

10 Critical Items Most Preppers Overlook

by Tim Makay

No prepper who has spent any amount of time focused on improving their personal readiness to face disasters needs to be told that a big part of being prepared is having the right supplies, the right equipment and enough provision to make it through.

The myth of the one, lone survivor who knows absolutely everything, and therefore doesn't have to carry anything with him is exactly that; pretty much a myth.



Chances are you are not this singular and legendary figure, and I know I am not either, so for us material preparation is a virtue.

Assuming this is not your first time on the internet you will have doubtless found by now dozens upon dozens of websites and articles offering you advice and checklists on what to stockpile, store, stash and generally squirrel away in order to make it through a major disaster.

These lists will include tiny items and large pieces of equipment, meals-ready-to-eat and sacks of basic staples. Total preparedness is generally the watchword for prepping.

But if there is one thing you can count on in all of this ceaseless buying, storing and rotating it is the fact that you will invariably overlook something. Maybe there's something that you did not account for, or failed to plan for.

Maybe you just forgot about it or never in your wildest dreams anticipated you would need it. In this article, I'll share with you ten of the most important preps for long-term survival that I see most preppers forget!

Context is Everything

It never fails then when some people come across any sort of recommendation list on the internet, be it a Top 10, 5 Worst, All Time Best or anything else, there are some folks who take it upon themselves to launch into a tirade in the comments explaining how the author's reasoning is fatally flawed and that one, multiple or all the items on the list are poor candidates for the title in question.

I don't take any issue with someone taking me to the cleaners in the comments for any particular reason since spirited debate is often instructive, but I do take issue with the attitude I described above. Let me explain.

The reason why it bothers me so much is simply that **the people who go off on such a tear obviously believe that the only survival context or scenario they could possibly exist is the one that they have planned for** or are envisioning. It is simply a form of imagination failure.

I don't bring this up now to cut off any sporty and civil discourse in the comments, but instead want to preface the recommendations on my list.

I want you to think long and hard about the items I am recommending and how they will fit into your own plans for survival, and more importantly avoid falling into the trap of believing you didn't miss anything...

I can tell you this honestly: Most people, facing most disasters of any kind will benefit greatly from the items I have included on the list here. Why? Simple:

Most disasters, man-made or naturally occurring will not change the basic necessities of survival! I indeed assert that the vast majority of people trying to survive and live through any potential long-term survival scenarios would be extremely well-served by everything I'm about to share with you.

10 Critical Items Most Preppers Overlook

Below you will find my ten recommendations, items that most preppers specifically forget to include in their stockpiles, or drastically underestimate the importance of.

Before you write off any of them as unnecessary, remember the old saying "no plan survives first contact", and that certainly counts for disaster preparation.

If you planned to bug-out but are instead forced to bug-in, and do so for an indefinite period of time, you may very well be singing a different tune come The Big One. Consider that.

10. Important Docs Package

It is easy to get swept up with the idea that a major disaster will effectively erase civilization and life as we know it in the immediate aftermath, and for an indefinite amount of time thereafter.

If we are all being honest, most of us have post-apocalyptic visions or fantasies of the world made over and what it might look like. It is understandable and may yet, horrifyingly, come to pass.

But chances are, statistically, the civilization will go on much the way it always has in the aftermath of even a serious regional crisis, and if not in your immediate neck of the woods, then elsewhere in the country and in the world.

Civilization entails a gargantuan amount of administration. Records. Important documents. All of the minutiae that make the modern world "go".

It would not do to forget that you will still need all of these things, and need access to them, after a disaster unless it is truly a world toppling one.

Because of this, no prepper should ever omit a personal file containing electronic or paper copies or even originals in some cases of all that important stuff you need day to day or a few times a year.

I'm referring to things like passports, driver's licenses, your social security cards, college diplomas, birth certificates, bank and credit card account information, mortgages, deeds and titles to land and other real estate, as well as vehicles and anything else you can think of that is crucially important.

You might decide to keep a paper file, weatherproofed, or turn to electronic copies kept on a flash drive that is then encrypted for safety.

No matter which mode of storage you decide to go with be sure that you keep this as well hidden and secure as possible until the fateful day you need it; if any bad actor were to get ahold of this information they would literally have the keys to your life.

9. Manuals and Guides

Even though the internet has become so ubiquitous it might feel like a part of your own flesh and blood body, it is still one modern miracle and supreme convenience that you will not be able to count on once the balloon goes up.

Anything, and I do mean anything, that you do not already have committed to memory, written down or even accessible on a self-contained device is as good as gone.

If you need to know something, and don't have access to the information (and cannot find someone to teach you) you will have to do without or resort to trial and error.

You can prevent this feeling of being set adrift out of your element by accumulating useful manuals, guides and instructional tomes on all kinds of topics,

everything from home repair manuals and permaculture guides to practical first-aid texts and even books on small unit tactics for group security.

All could wind up being essential for preppers living in the aftermath. No matter how good you are, no one has all the answers and time for study and for training is always at a premium even in the best of conditions.

This is one area where electronic storage can make sense, especially with the rise of portable and extremely efficient solar chargers. A single tablet or e-reader can store an entire virtual library inside a device that weighs less than a single paperback book.

If you absolutely must have paper, or it is all you have access to, you should consider purchasing smaller, compact versions of well-known subjects that are easier to transport and store.

If you forget something, or never knew it in the first place, a manual can remember it for you.

8. Hand Pumps and Siphons

Virtually every prepper is well aware of the fact that they might have to gather water wherever they can and even salvage fuel from wrecked or immobile vehicles in order to contribute to their own supplies during a survival situation.

What few of these preppers consider, though, is just how difficult accessing any of these liquids that are otherwise free for the taking will be.

The quintessential scenario we envision when the time comes to gather water is simply tiptoeing down to the edge of the stream or pond before dipping our bottle or filter directly into it.

The reality is often not that simple, and it is definitely not that simple when the time comes to obtain fuel.

The facts are that you will have to obtain water and fuel where you can get it. You might be forced to fish it out of a shallow depression, a laborious and frustrating task if all you have is your bottle.

Getting fuel back out of a fuel tank without crawling under the vehicle to cut the lines or puncture the tank itself can be equally maddening.

Instead of driving yourself crazy and wasting time, you could simply **whip out a manual hand pump or a siphon to quickly and efficiently extract your chosen liquid from whatever holds it.**

So long as the tube can make contact with the body of the liquid itself you are in business!

Don't rely on mouth suction and rubber tubing, either. Get quality tools you can depend on without risking a mouthful of gas or foul water.

And since we are on the subject here is a pro-tip: always make sure you have two pumps or siphons- one only for water and one only for fuel. If you use one to do everything you will definitely be contaminating your liquids, whatever they are.

7. Manual Washing Machine

This is another one of those "why didn't I think of that?!" items. You will easily find preppers who have extra clothing packed as part of their survival accoutrement, but very few who have dedicated equipment and plans for cleaning their clothing in the aftermath of a crisis.

As much as I hate to say it, the "wild men" who plan on wearing the same soiled clothing for the duration of an event, since they apparently care little for such "social niceties", are more numerous than you think.

The joke is on them though, since keeping your body clean is about much more than just social graces.

This should not be a shock, but your clothing must be washed periodically. This is critical not just to keep the nasty stench down so that other humans can tolerate being near you, but also to keep your clothing functioning correctly and minimize your risk of skin infections.

Yes, I did say “functioning correctly”; clothing that is soiled starts losing its insulative or cooling value in direct proportion to how filthy it is.

Of perhaps greater importance is the fact that filthy clothing will trap germs against your skin, greatly increasing the chances of rashes, fungal outbreaks and other assorted nastiness that will serve as a serious annoyance during a disaster scenario or even turn into life-threatening open sores.

A manual washing machine can prevent this bleak outcome. Using just a little water and a little bit of detergent these compact and surprisingly efficient wonders rely on a foot actuated pedal or a hand-operated crank to agitate and wash clothes with remarkable efficiency.

They can even spin cycle so that your clothing, once line-hanged, will dry out even quicker.

Using one of these clever little machines your clothing will last longer, work better and smell infinitely nicer, even in the aftermath of a disaster!

6. Building Supplies and Repair Materials

You should count on having to enact repairs after a disaster, since so much of the time their occurrence will result in all kinds of widespread damage and havoc.

Almost no one forgets the tools themselves, all those implements you will need to get your Bob Vila on, but plenty of people forget the needed materials that they will need to enact those repairs, be it to a structure, a vehicle or some other piece of equipment.

This is especially crucial if you plan on bugging in for the long haul. When you need to patch a leaky roof or repair some mangled bodywork on a vehicle you'll need the materials to make that happen.

Don't assume that you will just be able to pick and scavenge what you need from the area around you, either; even wrecked homes and vehicles still belong to someone, and your scavenging might easily be mistaken for opportunistic looting if you are surviving in a suburban or other built-up area...

You don't need to stock everything that your local metal works or lumberyard offers, but you should have a supply of typical lumber and plywood, sheet metal, wiring, heavy duty plastic sheeting, a variety of fasteners including nails and screws, all-purpose construction adhesive and epoxy, plenty of duct tape and a variety of piping for various purposes.

All of the above used in conjunction with your tools and a little bit of know-how will help you get things back in running order or just makes him a little more livable.

5. Fuel

You don't need me to tell you how badly you will need fuel if any motor vehicle or generator figures into your plans, but it is still my duty to tell you that you are liable to need far, far more fuel than you are anticipating if you want to survive a long-term or even indefinite-term aftermath with full facility.

Our nation, and many nations around the world, are completely dependent on an intricate and interconnected web of services and industries that make commerce happen down to the local level.

It does not take much in the way of disruption or destruction of any one of these fragile pieces to bring the whole thing grinding to a halt. Imagine how much worse things will be if a truly major cataclysm were to occur, and affect all of the parts in many places all at once.

One of the first casualties is likely to be a liquid fuel, both gasoline and diesel, as all the places you typically get it are completely dependent on daily deliveries to keep their tanks full so you can keep your tank full.

A single, small backup gas can, or even a 5-gallon jerry can is just not enough for long-term survival. While A-OK for over-the-road top offs, you'll be almost completely dependent upon scavenging in a very short time.

So will everyone else, meaning competition for fuel will be fierce. You can prevent this eventuality by keeping even a single 55-gallon drum of fuel (or even multiples if you can afford them and have room to store them) that you draw from regularly while keeping them topped off with good gasoline or diesel.

Consider that the vehicle you get running or the generator you power might not be your own; what would you do if you had a close friend, family member or neighbor stop by begging you for any gas you might spare?

If you don't have it to spare, you have a tough choice to make. However, if you have stored fuel in abundance you might very literally be their savior.

4. Fire Extinguishers

Residential fires are among the most common, destructive and deadly disasters that any of us are likely to face in our lifetimes, and they reap a toll yearly that numbers in the thousands of lives and billions upon billions of dollars in property damage.

Considering how common they are, especially in the aftermath of a disaster when damage is widespread and scattered debris makes them even more dangerous, most preppers either go very light on firefighting equipment or even omit it entirely.

This is a bad idea, especially considering how affordable and how effective modern fire extinguishers are.

You don't have to be a firefighter to appreciate or use one, and having the right extinguisher in the right place and at the right time might mean the difference in having a damaged house but needs a little cleanup, or a pile of smoking rubble where your shelter, and all your preps used to be.

Generally, any home anywhere will benefit from having at least two fire extinguishers of the correct type placed strategically within.

For most of us, an ABC rated fire extinguisher of moderate to large size will be all we need to tackle a small blaze before it starts to consume our entire house.

Fire extinguishers of this rating can handle any type of fire except those caused by flammable metals, which are admittedly rare occurrences, thankfully, outside of certain laboratory and industrial settings.

Make sure you keep them maintained, and place them strategically in locations that will be easy to access, but are unlikely to be the initial starting point of a fire.

3. Bleach

Common, standard chlorine bleach is a survivalist superstar, and serves many important functions for preppers. Bleach does far more than just make your white clothes pearly white: with it you can clean, sanitize and sterilize surfaces and tools, even your skin!

Among all the chemicals that you will have ready access to, none is more effective at so many things and is more affordable than common, household bleach.

Most important, however, is the capability of regular off-the-shelf bleach to purify contaminated or suspect water sources by killing any bacteria or viruses hiding within (so long as correct ratios are used!).

By using a standard formula of splashless, unscented six- to eight-percent solution chlorine bleach in the correct ratio to a given quantity of water you can be assured of nuking any nasty little germs it might be waiting and willing to make you gravely sick, or even kill you.

I cannot overstate how vital water purification is in a survival situation, and a cheap, bog-common bottle of bleach will purify an awful lot of water!

Bleach is also as you might expect an ace at decontaminating any surface, any tool or any fabric that has come into contact with human bodily fluids that are also apt to harbor germs.

Bleach is especially effective on hard, smooth surfaces, and a weakened solution of chlorine bleach makes for a very effective cleanser around the house, even if you do have to be cautious around your clothing if you don't want it spotted up.

There is one catch for diligent preppers, however: bleach loses its effectiveness over time. That means you'll have to rotate it just like you do any other perishable prep, be it medicine, food or something else.

Generally speaking, anytime you notice bleach losing its distinctive odor, that chlorine "pool-like" smell, you know it is losing power.

You can reliably depend on it to sit on your shelf for about a year before it starts to degrade, but you should make it a point to keep plenty on "tap" and rotate it regularly.

2. O.C. (Pepper Spray)

Almost everyone plans to acquire the tools of lethal self-defense, guns, knives and other melee weapons in abundance, but few stop to think how important less-lethal tools might be in the aftermath of an SHTF event.

It is true that our fellow man might sadly be one of the most dangerous things we have to deal with in an already dangerous situation, but that does not mean you should have a one-size-fits-all tool for self-defense.

In general, anyone who is serious about self-defense should want to make use of multiple options for defense depending on the threat at hand. If the only thing you have is your fists and feet and then a gun, you are leaving a wide gap in capability between those two extremes.

Face it, not everyone needs to be shot, and not every fight is worth prosecuting with your fists. If you want something with range, but something that is also less lethal than a firearm, you have very few options that will be as reliable in as many situations as pepper spray.

A good brand of pepper spray deployed correctly and accurately will have an extremely high success rate, and is the ideal solution when someone is getting rowdy or unruly, or just won't leave you alone in an uncertain encounter.

But assuming you do zap someone with your pepper spray and they persist in accosting you, you should have a significant advantage over them since their vision and breathing will both be significantly impaired.

Aside from its obvious efficacy at mitigating a bad encounter with those people who don't warrant shooting, wouldn't it also be a good thing to run off a desperate person who might be attempting to steal from your supplies but is otherwise not a lethal threat, and do it all without inflicting lethal damage on them?

A smart prepper will obtain pepper spray in two sizes, a smaller container for keeping at the ready in a pocket or clipped to their belt and a larger canister with a much greater range and spread for fending off crowds or groups.

1. Antibiotics

A medical kit is a must for serious survival, and you will rarely find a prepper who goes anywhere without one, at least a lean, basic medical kit. Nonetheless, no medical kit is complete and ready to serve in a SHTF capacity if it does not have antibiotics in it.

Think about it: you are not going to have the ability to just run down the street to the doctor or clinic when you are busy surviving in the aftermath of a crisis.

Chances are much of the world or at least your local area will be turned upside down, and what doctors and nurses do remain will be busy serving where they are needed most; triage will definitely be in effect.

Antibiotics are one of the single greatest inventions in history, and have saved countless lives over the years since their discovery and refinement.

Antibiotics make illnesses and injuries that were once extremely serious, life-threatening events into trivialities. Even way back when, minor wounds always stood a significant risk of infection, and that simple cut on your finger or hand could let a raging infection into your bloodstream that would later kill you.

Today, we enjoy the ability to go get treatment and the correct prescription at the first sign of infection, and it is very rarely if ever an issue after that. You will not enjoy this modern miracle or the luxury of prompt, institutional medical care when things get really serious.

Common, "wide-spectrum" antibiotics can give you an insurance policy against all kinds of illnesses and injuries, and ones like amoxicillin and ciprofloxacin are common in trauma kits all over.

But you might be asking yourself, "If it makes so much sense and antibiotics are so important, why don't you hear about more people keeping them in stock for their personal survival stash?"

That part at least is simple to explain: getting a good supply of antibiotics and then rotating them so they remain potent and viable requires effort, time and money, and is all-in-all a bit of a pain.

First you'll need to get a non-essential prescription from your doctor, then pickup and pay for these often expensive medications.

You must keep in mind that antibiotics don't live forever, even when stored in ideal conditions and they will steadily lose strength over time. Just like your food, your fuel and all your other perishables you'll need to rotate out antibiotics over time, but unlike food and drink you can't just eat it with no ill effects.

Unless you can donate it to a place that can make use of it, this will be money literally going down the drain every time you have to rotate your stock of pills.

Despite all this heartache and hassle, antibiotics are essential enough to be worth it, and even if you don't want to go through all the expense and trouble of getting traditional antibiotics from a pharmacist, you might consider looking in to veterinary grade or even fish-specific antibiotics, which can be effective in humans under certain circumstances and much cheaper to boot!

Conclusion

Prepping correctly often means obtaining an awful lot of varied supplies, a mountain of gear and a warehouse's worth of equipment, but even the diligent can overlook a few items now and then.

Make sure you review the list of ten commonly overlooked items above and make sure you are not leaving any glaring holes in your preps!

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