery stores and possibly bulk food stores.

Secondary sources - Abandoned home liquor cabinets.

**Cigarettes (I have a bone to pick with you people)**



For five years I told myself I wouldn't bring this item to the trading table. It has done so much damage to our country. I can't overstate it. Everyone knows someone who has died or is dying of cigarette related cancer. Everyone knows exactly what the product can do, and yet 30 years after the ads have been banned from television and radio, this country **still** has over 50 million people who smoke.

Maybe Dennis Leary was right. At this point you could put the cigarettes into a black pack with a skull and crossbones on the front, and people would still buy them. No matter what we do, there is a very large group of people out there who have decided that dulling the pain centers of their brain in small amounts is more important than the huge health consequences.

Once the cigarette trucks stop moving, their value will skyrocket. You think your smoker buddies light up a lot now, just wait until their stress levels jump up about five notches.

This item will be looted first, even before alcohol, because of its lightweight and convenient pre-packed portions. You will not be able to find cigarettes a week after the lights go out.

I have a challenge for the smoker reading this. **You** have the chance to live longer than most people. All you have to do is save the cigarettes you have, the cigarettes you just bought, and trade them later for needed supplies. Cigarettes can get you food, water, medicine, weapons,

anything. Just stop smoking when the power goes out. Lock them in a chest and hide the key. Put them in a plastic bag and bury them in the backyard.

Where to get more: Grocery stores, liquor stores, convenience stores, bulk food.

Secondary choices: Vending machines, Office drawers, Vehicle glove boxes, abandoned homes.

### Prescription drugs (Vice)



There are certain medicines that can be helpful to treat sick people. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatory, etc. For every one of those that are another five currently being abused in this country. Most of the culprits fall into the painkiller category. In normal circumstances they relieve extreme forms of pain. In regular doses, they can help with surgery recovery, muscle tears, broken bones and torn ligaments. That's what they were designed for.

If taken by a healthy individual, the person feels a great sense of euphoria. In short, they get high, and could care less about anything. They are powerful *escapism* drugs, as strong as most black-market items. In a low resource environment, they will be more valuable than alcohol and cigarettes combined, because they can produce several mind-altering effects simultaneously.

Normally I would only recommend them for injuries. However if their value increases enough, it might be wise to see what you can get in trade. Prescription drugs, being chemical based, have an official expiration date of maximum potency. It's value will slowly decrease after this date is reached, until the drugs effects are nominal.

The most popular types of prescription drugs include painkillers, mood stabilizers, and ADD or hyperactivity drugs.

**Examples of Painkillers**--sometimes referred to as narcotics—are morphine, codeine, and related medications. Morphine is often used before or after surgery to alleviate severe pain. Codeine is used for milder pain. Other examples of opioids that can be prescribed to alleviate pain include oxycodone (OxyContin) (Darvon) (Vicodin) (Dilaudid) (Demerol), which are used less often because of its side effects. In addition to their effective pain relieving properties, some of these medications can be used to relieve severe diarrhea (Lomotil, for example, which is diphenoxylate) or severe coughs (codeine).

**Examples of mood stabilizers**--Barbiturates, (Mebaral) (Nembutal), which are used to treat anxiety, tension, and sleep disorders.

(Valium), (Librium), (Xanax), which can be prescribed to treat anxiety, acute stress reactions, and panic attacks. (ProSom), can be prescribed for short-term treatment of sleep disorders.

**Examples of Stimulants**-- (Dexedrine) (Ritalin) Stimulants increase the levels of these chemicals in the brain and body. This, in turn, increases blood pressure and heart rate, constricts blood vessels, increases blood glucose, and opens up the pathways of the respiratory system. In addition, the increase in dopamine is associated with a sense of euphoria that can accompany the use of stimulants.

Where to get more: Very limited supply. Hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, or any grocery store with a pharmacy.

Secondary choices: Abandoned homes, more specifically, medicine cabinets and bedroom nightstands.

**Prostitution (Just say no!)**



The oldest profession in the world. This millennia old industry has been a part of every world city, both large and small. In an unstable environment like a breakdown of general society, it's best to stay far away from anything that has to do with it. There are just too many unknowns, all with potentially horrible results.

Here's just a few:

Safety. Pimps in a city full of armed stressed out people? Are you kidding? They wouldn't last an hour, which means no protection for the woman, and you're not a pimp!

Disease. Condoms are going to be in short supply, and it's a safe bet that tricks will be turned without them. Bad idea. Hospitals and clinics will have bigger problems to deal with, assuming that they are still operational.

Predators. With the streets turning very violent, don't be surprised to see some women just get thrown into the back of a truck, and then never seen again.

I don't want to say that you can't have sex at the end of the world, but trying to sell or trade it in this new environment is a poor choice. **That being said**, it is still a commodity for women who find themselves in a dire situation. Would you sell your body to save your child? Would you sell your body to save yourself? Some would say yes.

All I can say to you brave souls is to *be careful*. I mean it. Men are especially dangerous in a high stress environment with few laws, and double-crossing you is an easy decision. If you have a regular place for sex then place a weapon under a pillow or mattress. You don't need much. A knife, ice pick, or big pair of hedge clippers will do the trick. Having someone to watch your back is better.

## Black Market Drugs



This would include any illegal substance that is bought on a street level. It's not a realistic trade item, with the exception of Marijuana. Overseas drug runners deal in cash, and in this scenario the dollar has plummeted to nothing. Distribution lines will be cut. Local Meth labs need raw materials, which will dry up fast. Marijuana requires sunlight, or grow lights, which need large amounts of electricity. There are better things to spend your generator juice on.

For those of you who still want them, there will be some small pockets of marijuana, mushrooms, and other organic drugs surfacing in more rural areas where farmable land is available.

## Chapter 7: Rock, paper, scissors, gun "The quickest way to end a war is to lose it" - George Orwell



This topic raises a lot of eyebrows, and passions. Americans are so divided on the issue of gun

control and lethal weapons in general, it deserves it's own section. I'll be as objective as I can. You can decide your own defensive options.

The point of this item / section is that everything you have accumulated so far, which hopefully will have been water, food, and light sources, needs to be defended at all costs. First, we need to find you a weapon of choice. Further down we will cover the attitude around combat for the average American. Right now we just need to pick something off the rack.

Let's start with a quick test to see where you stand when it comes to weapons. Try to do this in an empty house without your family. If your family is there, try not to look obvious; otherwise they might think you're having some sort of breakdown.

Use your imagination, and picture a person banging at your front door and yelling. You don't know who it is, or how many people might be there with this person. What do you do for sure is that they intend to cause you some sort of harm. If it makes it easier, pretend it's a burglar with a violent side. We've all entertained *that* thought at one point or another. You need to defend yourself, **right now**. You have 60 seconds before that door comes crashing down. Drop the book, take 60 seconds, see what you would go for, and then come back.

PAUSE

... Really, not kidding. Get off the couch and pretend this is real. It will give you a new perspective on what might happen.

... If you did go and come back, then kudos. If you just "imagined" yourself getting off the couch, then you're in worse shape than I thought, and probably aren't taking this very seriously. I will do my best to shed some different light on the topic in hopes that it will motivate you.

Did you immediately go to the kitchen and fumble around for the biggest knife you could find? Did you grab a tire iron you had sitting in a closet, or a big wrench? A pair of scissors perhaps? When you got this life saving device, did you think of where you might be standing when the door opens, what to look for? Are you going to hold the knife with both hands in front of you, waving wildly like the wife in "the shining", or perhaps go charging in like Glenn Close in "fatal attraction". You're protecting your family from an unknown threat. This person isn't going to go away. The weapon you chose, do you really think it's going to stop whatever is behind that door?

**I'm not asking you to buy a gun.** You may hate guns. You may be, or know someone who has been a victim of domestic violence or some other violent crime. This section isn't meant to offend you.

I'm also not going to offend the red meat eating gun enthusiasts, some of which have an unnecessarily large stockpile of firearms, and think that it's their right to accumulate even more.

The attempt here is to try to find a happy medium, one that will keep you safe, without looking so militant that people think you're going to start a revolution.

This is about weapons, any weapons that **you** are comfortable with and **will** use if someone tries to take something that is yours. We are assuming here that if someone says: Please hand over your food and water, you won't just roll over and say "God bless you". That would be a pretty silly ending to your efforts.

If you are into baseball bats, then grab a bat. If you are into knives, grab a knife. If you think you can hold your stash with a 9 iron, by all means, go to the back of your Range Rover and get one of those.

**However,**

Sooner or later, and in this country it means sooner, one day, you will bring a knife to a gunfight. If the other party is of even *average* skill, you will lose. It's just that simple. **Rock, paper, scissors, gun. Gun wins.** Remember where you are. This is America: Land of the crazy, and home of the armed.

Fine, you are a bow hunter, and are very skilled at it. To you I say first: You get one shot, then you're trouble scale goes way up. Second, I have yet to meet a bow hunter who doesn't also own a firearm. The same goes for you crossbow people. Don't get cute; I've heard all the arguments a thousand times.

If you are so against firearms and are so stubborn that you absolutely *will not* use one, then at least *pretend*, and get one of those high-end air soft "replica" toy guns that look like the real thing. Even **that** will give the person across from you pause. If they see a kitchen knife, the fight is over.

Demographics say if you're reading this, the idea of a firearm in any form isn't totally out of the question. For you I offer this: Make your choices wisely. Your life depends on it. The over used KISS principle of sports (**keep it simple stupid**) applies even more so in mortal combat situations. Try not to get fancy or exotic. *Exotic* when referring to firearms often means complicated. If you're the type who has a problem running a television remote and eating a bag of chips at the same time, stay away from the complicated weapons.

Complicated weapons are sexy. They are cool; they are deadly, in the right hands. Let's leave the complicated firearms to the military and the police special weapons unit (note the word *special*). We are Plumbers, middle managers, and programmers. We are ordinary business people who spend more time with their families than at firing ranges. You need something you can actually use, not something that looks good on a "my space" page.

Your weapon should suit you and you only. Don't plan on a *universal* weapon that others will use. Don't plan on your spouse using it. They can get their own. I've been studying small arms for 25 years, and there is a lot to consider before purchasing one. Forget the magazines say and forget what your buddies down at the gun shop tell you. Treat this decision even more carefully than you would in buying a car. It's that critical. This small piece of metal and plastic could save you, your family, and everything you hold important, from tragedy.

The highly revered George S. Patton, decorated General of the US Army during World War 2 once said: "The basic principle of war hasn't changed. It is to deliver the maximum amount of firepower in the minimum amount of time". In layman's terms, fire the biggest weapon you can that holds the largest amount of shells.

The concept, though now 60 years old, is still valid. From a single person point of view, it comes down to body weight, muscle, and the energy your firearm delivers. It's common sense that a 120 woman would be hard pressed to fire an elephant gun on a regular basis without suffering some heavy bruises or maybe even a dislocated shoulder. On that same line it would be a waste to have a 240-pound man firing a tiny pistol designed to hunt rabbits. In a stressful situation, shoot the biggest thing that you can, comfortably.

Numerous survival guides will tell you that in the long term, you should own at least 1 rifle, 1 shotgun, and one handgun, with a generous amount of ammunition for each. This is not bad advice, but a little hardcore for the average citizen. Let's reduce it down a bit, and again, keep it simple.

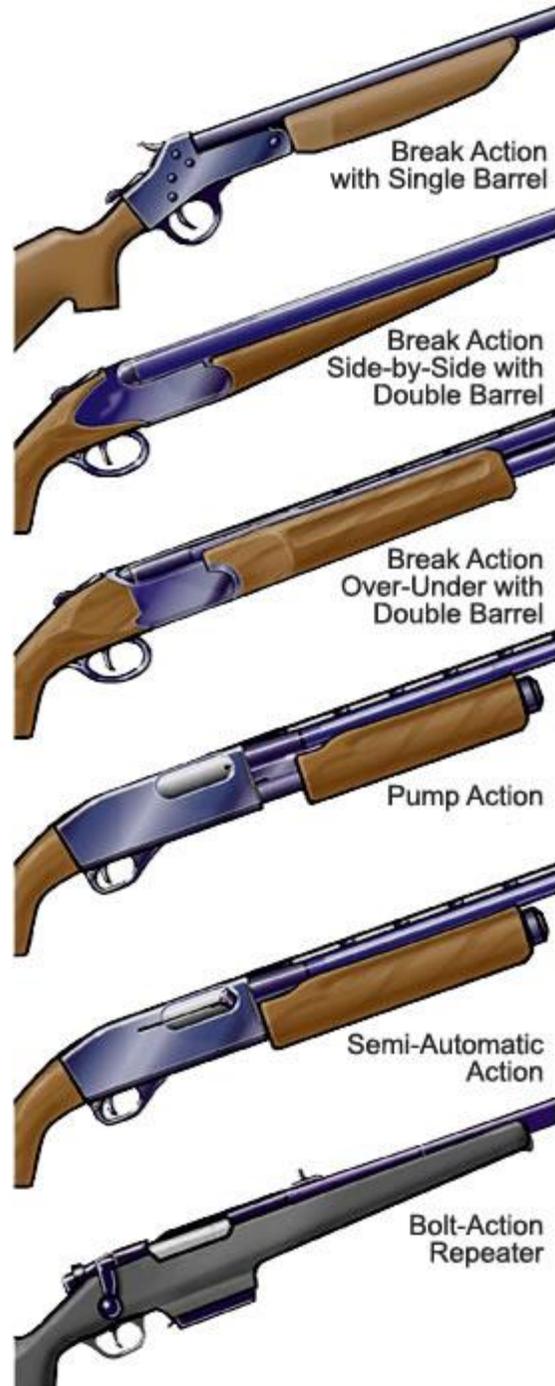
### **One rifle or shotgun, and one handgun.**

If you have to choose between a rifle and a shotgun, I'd probably choose a shotgun for an everyday neighborhood environment. Rifles have greater range, hit harder at greater distances, and can carry more shells. Shotguns hit much harder in the first 50 yards, but aren't good at long range, and hold fewer rounds.

You, me, and just about everyone else isn't that accurate at longer ranges, so a rifle isn't going to help you much there. You'll have a chance to hit things from far away, but the percentage isn't very high. Rifles also have a double-edged problem, and that they can penetrate house walls very easily. Shooting at something inside a house and missing means that it will most likely go through several other rooms, exit your house and go into someone else's. No need to start creating accidents that will haunt you later.

On the other hand, if you are convinced that in a gunfight you will be *blind* with panic, and totally out of control, a semi automatic rifle may be your only real answer. There is something to be said about pulling the trigger and letting 30 bullets fly in front of you. You're bound to hit the bad guys once, right? There is logic there. Just remember that any time you miss, the bullet has to go somewhere, and a rifle will be sending bullets hundreds of yards in that direction.

### **Choice 1: Shotgun**



You've chosen a shotgun. Good for you. Shotguns haven't changed much in the 100 plus years that they've been around, and there is a wide selection to choose from. You also need to choose between Semi-automatic, which means you just pull the trigger and the weapon fires each time, or pump action, in which each shot needs to be chambered manually. You will need to choose the size of shell you want to fire. I'll help you along the way.

Pros and cons of semi-automatic: They are more expensive by a few hundred dollars. They have

a narrower selection. Semi-automatic is usually found in bird hunting shotguns. If you want a good one that holds the maximum amount of shells (at the time of this writing, 9) it can run you up to \$1000. One obscure drawback of the semi-auto is its inability to fire "non-standard" shells, ones made by custom ammunition makers. The semi-auto mechanism, which ejects one shell and inserts another, is based on a minimum amount of powder to power the action. If there is not enough power, the action jams. If the action jams and what you're shooting at is still standing, that's bad.

Pros and cons of pump action: Less expensive, holds the same maximum amount of shells. Wide variety of models can fire any type of shell, standard or non-standard. One drawback is that you will fire slower because of its manual operation. This may or may not help you, and here's why: People tend to shoot too many times when pumped up on adrenalin. That's much easier to do with a semi-automatic. A pump action slows you down a bit, giving you time to think as you deliberately cycle the shells. A pump action also will let you know you're out of ammunition about a second later than an automatic, because of the extra pump, but this may not affect much.

By far and away the most popular shotgun caliber is the 12 gauge round. It is the current US military caliber, and is preferred by all types of hunters and law enforcement. There are millions of rounds of 12-gauge ammunition in circulation, with many different purposes. Please see Item (Ammunition) for types and potency.

Tip: There are some slight differences in shotgun shell sizes when it comes to 12-gauge ammunition. The variance is in *length*. 12 gauge comes in 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, 3 inches, and some a little longer. Make absolutely sure that your shotgun can handle the length of the shells. A shotgun labeled 2- $\frac{3}{4}$  inch cannot take 3-inch shells. A 3-inch shotgun can however, take the shorter rounds. The majority of ammunition made is in 2  $\frac{3}{4}$ , but since they look almost identical, it's always good to go with a larger chamber, just to be sure.

All other calibers in the shotgun category should be considered distant seconds. This includes .410, 16, 20, and 10 gauge models.

## **Choice 2: Rifle**



Bolt Action



Lever Action



Pump Action



Semi-Automatic  
Action



Break (Hinge) Action

You've chosen a rifle. Rifles have been around even longer than shotguns, hundreds of years in fact, and being the murdering warmongers that we are, we have created everything from low-level plinkers to bristling monstrosities that can rip down small buildings.

The same topics apply for the rifle as they did the shotgun. Semi-auto vs. manual, and the size of shell you want to fire. Let's get the easy choice out of the way. Choose semi-auto. I'm not saying this because there is anything particularly wrong with manual, bolt-action rifles. There is just a huge fundamental difference between bolt action rifles and say, pump shotguns. *Bolt action* is

where you have to lift up the bolt lever, pull the spent shell back, push it forward, and swing the bolt down again. This is four movements versus two for the pump shotgun, which is just pull back and push out.

All the movie and television scenes where the guy with the bolt-action rifle screws up and jams the weapon under high stress, that really happens! Don't be like them and get eaten by the dinosaur, or the giant crocodile, or the mutant rat, or whatever else seems to know that you are using a bolt-action rifle in a life or death situation.

Whether it's a \$400 off the shelf bolt action, or a \$10,000 gold inlaid, custom made, elephant killing bolt action, it still works basically the same. Soldiers don't use bolt action, general police don't use bolt action. The only people that really use it are snipers. Why? Because bolt-action rifles are consistently more accurate at long ranges, on a target that is only in there for one shot.

If a bolt action is all you have, then try not to engage anyone at close range. If you do, chances are you will have **one** shot. Treat your strategy like you're using a musket.

The semi auto rifle comes in all sizes, and being that we're in America, you have an **enormous** selection in front of you.

Here's why: Back in the early 1980's some Hollywood producers realized that the popular Clint Eastwood series "Dirty Harry", had increased the sales of the .44 magnum revolver by leaps and bounds. In collaboration with the major US and then later foreign manufacturers, Hollywood started giving every leading man a sexy gun of some kind, and the firearm makers in turn, started churning out "civilian" versions of the same weapons to the public. They fired the same shell, held the same number of bullets, and looked identical. The only difference is that they weren't "machine guns", weapons that fire multiple shells with one pull of the trigger.

Public response was very enthusiastic and the general public bought everything in sight. Every year up until the Brady gun bill was passed the gun makers created more and more exotic weapons for the public. Some of these included drum fed shotguns, plastic pistols that held 100 shells, rifles with shotguns bolted to them.

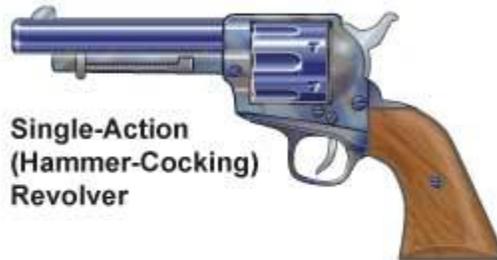
One side effect of this, whether deliberate or not, is that America has now the most well armed civilian population on the surface of the Earth. Not exactly an appetizing target if you were going to invade. There are as many firearms in circulation as there are Americans, the downside being 17,000 domestic gun related deaths a year.

As with the shotgun, there are some military calibers to consider. Our current US army rifle cartridge is the 5.56 mm, .223 inches. Many companies make the civilian version of the US army weapon. They range in price from \$600-\$2000. If you weigh less than 160 pounds I highly recommend this caliber. If you are over 160 pounds, you may want to look at the larger military caliber 7.62, .308 inches. The selection is fewer, but the shells reach farther, and hit harder. Both domestic and international companies manufacture them. They range in price from \$400-\$3000 and are well worth looking into. If money is an object, but you still want a popular round, try any of the civilian AK-47 variants that are in high supply in today's market.

## Handgun:



**Double-Action  
(Trigger-Cocking)  
Revolver**



**Single-Action  
(Hammer-Cocking)  
Revolver**



**Semi-Automatic  
Pistol**



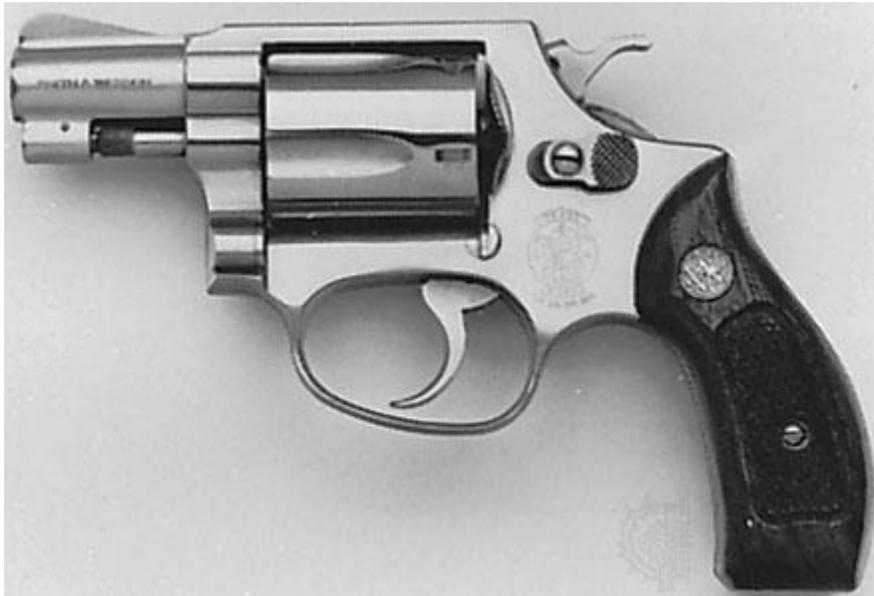
**Break-Action  
Pistol  
(Singleshot)**



**Bolt-Action  
Handgun**

The choice of a one handed firearm is simpler. While it is true that there are a large variety of handguns manufactured in this country, the decisions of what to use in a crisis still come down to the two same basic options. Semi auto or revolver, and the caliber used.

## Revolver:



An old, tried and tested technology. A revolver is what we grew up with, played cowboys and Indians with. Movie after movie, year after year, used the revolver. It holds six rounds; and in most cases has no safety. Cops used them, criminals used them, and the Lone Ranger had one that fired silver bullets. Dirty Harry used one for most of his career. It is by far the most comfortable in our hands. They come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some of the cartridges used have been manufactured for over 150 years.

Pros and cons: In the majority of revolvers, you have six shots as fast as you can pull the trigger. If you have to reload, the cylinder has to swing out and shells ejected manually. Revolvers have regained some popularity recently because the shells stay in the gun. No shells, no fingerprints or DNA. Professional assassins gravitate towards these weapons in certain *discrete* situations. The revolver doesn't have a safety. To combat this, some users keep at least one chamber empty to prevent an accidental firing.

The revolver has one very important advantage. It's instinctual in a crisis situation for the common man. You point and shoot. You don't cycle a round, you don't throw in a clip. A revolver doesn't jam, and it is one of the few weapons that can fire repeatedly underwater if needed.

Until the mid 1980's, all law enforcement in America used the revolver. When the military type weapons began entering the civilian population, law enforcement found themselves in firefights where the criminals were doing most of the shooting. This wasn't good, both for police mortality rates and morale. It was then that law enforcement switched from .38 and .357 revolvers to their semi auto counterparts, evening the odds.



The two most popular calibers for semi auto pistols currently are 9mm, and .45.

Where to get more: The manufacture and sale of new and used firearms is controlled (sometimes loosely) by the federal government. Because of this, the number of places firearms can be acquired is limited and monitored. Because of their dangerous nature, everyone and every place that sells firearms implement safety precautions.

Primary: Firearm shops, Some hardware and sporting goods stores, pawn shops, gun shows, private firearm dealers, online manufacturers, and of course, online private owners through the classifieds.

Secondary locations: Abandoned homes, security offices of some companies, abandoned police stations, National Guard armories.

### Gunplay



You don't use firearms on a regular basis. The range fees can be expensive, ammunition isn't free, and quite frankly, we're normally way too busy to be playing with things that we're never going to use in a practical situation anyway.

Get real. Stress and panic turns us all into idiots. The reason they put push bar levers on auditorium doors is because when people panic, they forget how to use things, like door handles. Learn the basics, get to a range, and practice every once in a while. If you're reading this by flashlight because the powers already gone out, and you have yet to fire a gun, then you have some things to think about.

*Don't freak out.* You're holding a gun, not a cobra. Both are deadly, but this one is built to

protect you.

*Make sure the safety is off when you are ready to shoot.* The whole point of the safety is to keep you from shooting things accidentally, like your underwear drawer. If you think you'll forget, then take the safety off and leave it off for the duration of the apocalypse.

*Aim for the legs.* This was taught to me decades ago and I firmly believe it is the best method for house-to-house fighting. Shooting the legs means there is a good chance your target doesn't get to stand up any more. It puts your enemy on the ground, where they are much slower. Shooting the legs doesn't kill them right away. This should make you *anti-killing* people feel a little better. Shooting them in the legs creates an obstacle for the person behind them. It gives you options. All the targets and training about hitting someone in the torso talk about hitting vital organs. This is good advice, but it doesn't cover body armor. Even if your adversary is only wearing a t-shirt and you hit their stomach they're still going to be standing for a little while longer. Shooting someone in the foot will produce better results than hitting them in shoulder.

*Count your shots.* If you're not yelling out some movie inspired Viking battle cry, then try to count how many shots you're firing. It sounds juvenile. I agree. Counting your shots lets you know how close you are to being empty. Being empty is bad. Most studies of small arms combat have proven time and time again, that in a one-on-one gunfight, the person who runs out of bullets last usually wins. Count your shots; reload if you have the time. Don't be the one standing there with when the gun goes "click", instead of "bang".

*You can let them live.* Survivalists all over the country are screaming No! My history teacher from 10<sup>th</sup> grade was one of the first to tell me that if an intruder comes in with the intention of sending you to the grave, your only logical choice is to shoot them as many times as possible. I used to like this advice. I will probably follow this advice. This advice isn't perfect, and here's why. You're not a killer! Ok, some of you are, and I hope you don't live next to me. The rest of you aren't expected to end anyone's life.

Guns and the images of death follow each other everywhere. You can do what you want with your gun. You can fire a warning shot into the air, you can fire a warning shot next to their head. I'm aiming for the legs. If you wound them, and they retreat, they'll carry their sorry butts out the door. If you empty 20 bullets into them, guess what, **you** have to drag them out of your place. This is America. There are some heavy burglars out there. If the person weighs more than 200 pounds, you may not be able to move them, and then what?

If you haven't figured out the most important reason to 'wound them and let the burglars run out the door', here it is: They can't get their wounds treated anyway! The hospitals aren't operational! The first aid kits are far away, and can't do anything for bullet wounds!

So fire away America, your conscious is clear!

**Ammunition (Priority)**



Normally this would be embedded inside the weapons category, but ammunition in itself is **both a tool and a tradable item**. There are many calibers you could acquire but not need. At the same time they could provide a huge value for someone else, either as an asset or a trade item.

*Tip: All ammunition has value, and its trade range can vary widely.*

Firearm manufacturers in the last 30 years have made it so that calibers that used to be exclusive to pistols and rifles are now interchangeable. Because of this the list below is not broken down into rifles and pistols, just calibers and what can use them. Note that Shotgun shells are forbidden by the general public to be used in a pistol.

Sawed off shotguns (barrels under 18 inches) are considered a federal crime, punishable by a minimum 10 years in prison without early release, which means if you were planning on sawing off the top part of your hunting shotgun, be sure to do it **after** the end of the world has started.

**You don't have to read the ammunition chart below, it's just for reference.**

#### **Most popular ammunition types (most valuable)**

**.223** - Current allied forces rifle round. Small bullet, fast speed. Can penetrate most house walls. Medium range.

**.9mm** - Current allied forces pistol round. Medium bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate car doors. Low range.

**.308** - Current allied forces heavy rifle round. Medium bullet, fast speed. Can penetrate standard body armor. High range.

**12 gauge** - Current allied forces shotgun round. Heavy bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate car doors. Very low range.

**.45** - Older allied forces pistol round. Heavy bullet, slow speed, Can penetrate car doors. Low range.

**.762x39** - Current Russian military rifle round. Medium bullet, fast speed. Can penetrate lower body armor. High range.

### **Secondary ammunition types (very tradable)**

**.30.06** - Older allied forces rifle round. Medium bullet, fast speed. Can penetrate most non-plate body armor. High range.

**.38** - Older police pistol round. Medium bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate car doors. Low range.

**.357** - Older police pistol round. Medium bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate car doors. Low range.

**.44** - Older hunting pistol round. Heavy bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate most non-plate body armor. Medium range.

**.40** - Current law enforcement pistol round. Medium bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate most house walls. Medium range.

**.454** - Popular hunting pistol round. Heavy bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate most non-plate body armor. Medium range.

**.22** - Older rifle / pistol round. Small bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate most house walls. Low range.

**.50** - Older allied forces machine gun round. Heavy bullet, very fast speed. Can penetrate plate armor. High range.

### **Miscellaneous ammunition types (some trade value)**

**.380** - Popular light pistol round. Small bullet, low speed. Can penetrate some house walls. Low range.

**.25** - Popular light pistol round. Small bullet, low speed. Can penetrate some house walls. Low range.

**.22 mag** - Popular light pistol round. Small bullet, fast speed. Can penetrate most house walls. Medium range.

**.41 mag** - Popular pistol round. Large bullet, medium speed. Can penetrate some body armor. Low range.

**You will only be using a few calibers from the above lists. If you do come across any of the others, keep them for later. You never know when they might prove useful.**

Note: **Ammunition has almost no expiration date.** As long as it isn't stored underwater, shells can stay preserved almost forever. At the time of this writing there is still ammunition manufactured in the 1960's currently being sold around the world.

**Tip:** *Please remember that ammunition should be treated like an explosive. If ammunition is thrown into a fire, the brass or steel casing will heat up quickly and ignite the powder inside. The bullet will then fire in whatever direction it is facing. If you see a fire that you know contains a stash of ammunition, get to cover as quickly as possible!*

Where to get more: Ammunition isn't under strict regulation by the government, and can be acquired quickly from many locations. Large quantities are kept in: Firearm shops, sporting good and hardware stores. They can also be purchased online in many states without paperwork.

Secondary locations: Abandoned houses, abandoned police stations, National Guard armory (only for military calibers)

## **Chapter 8: Hot loot, cold loot "Honey, I think we're out of toilet paper" – Your Spouse)**



You're like most of your peers. By the objective standards of the law, you qualify as a good person. You don't rob banks, or shoplift, or kidnap. The most trouble you've seen in the last 10 years are a pair of speeding tickets and a slightly guilty feeling in your stomach that you took too many tax deductions.

Or, you could be *squeaky* clean. I mean shiny sparkly. You don't miss a Sunday of church. You have never looked at an Internet site full of naked people. You take your family to Disney every few years. You have parental locks on the television. You respect authority, and in turn condemn anyone who doesn't.

Convincing you that the brutal basic human instincts still lie within your DNA will be difficult, but not impossible. In this crisis scenario everything is possible, including turning your overly righteous and judgmental butt into a logical and sensible survivor that will look past the unthinkable, barbaric actions of the masses, someone that will see yourself and family as priority number one.

Believe it or not I used to be the most law-abiding person around. I feared authority, and did everything I was told. I respected all laws, and tried to stay out of trouble. Circumstances change. People change. You will change.

You yell: “I would never!” How many times have I heard that? Remember the first time you watched a news broadcast during Christmas, you know the one, where the rare toy gets released, the one that **all the kids** want? The department store only had 60 cabbage patch dolls, and there are 500 people outside. The doors opened, and chaos ensued. Mothers pushed and shoved, Fathers cursed and threatened. Kids were trampled. It was Christmas, and this was a **toy** for God’s sake. These are your neighbors in action.

Maybe that was an isolated incident. Did you watch the home run king Barry Bonds as he hit those last five shots deep into the stands? Each ball was worth thousands, and when each landed, the crowds went berserk. They punched, kicked, screamed. People bled. People went to jail. This was about the chance, just the *chance*, to sell the ball on Ebay. These are your friends banging on your door.

When the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake took place, the looting started within *seconds*. When Katrina hit, the looting didn’t stop for weeks. Even the police were taking things from the stores.

You may be a good person, bordering on saint hood. You may be so perfect that it is difficult to gaze on you directly. Your sense of righteousness may be the size of a city bus, but you are still human. **Humans in a survival situation act in very similar and predictable ways.**

Imagine just for a second, that you’ve been wrongly accused of some minor crime and are thrown in a jail cell. You’re getting hungry, and the jailer opens the mail slot at the bottom of your door. He shoves a sandwich through, and a dirty glass of water.

You’re not really a sandwich person. To make things worse, it’s a Spam sandwich, with spicy mustard. You hate both Spam and spicy mustard. You just sit and stare at it. Now pretend that the jailer isn’t coming back for a few days.

After a while, that sandwich starts looking better and better. You are like a vampire. You hunger, you thirst. You fight it, but your mind starts playing tricks on you. Unless you are the most stubborn and overly dignified person on earth, or maybe British, you will eat the sandwich. Your instinct will override all other bias, all protests, and all objections.

Now, imagine one more thing. Pretend that your life depended on it. Pretend that your family’s life depends on you breaking the rules. Deny it all you want. The quicker you accept that you are a part of the masses, the faster you can stay ahead of them.

To be clear, I am not officially *endorsing* the looting process. In a perfect world, authorities would distribute resources evenly. In some places this might actually happen. In most they will not. People will have to fend for themselves. The criminal element will act first. The people with injured or sick family members will move second. Those with younger families will follow that.

Let’s take a look at will probably happen to an average strip-mall over the first few days of a power outage.

**0-24 hours:** This scenario assumes that there is loss of power only with no hint of why or when it will return. At first the power outage is seen as a curious anomaly. Everyone is on *stand by*. Order is contained. Routine burglaries see an increase. Some outlying liquor stores are robbed, as well as some smaller stores that sell small, expensive electronics such as phones and portable music players. Hospitals automatically switch over to backup generators, with a limited amount of fuel. Their clock is ticking. Most of the gas stations close. Large amounts of local law enforcement are allocated to traffic control. A number of intersections have officer's running lights with LED batons. Grocery stores pack what they can in ice, and close their doors. Some smaller shops attempt to stay open with calculators. Convenience stores along major roads begin to raise prices on popular items.

**24-48 hours:** Assuming the emergency broadcast system hasn't been activated, burglaries involving luxury items increase dramatically as criminals realize alarm systems are down and the backup power supplies have been exhausted. Confused individuals drive around town, looking for any store to be open. There are small gatherings outside of supermarkets. This is the critical point where state and local authorities dictate the actions of the population. If the emergency broadcast system is running, and instructions are given over major radio stations, it will buy a few days for protection to be put in place. For our scenario we will imagine that any available National Guard troops have been dispatched to other locations. Your town has to depend only on local law enforcement for security.

By design, local law enforcement is not equipped to deal with martial law. Their first priority, like at Katrina and Los Angeles, is to protect human life. SWAT teams are few and far between. Your average sheriff or traffic officer is not going to spend their days firing rounds into angry mob. They just aren't equipped for this type of situation.

By the end of the second day, people will start becoming resolved on their next course of action. They will want solutions from the authorities, and the authorities won't have the best answers. *We are waiting for the state or federal government to issue instructions.* This waiting doesn't feed your children. There are people around you who have run out of diapers, soap, and toilet paper. Toilet paper!

**48-72 hours:** The resolutions will manifest as day breaks. At first light, friends and neighbors will again start gathering in front of the larger supermarkets. They will start congregating in front of Costco and Sam's club. The things they need are in the darkened stores. Supplies are just sitting there. The registers don't work, so the items can't be paid for. The aisles are very dim, so it isn't safe to shop. The general population won't care. The only thing sitting between them and the things that power their *comfort zone* is a single law enforcement unit.

The bold individuals will approach the lone officer, friendly at first, asking questions about when the store might be open, casually suggesting ideas about letting a few people in, taking names and phone numbers so that the store can be reimbursed later. Those sales pitches will start to get old after the first few dozen times. The officer will use the radio occasionally, to show the growing crowd there is backup if needed.

Unfortunately, this scene is being played out all over town, and there is no backup to send. The police and sheriff units are stretched too thin, and the officer knows it. Hour by hour the crowd gets more agitated. The strain is starting to show. By midday, his / her hand is constantly at rest on their sidearm, and with good reason. Then, a loud, desperate voice from the crowd demands that the people be let through to get what they need. Threats come from the masses. The corresponding threat of reprisal by the officer is impotent. After all, how many people can they arrest and still protect the store?

The situation is not a stalemate. The officer will lose. Even if the officer has civilian *friends* that come to their aid, they will get pushed aside or fall. The reason is simple. Law and order can only function as long as the public is at relative peace with itself. The population's needs must be met, and those needs are insatiable. A bullhorn can't compete with the yelling of hundreds.

**72+ hours:** The officer stops responding to questions. Only the mob is yelling now. A sound comes over the police radio. One of the stores at the other side of town has just been overtaken by a large group of people. The police chief orders all units to pull away from what they're doing and converge on that particular supermarket. The chief's logic is flawed. He can only save one store with the manpower he has, and it is already being overrun. They will lose the store, people will be arrested, and officers potentially injured. All the while the rest of the town is being taken apart.

The lone officer gets into the car and drives away quickly, siren blaring. The crowd doesn't even wait until the police unit is out of earshot before smashing through the grocery store glass. Within 60 seconds there is already fighting in the aisles. Within an hour, that same store will hear gunfire.

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This scene will have different variations of tempo, but the theme is constant. It *will* happen. The general population is not very different from *man's best friend*. Your family dog is loyal. It hunts with you; it plays with your children and licks your face. If it is not fed, given enough time, your dog will turn on you as food.

You could easily be one of the mob, but you're better than that. You're smarter than that. The mob runs off of pure instinct. Collectively, their decisions are childish, brutal, and reckless. The only way to beat the mob is to become your own animal, one that is more cunning, logical, and level headed.

In order to be one step ahead, the group mentality needs to be understood. Once you have the knowledge, and can predict what a mob will do before hand, Everything will play out like a well-executed crime movie. All eyes are looking in one direction, but you and what you need to do, will be somewhere else. Somewhere secret.

Most people are creatures of habit. We take the same route to work, even though multiple streets are available to us. We watch the same television shows each week, have lunch at the same group of restaurants, use the same ATM, and most important to this topic: We shop at the same grocery store, month after month.

The community mentality runs on simple rules, and survives on a very primitive mindset. We are out of food. Where do we get more food? I shop there. We need to go there. Where are you going to get food? I am going there. I am going there as well. Let's both go there, to get food.

You'd think we just learned to walk upright, heading out of our caves to kill a mammoth. It just gets worse from here. Food store closed. Dark. Locked. Lots of glass. We don't need to use door. Angry person with gun in front of store. We will wait.

The sentences may play out a little better than that, but not much. Some may think of other stores, only to find a different group of people, and the same law enforcement units. The clever people will do the math and deduce that with that amount of people in front of the store, no one is getting out with a cart full of anything. There aren't enough goods in the aisles for that. They will start thinking of the obvious alternatives; the most obvious being the bulk food outlets.

There is one thing about following the mob mindset. If you've thought of it, others have to. Of course, Costco! People will be slapping their heads by the hundreds. There is **way** more food and supplies there. We need to hit that place! Let's go!

You should have stayed at the grocery store. Costco is a literal *fortress* compared to the average supermarket. Have you ever been parked outside a Costco and just stared at it? It's a stone and metal warehouse, with giant rolling steel doors. The small doors are steel too, with windows too small to squeeze through.

Yes, it is filled *literally* to the ceiling with every kind of supply you could think of. Forget for a moment about how solid the building is. Another problem is that all these great supplies are in the middle of a giant room with few windows, and no light. Throw in the fact that you will have about 1000 people sitting outside it trying to find a way in. Do you have a plan of getting a large amount of food out of this building? Here are a few **bad ideas** to consider.

**Attempt 1.** You force open a smaller door on the back loading dock with pry bars and portable drills. A bottleneck is now created. You would need armed guards to keep people out while you went in, filling a flatbed cart with everything you could in about 10 minutes. Word spreads through the crowd in the front, and hundreds of people flock to the back to see if they can get in on it. You get the cart back to the door, and try to load up your truck for the escape. If you were smart you pull the guards off the door and let people flood in, distracting them from your getaway. For this you need at least five people, armed, who you can trust, and who are willing to open fire if things get ugly. This will be difficult with a group. If you don't have the manpower, then the bulk food store isn't a valid target. It doesn't matter how many firearms you carry by yourself, there are some things a single person can't do.

**Attempt 2:** You get a backhoe or front loader and just plow through one of the front steel doors. Once down, you set up armed guards to keep people from getting in, and use the same plan of attack from before. The same amount of people are required, plus you need the bulldozer, which you don't have. Because of the large opening, there is a good chance that warning shots will need to be fired if you expect to keep other people out of the area.

**Attempt 3:** You wait until someone else breaches an entrance, and then try to find what you can. This is called a “**hot loot**” situation, and is only recommended as a last resort.

“Hot loot” refers to an area that is either 1. Being looted by two or more people at the same time, or 2. Being looted, even though there are defenses present. Stores that are being mobbed are hot loot zones. Stores that are being protected by owners are also Hot Loot zones. Homes with owners inside are a hot loot area.

These areas are dangerous, because they are filled with unpredictable people. You don’t know if the person next to you wants that same 5-pound container of peanuts. If they go for it, what are you going to do? Grab it back? Hit them? Start shooting? Hot loot zones are chaotic, full of noise and panic. Adrenalin is up, and everyone is moving quickly, because the faster you move, the faster you can pick up things. **It’s like a giant game of musical chairs, but you don’t know where the chairs are, everyone has guns, and if you can’t find a chair when the music stops, you starve.**

Pushing a cart is a waste of time. The store is dark, flashlights the only way to see anything. You get to a section you were thinking of, and it’s been cleaned out. You can’t carry enough. Did you bring a backpack? Some people a few rows over start fighting, and a gun goes off. People scream, some run. The smart ones stay. You go into that row and have to step over a body to see if there’s any more beef jerky. **This isn’t where you should be.** Someone shines a flashlight at your backpack, then into your eyes. You hear the cocking of a weapon.

You are better than this, more clever. The last thing you need is to be spending your time running around dark hallways fighting for scraps. Look, listen and learn. The mob is like a swarm of angry bees, moving as a single unit, like a virus, consuming everything it touches. It is something to be feared. It is also something that can be manipulated.

The best thing, what you and your family need, is a "cold loot" situation. A place that isn't either a primary or secondary target. A place that is so far ahead of the mob that they can only wish they thought of it first. Cold loot refers to a stash of supplies that can be acquired alone, or with a group you trust. There is no competition here. It can be emptied at your leisure. It is ahead of the curve. When the tentacles of the mob finally reach it, they will find only empty shelves. More importantly, they will not find you. Imagine yourself blending in with the mob. Feel what they feel. See what they see. They are a blunt instrument looking for resources. All their targets, every single one of them, will be a hot loot situation. Every stash they find will be by definition, a danger zone. Understand their primary and secondary targets.

## **Week 1: Mob Primary targets**



Grocery stores - The lifeblood of any community. They contain food, water, batteries, and toilet paper; everything needed to keep an average household operational.

Pharmacies - non-perishable food, water, batteries, toilet paper, enough to keep an average household operational.

Bulk food stores - Food, water, batteries, toilet paper. Everything needed to keep an average household operational, and it's in large, easily transportable amounts.

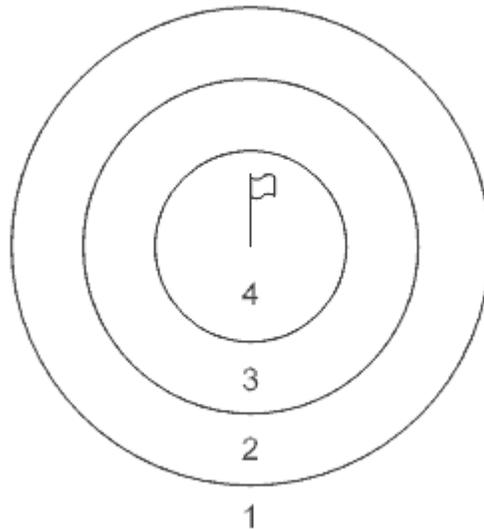
Convenience stores - Non-perishable food, water, batteries, enough to keep an average household operational.

The first week of the outage is an orgy of acquiring consumption materials. The grocery stores will be bare, emptied in a frenzy of consumer madness. The adjoining pharmacies will be hit almost simultaneously. As discussed earlier, the bulk food stores will be the biggest challenge, and most likely produce the highest amount of casualties because of the higher concentration of people combined with a collision of well-laid plans. Some people will try to drive into the store, others will try to access some of the food and supplies placed 20 feet above the floor. Forklifts will tip over. Lots of people will make mistakes.

There are huge stashes of basic supplies in a bulk food store; enough to last well organized group years if rationed well. There will be more than one group that will make a play for it. There will be in store skirmishes. Can you imagine what it would be like to be an average family walking into that giant dark place? There is a gun battle raging in one corner of the warehouse, and all the while supplies that could keep them alive for months are within an arms reach.

The only good thing to say about convenience stores is that each one is so small; a single vehicle would be able to empty out the entire place in less than 30 minutes. It could be done with twenty garbage bags and vehicle headlights to illuminate the store. The process would be relatively painless. Either you're there alone, or you've missed your window. Note that many convenience stores are franchise owned, which means the owners / employees will probably just move in and live off the inventory.

## Week 2: Mob Secondary targets



Gas stations - Some non-perishable food, some water, batteries. Enough to keep an average household alive.

Restaurants - Some canned food, some water, and misc items. Enough to keep an average household alive.

Hardware stores - Some non-perishable food, some water, misc items. Enough to keep an average household alive.

Specialty shops - Some non-perishable food, some water, misc items. Enough to keep an average household alive.

Sporting good stores - Some non-perishable food, misc items, including firearms. Can supplement household supplies.

As the primary targets are being depleted, first level *alternative stores* become more attractive to the mob. Even the smallest gas station carries a substantial supply of candy and chips. Restaurants vary in the different types of canned food, but the rule of thumb is, the better the restaurant, the better the stash. Note that a large share of restaurants have alcoholic beverages (tradeable) as well. Fast food franchises still suck in the apocalypse, with the majority of their supplies coming in large cans of sauces and a huge amount of perishable frozen food that will

become useless once thawed.

Hardware stores carry a large supply of batteries. The smart looters will ignore the shelves, and go into the back stockrooms where everything is packed into large boxes. Some sporting good shops will carry not only camping gear and power bars, but also a generous supply of non-military firearms. The mob will have some trouble with acquiring these weapons. Security devices for guns have gotten better over the years. Some firearms contain a special lock that covers the entire trigger section. It can only be unlocked with a key. The average person cannot make the gun function without the aid of power tools. The other, more popular option for securing store firearms is to run a long steel cable between all the triggers. This can be severed easily with a set of bolt cutters.

### **Week 3: The first sweep**

By week three, there will be some organized groups using trucks. They will be searching business to business, looking for anything consumable. They will find the water cooler bottles, the vending machines, and the factory cafeterias. If the groups have anyone efficient running the operation, they will go from location to location until the truck is filled, and then head back to a rally point. Running the sweeps during the day will make it easier to find things, save battery time, and make it easier to coordinate personnel. Night sweeps are risky. In a dark world, headlights can be seen for miles away. Ambushes will be frequent. Some of the smaller teams might work at night with minimal lighting in order to avoid the larger groups. The successful ones will be fast, mobile, and have the ability to work with smaller lights, or even night vision.

### **Week 4: Leftovers**

By the end of the first month, all the visible targets will have been exhausted. All stores and shops that contain supplies that can be seen from the street will be gone. Soda machines will have been forced open. Specialty shops with small amounts of candy next to the register. All office refrigerators containing non-perishable liquids, all the snacks in Blockbuster, every candle at Williams Sonoma. The camping sections of any hardware store will be decimated. Every can of food in the hotel kitchens will be gone. The juice bar at the local spa will be bare.

The only things left now are misc items hidden away in all the drawers, cabinets, and cupboards within office buildings. If your coworkers are as consistent as mine, there still is quite a bit to be had. God bless us, for there is food in almost every cubicle. It will just take more energy to find it.

The general mob finally runs out of motivation at this point. Their wave crests here. The shopping spree is over. The looting of commercial and corporate America has come to an end. Unfortunately, some of the smaller, more hardcore groups are still alive. If they are to survive, they can only do so by taking on the homeowners. Personal residences are the final targets. The predators are forced to try their luck against the everyday citizen. This is the unknown scenario which even government models have a hard time predicting. Is the house that is being raided occupied? Will the owners fight back? Are there casualties? When do the looters give up?

When it comes to long-term predictions, there has been much debate in the survival world. Some

think that it will develop into a “Thunder dome” scenario, where limited trade is restored. Some think that larger groups will venture out of the city, hoping to find a better outpost. Their purpose seems aimless. Yours is not. You still have hope; have faith that the government who used to be in charge will return to help their population to restore order. This is what you can cling to, and with some organization, can create a protective bubble that can keep those who you care about safe.

You now have a rough blueprint of targets that a garden-variety town mob will take to secure resources. Do you see the pattern? Have you figured out the trends, and what you could do to take advantage of this?

The mob attacks the *obvious*, and keeps hitting it until the resource is exhausted. They then move to the next big thing that sticks out. In short, the mob is a bunch of slack jawed mouth breathers who couldn't make a good decision if their life depended on it. You're much better off without them.

Your window lies in the small gaps that the mob overlooks. Your chance is hidden between the huge waves of chaos these people create. The timelines mentioned above will have some variance, but it will give you the chance to get what you need, without the added pressure of looking over your shoulder.

Your edge, your angle, is a **cold loot** target that *only you* know. Forget the mobs first choices. They are the choices for the masses. All their focus will be the immediate three targets closest to their homes. Take the easier path. Sieze your chance and hit a well thought out cold loot target.

The target chosen could be anything from a secondary mob choice, or something special you came up with on your own. If your decision is well thought out, there won't be any law enforcement or lights. Look for a back service entrance or loading dock, something that faces away from the street. Expect the unexpected. Employees of this establishment, especially kids, will come up with the idea to hit their own store shortly, and may move on it. Have at least one backup selection, and maybe two.

To get an idea of what you should look for; be overly observant the next time you are driving through town. Look for some interesting stores. Here's what I mean: Pick a supermarket or any good-sized grocery store. Now look right across the street and see what's there. Maybe there's a convenience mart, coffee shop, radio shack, or a restaurant, all with service entrances that are not visible from the grocery store parking lot. This is the place where your knuckle dragging adversaries will be. The restaurant has canned food. Radio shack has equipment. The coffee shop has bottled everything. The decision is yours.

This is your sweet spot. You won't need much motivation. The crowds making that incredible ruckus should get your blood pumping. Go at night, and bring the smallest portable light sources you have. Did you have your tools prepared? Are you ready to make the score that could buy your family weeks or months that they need until help arrives?

You're not ready yet? C'mon, let's get the tools, pack your bags, and get psyched! This is the

moment of truth, the all or nothing night of your life! Are you going alone or bringing a friend to help you keep your nerve? Look over your gear once more:

### **Looting equipment:**

**1. Nylon or leather bags.** Try to find a balance between weight and strength. Standard travel luggage is a bad idea, and don't even think about using something with roller wheels! Those damn things are loud enough on a perfectly smooth airport concrete, and you want to roll this thing down a mile of city grade asphalt? Backpacks aren't terrible; just make sure you leave them mostly unbuckled for a quick getaway. The size of the bag will work itself out naturally. If you choose one that's too large, and notice that after it's filled that you can't lift it, then you are holding the proof that you've made a bad decision. Take some stuff out and try again.

**2. Entry tool.** These can be more valuable than weapons. Good examples are crowbars, pry bars, bolt cutters, the sturdier the better. They are all heavy steel, and you need to lug them to the location. That's bad. The flip side is you can either bring them back with you on the first trip, or leave them until the last trip. The crow bar and pry bar are used to wedge into door jams, in order to force them open, breaking the lock. The bolt cutter is to punch through steel cable, padlocks, or chain link fences. When it comes to bolt cutters I recommend anything over 36 inches in length. That size will sever most steel barriers.

**3. Light source.** Don't grab your giant flashlight. This is supposed to be a covert operation. The only reason you're bringing *any* light at all is to see what is being stuffed into the bag. Penlights are a good first choice, unless you have night vision goggles. If you are wealthy and crazy enough to own these, then you're way ahead of the game. You should already have a solid plan of your own. Use your lights only if you are unsure of the terrain. If there is an obstacle in your way, light it up and check it out before trying to hurdle it.

**4. Be Defensive.** You run into trouble, you have to look at the odds before making a move. One person? Size them up *fight club* style, and decide if they can be bargained with, or will it turn into a skirmish? Did you see two or more people? You may have to cut and run, even if they're younger and smaller. If you are thinking about taking on one of them, the other may be running for help. There is no honor among thieves.

### **5. Distraction device (optional)**

Head out at dark, not dusk. You don't want anyone in your immediate vicinity following you. If you know the area well enough, then try to travel without any light. Walk down the middle of the street if you have to. Walk quickly, but quietly. This new world has some long stretches of silent streets. No need to give yourself away. If you consider yourself adept on a mountain bike, then you could save some travel time. Note that large bags will throw off your balance, especially when filled. The extra weight will make it harder to start and stop, but you will be able to outrun people on foot.

Take small detours to avoid any other people you hear up ahead, and remember where they were for the return trip home. Anyone that has a bonfire going will work to your benefit. The light

from the fire resets their night vision, making it almost impossible for them to see at any distance in the dark. Don't take the long way around just to avoid a fire.

When you arrive at the entrance of the store, force it open as quickly as possible, but use some stealth. If you need to hammer in a window, wrap the hammer in cloth to muffle the sound. If the back door needs to be worked over with a pry bar for a few minutes, take a break every once in a while to check your surroundings. If it's going to take 15 minutes, you may want to consider a distraction.

**Distraction techniques:** Sometimes, it is like the movies. Distractions are used in warfare, but are called diversions. There are times where you need to divert your opponent's attention to something else. Use the environment around you, and try to keep it simple. If it's dark, use something that involves light. If it's quiet, create something that makes a lot of noise. A few examples:

Fire is your friend. Despite what your parents have told you, it's ok to play with fire. We are moths to the flame. We sit around campfires and stare into the glow. We watch apartment buildings burn. In a world without electric lights, fires become a magnet, the bug zapper of the apocalypse. People will gather around and stare at a burning house like it was a giant beach bonfire, and why not? There are no fire trucks to put it out.

Don't get fancy. Find some flammable liquid. It can be gasoline, paint thinner, lamp oil, a strong alcohol. Locate a wood structure, preferably with smaller pieces. Set the blaze quickly, and then head over to your cold loot target. The fire doesn't have to start big; a little goes a long way.

Car alarms. Did you ever think you would see the day you would welcome the sound of a car alarm? Find some vehicles a few hundred yards away from the store you want to get into. Hit them hard with a blunt object. If the car / truck doesn't start making noise after a few whacks, move to the next. Once the alarm goes off, high tail it out of there and get to work.

Once the distraction is set, you enter the coffee shop, or specialty store, or whatever you have chosen. Use your lights sparingly. Even if you use the front door as an entrance, try to use the back door as an exit. Fill up the bag with what you can comfortably carry, then calmly walk out and start heading home. If you are wearing a watch, start keeping track of how long it takes you per trip.

#### Rinse and Repeat:

When you do get back to home base, check your watch again, and see how many more times you can hit this store before the sun comes up. As the sky starts to get lighter, you are done. I mean it. Stop. Take inventory of what you now have, get some rest, and if you're up to it, begin again the next night.

#### If the plan goes wrong:

Sometimes, you can't just go home. You are on your third trip back, and there are some people following you. If you're lucky, they won't know the area as well as you do. They are tailing you, waiting to see where you will crash for the night. Do not under any circumstances lead them to

your home and family. If your bag is heavy, look for a quick place to stash it. Hide it in some bushes, underneath a car, some place that you can get back to in the daytime. As soon as you ditch the bag, move faster, take an unusual corner. Don't panic, just lose them, anyway you see fit. If you think you can set up a quick ambush and scare them off, then do that. If you have to fight, then fight.

### **Dangerous zones**

“Extreme hot loot zones”, only recommended for groups of 10 or more people.

In every state, there are manufacturing facilities. Taking the odds into consideration, most of these places will be making and storing products like distributor cap parts, plastic vomit, or lawn furniture. These companies will only be useful for supplies you can get out of the cafeteria, vending machines, or office drawers.

Then there are the *gold mines*, the warehouses that have literally lifetimes of supplies. They include things like, a Campbell's soup factory, a Nabisco plant, a grocery store distribution center, a Wal-Mart shipping hub. **Do not try to approach these places alone**, or even in small groups. The logistics are too large for you. Imagine a Costco, only 10 times as big, with everything needing a forklift to move, in pitch-blackness. Now imagine all the employees that work there, day after day, who will approach this facility within 24 hours.

Any employee with keys to the main gate will fill a truck by the end of the second day. After that, anyone working in the immediate industrial park will try to get some groups together and take their shot. After that, the public will catch wind of it, and things will start to get crazy.

These factories and warehouses are normally located in industrial zones, which are some distance away from residential areas. Using a car or truck is a good idea. A tractor-trailer rig is better, with a large group of people to guard it. A well-armed group could get in and get out without too much trouble, and it could be done quickly if someone knew how to run a forklift.

Some brave souls may move some of the supplies into a more secure part of the building, and just try to live at the warehouse. That would be a 24/7 job, constantly patrolling the area. With enough troops it could be possible. These specialized stashes are rare, and shouldn't be considered a viable option for most people. Military or law enforcement groups have the best chance of securing these, for whatever purpose they see fit.

*Tip: There are only a few places that should be considered “too dangerous” to approach. One example would be small gun shops run by private owners. Most firearm stores are like this. They only sell firearms and firearm related products. Some of their employees carry side arms during normal business hours. When the power goes out, they are instructed to immediately go to the store and stand guard. This store has a lot to lose. These owners will shoot first, and ask questions of your body later. They have more guns than you do, and enough ammunition to start a small war. You can't bargain with them, and sure as hell can't out gun them. Go away, and never think of it again. Some of your heavily armed pawnshops also fit into this category, although they aren't as dangerous in an extended fight because of their limited supply of*

*ammunition.*

*One other dangerous location is any privately owned army/navy surplus store. Some of these places carry firearms on site. The owners of these shops are survival oriented. They will be armed, and they are already convinced anyone approaching the store is a looter.*

### **The Mormon supply house:**

Weeks after the power goes out, when all the stores, factories, and vending machines have been licked clean, there will be house to house skirmishes. The supplies acquired from these poorly organized neighborhood battles almost don't seem worth it, because the average family won't have much of a stockpile.

Well that is, except for the Mormon families living outside of Utah. I don't want to pick on the Mormons, I really don't. I'd like to think of myself as treating everyone equally. I'd like to state officially that I don't have anything against the Mormon faith. Freedom of religion is a right in this country. I happen to respect that this religious group practices what they preach and prepares for their version of Armageddon. Great job! You have at least a year's supply of food for every member of your family, and weeks after the power has gone out; some of your neighbors just remembered that little nugget of information. For you, it's time to start sleeping with one eye open!

Unfortunately, this version of the grasshopper and the ant doesn't end well. Outside of Utah there are way more grasshoppers and the ants don't have nearly enough guns to keep them out.

To be fair, I'm going to give help to both sides; I don't want to play favorites.

**If you are a practicing Mormon living outside of Utah,** you should consider upgrading your security. This means more fire extinguishers, bigger rifles, and more ammunition. You may want to have a safe room built, one that can withstand fire. There should be some walls in certain areas of your home with steel plating or heavy stone. Bomb shelters are an excellent fall back position. Shoot first and shoot often. Keeping your opponent off guard and off balance is important. Have faith that the neighbors will lose their nerve and go away!

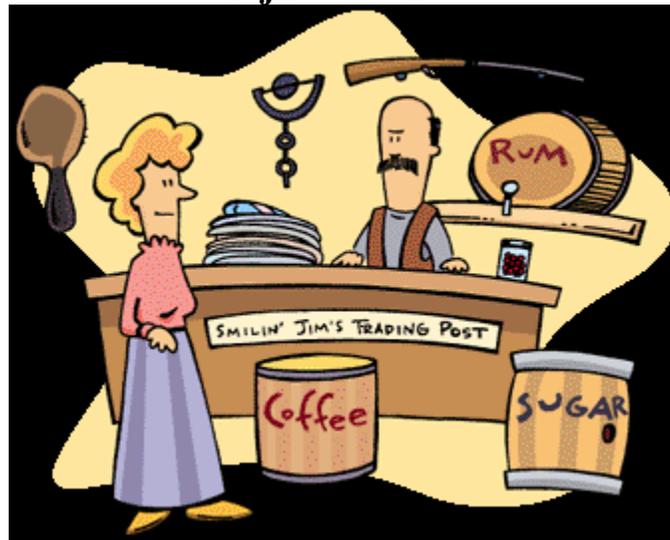
**If you are living in a large neighborhood and are planning on attacking a Mormon house:** You had better be ready for a drawn out fight. These families have God in their hearts, and will not give up willingly. Luckily for you, unless a few families have banded together, you're probably looking at three guns or less coming at you. The best way to breach the house is to back a car into a living room wall at about 20-30 miles per hour. Note I said *back* in you monkey. Why would you drive in nose first and wreck your engine? Think people! Back the car / truck through the wall, then drive forward, exposing the hole. There is your access point.

Yes, you could just burn the house down. The drawbacks are that it takes almost 24 hours before you can even begin to start sifting through the wreckage, and you'll have to move that out of the way to get to the basement. The smoke won't affect any canned goods, but the heat might. If they are storing fuel in the basement, then all bets are off, and there may not be anything to

salvage. Better stick with the car idea.

Also note that a gun battle in your neighborhood will draw *huge* amounts of attention, even blocks away. If or when you are victorious, and start carrying out all that hard fought cache of supplies, **you** will now have become the new Mormons. You also are walking around the street holding food and water instead of weapons. I hope for your sake that God is on your side now.

**Chapter 9: Advanced: The trading post**  
**"Who is rich? He who is content. Who is that? Nobody."**  
**-Benjamin Franklin**



The concept of the trading post is simple, but the implementation can be challenging, and end badly if you're not very careful. An organized barter system is the best, and worst of both worlds. It can be a windfall of essential resources, especially if used with specialized looters. It will also draw some unwanted attention to your location, including potential thieves who may make a move to take over your new enterprise.

A trading post can be started within 72 hours after the power goes out, and if well secured, will be one of the last places with access to needed supplies. A trading post brings a sense of order, as well as a familiar gathering place. If it's completed quickly, it can bring a community together, give it perspective, and allow organized barter to replace the chaotic roar of the mob.

The trading post can be as simple, or as complex as you want, depending on your manpower, stockpile of items, and location. Keep in mind that the more complex and spread out it is, the harder it will be to defend. The quick rules of the trading post are simple. 1. Acquire and distribute needed supplies, and 2. Defend the stash at all costs.

Once completed, the trading post will provide you will potential goods, manpower, and most importantly, information. It will become the general store where people come to gossip, trade,

and lament about their situation. All of these bits of information can become useful to you. The key in any trading post is to be consistent, organized, and always project confidence in what you are doing, whether you have it or not.

You can set up a barter based system with as few as two people, but I recommend four. To start, you need a good trade building, one that isn't your current residence. The building should be solid, with as much brick and stone as possible. Brick and stone are resistant to gunfire and impacts from vehicles (Remember the Mormons!). More stone means less wood. This means it can withstand fire, and fire related products. It doesn't have to be a large structure. You're not running a Costco, nor do you want to. This is a neighborhood trading post, which will cover an area up to, 2-3 square miles. This is the maximum walking distance you should expect any one person or group to travel to your location.

Bring the inventory you want to trade to the location, and then create a trading post sign. The larger the sign is, the better. The sign should be moveable if possible. Don't just get a can of spray paint and write on the side of the building: "Trading!" What happens if you move? Better to take a wooden door off its hinges, use that as the sign, and then lean it against the building. When the post closes for the night, you simply lay the door down. Keep it mobile!

The important part of the post structure is where exactly the trade takes place. A window that is big enough to pass through goods is a great start. Treat it more like a ticket window at a ballpark, or a bank teller. People give you money. You give them the ticket. No one is behind the counter but you. Your total inventory should not be visible from the ticket window, only the goods you are trading. The window doesn't get left unattended, ever. Give the impression that you have a number of armed people inside the building, project threat. Be serious, but be fair. The trading post is not only there to help you, but to build the trust of the community. You are not there to loot and pillage. You are providing a service. You are providing some order that people recognize. You are providing hope.

I recommend doing all trading through a window or on a trading table outside the front door. One thing you should stick to, and I cannot stress this enough: Never use the front door for anything. Put furniture in front of it, nail it shut, or better yet, cut holes in it big enough to stick out gun barrels. The front door is the visible access point. No one should see it open. All inventories should be brought in through the back door. Again, treat this like a ticket window, or if it makes it easier, a bank teller window. The average customer should leave with a sense of mystery.

They should be doing anything else but thinking about how to rob you. Your group should appear strong and organized. You are the shopkeepers. The force you represent is unknown. People fear the unknown. When people do business with you, they will do so without thinking of crime.

Display your firearms, real and fake. Replicas or props will work fine. You want an honest trade, and so do your customers. If you feel safer with more than one person running the ticket window, then use more. What's important here is that they are polite and civil, and know how to spot the BS. People with customer service skills are good. Bartenders are good. People who

know how to deal with crap on a regular basis are what you need.

You have your inventory sitting somewhere hidden in some type of solid structure which can't be crashed into with a car / truck. You have a few friends or neighbors, people you can trust, running the trade window. You place random guns in visible distance and look as intimidating as you can. You raise up the painted door sign and you are open for business!

At first you hear nothing but crickets. What did you expect? Did you want a local celebrity cutting a ribbon on this grand opening? People will not be bursting out of their homes, running with hands in the air, cheering the fact that there is finally a store open. Give it time. Be patient.

The great thing about a trading post in this scenario is that everyone's a potential regular customer. If you can get them to deal with you even once, they will come by almost every day until the end. The process starts slow, but gains momentum. The people wandering streets need things, your things. The dialogue is always the same. What the first customers want will dictate the specials list.

What do you have to trade? What do you need? I need water. I need food. I need bullets. I need cigarettes. Everyone is looking for something, and you may or may not have this something. If you think you might be able to trade it later, add it to the *need items* list, and post it outside the window. You may also want to post a "Robbers will be shot", in an attempt to keep people honest.

Most of the first people that come to window are just the curious types walking around. They aren't carrying anything. They have nothing to trade, except maybe a weapon, ammunition, or water. They're going to be holding onto those things. The old saying is true: We want most that which we cannot have. They will be looking to you for something they need, maybe a few AA batteries for their flashlight? You have them, and let them know. Now comes the barter. What do they have? What they bring to the table has to correspond with your needs list. You give them a business card with your needs list on the back-side. This is something they can take home with them. The trade rate isn't on the list, just the items. This is how the process starts.

They go home, and start looking through their inventory. They don't know how much you have, because it isn't visible, so they aren't thinking (for now) about robbing you. They debate, they fret. What is important to them? Their decision process is extensive. The next day they show up with a bag of goods, hoping to trade for some AA batteries. What are they bringing? Canned food? Candles? Other batteries? Now the barter process kicks in, and haggling starts. Don't be unfair on the priority goods. See what it is worth, and what you can gain from it. These trades should be as honest as possible. Your profit will come from another source. The person in question gives you three cans of food for 4 AA batteries that expire in a year. Always try to trade the earliest expiring items first. The exchange is made through the window. You inspect the cans, they inspect the batteries, maybe even try them out in the flashlight. Everyone is happy, and they go on their way. No fuss, no problems. You've just made a solid customer, maybe even a friend. Given enough time, this person may even work for you.

The barter system is whatever you see fit to implement, but there are some guidelines in the new

world you should pay attention to, especially when it comes to priority items, and vices.  
Examples of possible trades:

*1 can of food = 1 battery or 3 rounds of ammunition or 1 cigarette (non filtered)*  
*1 bottle of water (sealed) = 2 cans of food or 6 rounds of ammunition or 2 cigarettes*  
*3 cigarettes = 1 shot of hard alcohol*

The combinations for trade are endless. Try to be as consistent as possible. It's going to be tough, because demand is going to change. This is a cross between a general store and the stock market. Someone may try to buy you out of AAA batteries, or all of your light sticks. Don't completely empty your inventory. Those last scraps will turn into gold. One day a can of food might be worth a few batteries, then someone who looted a warehouse tries to trade more water than you could use in a few months. Weigh the trades carefully. You have the time. If a line forms, then try to assure the people that everyone will be serviced as soon as possible.

Don't try to scam any of the *fair trade* people, especially if there are others in line. Your reputation is everything. Word of mouth is crucial. Your ability to function as a vendor is the most important thing in the world. You have the option of allowing people to trade with each other in line. This doesn't hurt you. In fact, you may want to encourage it. Your trading post will become a gathering place, a hub of activity.

Days go by. You bring in items, you trade out items. Maybe you develop a relationship with a regular customer or two, and some of them are handy with other things. In exchange for letting them be part of the group, they help you with different functions. They can you help with security, they can help with bartering. Your supply chain is becoming more efficient and helpful. The people you deal with are grateful for what they have. The trade itself gives them purpose, gives them some meaning in this difficult time.

The people that will make the real difference to you are the stragglers that have little or no supplies, but are hoping you can help out. There is no charity in the Apocalypse. There are only contracts. The people who have nothing to lose will be your greatest asset.

**The Carders**  
**"Obviously crime pays, or there'd be no crime"**  
**-G. Gordon Liddy**



## LOOTING

Sometimes the best things in life  
are free if you can run fast enough.

[www.plan4.tv](http://www.plan4.tv)

The saying goes: “All any person wants is something to love. If you can't give them that, give them something to hope for. If you can't give them that, then just give them something to do”. The potential free time after a power outage is immense, but it shouldn't be leisurely. Time is money. Time is resources. For the downtrodden people walking the street, time may be their only bargaining chip.

As the trading post develops, your inventory will neither grow nor shrink in any great amount as long as the trades are fair. If people are desperate, then they will make trades to your advantage. You will also be consuming resources which will balance these things out. Where the inventory

starts to expand is with the loose contracts you make with people who have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

We've already established that you are a good person. You take care of your own. You, your family, and your friends are fed, safe, and are now part of the only business in your area. There are others not so lucky. People who need guidance, who need a way of life to follow. The trading post will be their new temporary church. You will offer them purpose, and they will be grateful.

You are looking for loners. These are your valuable assets. The conversations start the same, and require a delicate touch. What do you have for trade? Us? We have almost everything, what do you have? Me? Not much, a saddened look crosses their face. Look, (handing them the loot list card) this is what we need. If you can get any of these things, we can do business.

If you want, hint that some of the houses in this area appear to be abandoned. For the first time in weeks, they have hope in their eyes. They turn and head down the street.

24 hours later, you see the same person, carrying a large bag over their shoulder. They have items for trade. These items are worth something to you. You deal. They smile. Once trust is gained, you offer them something else. Your makeshift supply bank. A chance to store their stash while they're out looking for other supplies, for a small fee, of course.

### **The Bank**

The supply bank is an easy to learn concept, and it only works if there is trust on both sides. The person looting is having a hard time carrying the stash they have. If they try to hide it in a house it could be stolen, and then they will have lost everything. You offer to keep their stash for them, inside the secure trading post, at a rate of 25-33 percent, or 1/4 to 1/3. Translation. For every 4 cans of food they store with you, the post keeps 1. For every 12 rounds of ammunition, you keep 4.

I recommend an inventory list, like a bank book, which they sign off on every time they leave the post. They can view the inventory list at any time, but cannot come inside to look at the goods physically. If they insist you can offer to bring it around to the main window, but this shouldn't happen too often.

1. Rate of contract is established and set for all "carders" (People who have a bank account) If you set it at 25%, then that is what it will stay at. Carders will run into each other from time to time. They should all have the same rate.

2. The inventory sheet should be on hand for them to view. They can deposit, withdraw, or close an account at will. You will not stop them. This freedom establishes trust. Trust builds relationships. You need allies.

3. Carders have to check in to the post every three days to confirm existence. This is a nice way of saying that they have to prove they haven't gotten themselves killed. If check in isn't completed in three days, the house lays claim to the entire inventory of the carder. Three days is

plenty of time and should be acceptable. Date the inventory sheets and keep good records of them. If a carder is gone for 5 days, then shows up out of the blue, they will still lose their inventory. You have an option of replacing this with a starter account that gives them enough water and food to last them another three days. This will keep them going while they get back to work. This is to reestablish trust.

4. Looting is strongly recommended in abandoned homes. If a house is occupied, the carder should leave at once and seek another location. Imply to others that you are a socially responsible organization.

5. Carders must respect other carders. If two are looting the same house, they should identify themselves to each other immediately. Whoever had entered the house first has priority over the other. Any deals cut between the two looters are outside of the post. Disputes will be settled between the members. The post will not be involved in general looting matters.

6. Exterior conflicts will not be brought to the post. The idea here is that eventually, a carder will stray into an occupied house. Let's say for arguments sake, that an occupied house contains four families, and a bunch of guns. They chase the carder back to the post. One of the home's occupants is injured. They demand justice. You now need to be a temporary judge. This is a potential situation and needs to be considered. Less than 2 months ago you were crying because your laptop didn't have Internet, and now, you're presiding over a domestic violence case. Nothing happens inside the post. For security reasons, all disputes are handled somewhere outside the main building.

Judging isn't that hard without a jury. You listen to both sides, determine a course of action, and then make a decision. Did the carder hurt anyone? What were the circumstances? What do the homeowners want for compensation? Do they want to trade? Are they a current customer? Do they want blood? You get to decide. If the carder is a real problem or has been a thorn in your side, then you could hand them over to the group, but that's not really fair. Exile may be better, maybe a running head start? I suppose you could just open fire. It's your decision; choose wisely!

The odds say that these carders will be taking chances you wouldn't. They may enter a house and get shot. They may fall down some stairs and get mauled by large dogs, they may get chased away from another group. Your goal is to make sure that either way the post benefits. You're not exactly rooting for their demise, are you? I didn't think so. The great part about this system is that it is driven by basic instincts. They are hungry, and there is no credit at the trading post. To eat, they have to forage for supplies. They become the perfect employee. No loafing, no clock punching, no long lunches. Sounds like a sweet deal doesn't it? Time to kick back and enjoy your success. It will be an easy ride until help arrives. Think again.

The flip side of the trading post is unwanted attention. As time passes, different groups will think about how they can get in to your supplies. Every location has a weakness. They are looking for it, and you can't let your guard down for a minute. They will send carders who seem like honest people. Beware of carders who want to come inside and take a look. Keep a close eye on everyone that's working for you. Remember the story about the dog. Everyone is trustworthy until they get hungry enough. As time goes on, and you become the only game in town, you are

almost guaranteed to have at least one standoff. A group will move past the line, armed, and want to take what you have. You and your sentries will be outnumbered. Don't back down. They don't want to start shooting. Hell, some of those guns may not even be loaded. Ask them what they want to trade for, but be prepared to take action. If you lose the post the game is over. **Quick words can sometimes save the day faster than quick guns.**

### **Chapter 10: When the bullets run out**

**"You can discover what your enemy fears most by observing the means he uses to frighten you"**

**- Eric Hoffer**



Something very serious has just happened, and it doesn't involve toilet paper. You're out of ammunition. This is not a happy thing. In fact, for a lot of survivalists, it's the scariest time of all. Resources are running low! You might actually have to get your hands dirty in a real fight! All your years of learning computer programming has not prepared you for this! What the hell are you supposed to do now!

This is not the time for a “stay calm” speech. You play this too cool and you're going to be having a personal conversation with the Lord. There are literally thousands of self-defense styles, with so many practical techniques I can't begin to scratch the surface. Teaching you how to fight is not what you need. You need huge amounts of bring-to-bear confidence.

You have to believe that even without a firearm, you can do enough damage to the other person that they either collapse in a blubbing pile of pathetic Jell-O, or run away at top speed, screaming in pain, thinking of the one adversary they never want to meet again, you!

There just isn't that much I can teach you in a few short paragraphs. Some things will come naturally. Your adrenalin will kick in; giving you enhanced strength and reflexes. You will attack with everything you have, and with a little luck and God's blessing, you will be the last one standing. If you have friends and family, think of them, and how you are their last line of defense!

**Of course it also helps if you are willing to fight dirty, and have some cool tricks to back it up. Let's review some items that might give you an edge in a hand-to-hand fight.**

#### **Brass knuckles:**



Your hands are soft like a baby's bottom. You haven't done a hard day's work in your life. There is no way that you will transform into a seasoned union dockworker in the next 10 seconds, so stop with the fantasy. Any martial arts training will tell you to hit someone with the base of your palm. It saves you a lot of pain and still will deliver a good impact. You won't remember that though. All your fight training was in grade school, or maybe you learned from the movies, which means you will hit with fist closed, knuckle to chin. Make it count, but if you can help it, get something that will protect your hand. Go online and pick up a cheap pair of brass knuckles.

This little toy is a solid piece of metal with holes to stick your fingers through. It rests tight enough in your hand that you can hit something with a full swing and the only thing that strikes your target is the metal wrapped around your knuckles, hence the name. The beauty of this item is that you can miss your opponent and strike something solid like a wall or your refrigerator, and you won't break your hand!

For decades, this product was strictly a black market item like it's cousin the switchblade knife. You can really hurt someone with a pair of brass knuckles. It's like getting a small pipe to the face; only it fits in your pocket. There were extra legal penalties if the police caught you with a pair. Then someone figured out you could mass produce them, call them paperweights, and presto! Brass knuckles you can buy over the Internet!

### Aluminum bat



Feed off of your childhood. Everyone has held a baseball bat at one point or another. It's a playground regular. It doesn't matter if you were chosen almost last on your elementary school teams; you still got to hold the bat. It was built to be swung and to hit things. They can be found in many places, you don't need the Internet for this. Aluminum bats are best because they don't break easily. When it comes to size, the smaller the better. Remember that if you are swinging inside the house, there are walls, furniture, and knickknacks. A long bat will just get in your way, and will slow down or even stop if you over swing and hit a solid object. A dark colored bat is better than a light colored one.

### Knife:



You are now a part of history! Humans have been hurting each other with knives ever since they

lumbered out of the caves and started carving them out of flint. We've come so far! Yep. Pretty straight forward, and I mean that literally. The sharp point goes into the bad guy. Note I said point, not blade. Short strong thrusts **forward**, not side-to-side. Don't start waving that thing around wildly. If that happens, there is a good chance you'll also cut yourself in the fight.

### **Flammable liquid, and a match:**



This defense technique is kind of tricky, but the principal idea is taken straight from the prison yard. Take 8-12 ounces of a flammable liquid and throw at target. Then throw a lighter, match, or candle at target. Target catches fire. Target then either rolls on floor yelling something about "being on fire" and "how much it burns", or they run down the hall and out of the building, fanning the flames, and drawing attention to them.

### **Martial arts:**



You are not Chuck Norris. No one is. If I see one more amateur attempting martial arts in a real fight I swear I'm going to go insane! Martial arts are a discipline, not an absolute. Martial arts create a fighting style, not a guarantee that you will win, or even that you have an edge. Every wonder why those reality cage fights on television aren't filled with a lot of guys jumping and twisting, trying to land that perfect palm technique? Watch a match and you'll see. Each fight is different depending on your opponent! If you are trying some Matrix style drunken boxing, and your opponent wants to wrestle that will end your movie real quick.

You can't do spin kicks in your entryway. There is no *flying tiger* inside a bathroom. There is no karate kid crane technique from the other side of a dining room table. Just hit for the head, sternum or genitals as hard as you can. Box their ears, try to smack the base of the back of their neck, there is a big nerve cluster where the shoulder meets the neck. Claw at the eyes; try to hit their Adams apple. So it's not a pretty, visually entertaining fight, the goal is to win, not to look good!

### Throwing things



When I was growing up my sister used to throw anything she could at me. I learned quickly when to catch, and when to dodge. You are not a professional baseball player. If a major league pitcher has someone coming through their front door **they** have permission to throw the high fastball. You throw slowly, because you are a sloth. Being a good video game player doesn't mean your reflexes will help you hit someone from across the room with a book. If you have something good to throw, like a bowling ball, or an all steel crock pot, then get close to the door, and hit them from 4 feet or less.

Note on throwing things: Do not throw your gun at the target! This is a bad lesson taught by bad guys in the movies! Just set it down or put it back into your pocket. You never know when you might find extra ammunition.

## **Stun Guns**



Due to the bad memories this item brings up, and that I'm not a fan of less than lethal devices, I can say only this: Hit the intruder with the stun gun and don't let go of the trigger. The disruption that they have on a body's electrical system is somewhat cumulative, and really taxes the brain if you give them an extra dose. Hit them long enough, and they will stay down for 30 minutes or more. Just to be sure, just empty the battery on the target.

### **Pepper spray**



There have been many documented cases about the use of pepper spray and there is some bad news. You spray your enemy with mace, and you will get some on yourself. It's like spraying underarm deodorant on another person. No matter how careful you are, you're going to smell it. The difference here is that mace stings a great deal. If you don't mind some tears and shortness of

breath, then this one is for you.

### Hiding



This goes against our basic “fight or flight” instincts. You may have been great at hide and seek as a child, but hiding under a pile of clothes, or under the stairs with your pornography isn’t going to do much this time around. Remember that this is a low resource scenario. All those television programs where the mob guys toss the apartment looking for the stolen drugs, that’s amateur hour now. People will be going through *everything*, and unless you have an Anne Frank style piece of furniture, they’re going to find you, in which case you’ll have to choose something else mentioned above.

### Playing dead



It works on bears, doesn't it? Sometimes it works on bears. It works on people sometimes too. The cases that seem to have the most success involve a large-scale military conflict, and there are a lot of bodies. People hide underneath them, and try to blend in. Do you have a lot of bodies in your home? If you do, then you have some larger issues, and the looters are just your next victims. I'll make sure to stay clear of your place.

If you are alone and trying to play dead, you may want to consider a few things before putting on your best "open eye and open mouth" dead movie face. First, the person coming in the door is looking for things, but they are also looking for you, to see if you're a threat. If they have a lot of extra ammunition they may just put a bullet into you. If bullets are scarce, they may poke you with something and check for a reaction. If they try to check your pulse, the jig is up, and I recommend using their close proximity to hit hard and fast.

Say however, that your performance is convincing, and they think you're really taking the big dirt nap. You are still going to have to deal with this person going through all your pockets. Let's hope you're not ticklish.

**Acting crazy**



I like this idea, even though I can't pull it off. Start screaming and flailing about, acting as insane as possible. For some of you, this will be quite easy. The idea is that a really noisy, scary person may not be worth the trouble. This is recommended even before they come in the room. The motivation is to pretend you are a human car alarm. If you make enough of a ruckus, the stealthy attacker may just move on, and kill your neighbors instead.

**To summarize:**

If you are out of bullets, find the best weapon you can come up with, and ambush your attacker with everything you've got. The best places to do this are either directly by the door they are entering from, or behind a blind corner inside the house. I don't recommend trying it from underneath the bed. Everyone knows there are monsters under there.

**The End?**

That's it, everything you need. Water, food, light, weapons, tactics, and some sensible advice that could save your families life.

You are now officially versed in the wonderful world of urban survival. The majority of you reading will have found it mildly entertaining. It was a small distraction in a never ending series. A short time from now you will be back to watching something on network television. In a week you will have forgotten most of what's been said here.

A smaller number of you may discuss some of the concepts casually with other people, pondering the possibility of a national crisis situation. Your friends and coworkers will have not read the guide, and therefore will condemn it as some extremist nonsense. You will feel relieved at this and return to some form of quiet contentment.

There may be a few that actually get something out of this guide. To those individuals who know deep in their hearts that the worst **can** happen, or have survived limited catastrophes of their own, I say this: Start small and follow through.

You don't have to drive at top speed to the nearest bulk food store and stock a spare bedroom floor to ceiling with freeze-dried goods. The secret, the **KEY** to this whole idea, is to **start small**. Buy a footlocker sized plastic container, make a small list of things you might want to have if your house was say, hit by a tornado, and start filling the container.

Once the list is checked off, and your footlocker contains the things you need, you might just stop and call it good. Mission accomplished, you'll never think of it again.

Chances are though, that as you make the effort to acquire your items, you will think of others, and those other things will give you more ideas. It can snowball. Before you know it, you have a nice corner of your basement ready for anything.

And while you're putting things into your plastic containers, why not include this manual as well?

Thanks for reading this, I hope it one day helps you and yours.

Mark