

Is Your Home Self-Sufficient and SHTF-proof?

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The general consensus amongst the survival community today, is that it is better to bug in and stay home, than to bug out.

There are several reasons for this, but the top one is that few people have the necessary skills to survive if they bug out to the wild. Besides, your home is a shelter, providing that need; and if you stay there, you have everything you own to help you survive.

That's not to say that there are times when we should bug out. Torrential rains forced several small communities in our area to evacuate just last week. Staying home in such a case, when your home isn't going to help you survive doesn't make sense. But as long as you are better off at home, than you would be somewhere else, there really isn't any reason to leave.

Of course, the average American home really isn't set up for survival; its set up for comfortable day-to-day living; something totally different. But that's not to say that it can't be an effective survival retreat. All that means is that your home probably needs some work, if you're going to use it as a survival shelter. How well you set it up to be a survival shelter will have a lot of impact on how well and how easily you can survive, when the time comes.

Stocked to the Gills

The first thing your home needs to have, in order to function as a survival retreat, is a good supply of essential supplies, like food, water and toilet paper. Most people, who start on the road of being preppers, start out by stockpiling food. That's a process which never really ends, as we are always finding more and more things that we need to stockpile.

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The greater your stockpile, the longer you can survive. This age old wisdom is no different than noblemen had to think of in the preparation of their castles, back in the Middle Ages. Most castles were not defeated in combat, but in the siege, where an opposing army would surround the castle, keeping supplies from getting in and starving the occupants of that castle out. The siege often became a contest between the supply lines of the attackers and the stockpile of the defenders.

Your stockpile is an essential part of your survival strategy. It's also a good reason to stay at home, rather than bugging out. If your stockpile of supplies is at home, chances are, you won't be able to move it all. So, bugging out not only means leaving your home behind, but leaving your stockpile of food and other essential supplies behind as well. That's obviously something that you would want to avoid.

Keep in mind that your stockpile isn't limited by the item you have the most of, but rather, by the item you have the least of. It is the items you run short of, which you will have to go out in search of. That's where danger lies, so you want to do what you can to avoid it.

Building a stockpile at home isn't to say that you shouldn't have supplies stockpiled elsewhere. You should always have an alternate site prepared and stocked with supplies. But the bulk of your

supplies are probably going to be right there where you live, along with the survival gear necessary to go with them.

Self-Contained & Self-Sufficient

Not only do you need supplies, but your home must have everything you'll need in place, in order to survive. Modern homes depend on electricity, natural gas, water and sewage connections to provide these essential services. But what if those services are no longer available? What will you do then?

Obviously, you'll have to have your own or do without. But doing without generally means replacing that item with something else that can accomplish the same purpose. Take electricity, for example; while we use electricity for virtually everything, there are other ways of doing just about everything that we use electricity for. So rather than trying to produce enough electricity to power everything we are accustomed to doing, it might make sense to find other ways of doing the same things.

Ideally, you want to be able to survive in your home and property, without having to leave or receive any supplies from outside. That's really what self-sufficiency is. The better you can do that, the better your chances of survival. Leaving home on a supply run, even if it is to an off-site storage that you have, increases your chances of coming under attack. The party who leaves for the supplies could be attacked along the way and the home base could be attacked as well, while they are gone, as anyone watching it would realize that your defense is weakened by that many rifles.

But sending out search parties to find supplies is risky for another reason; there aren't likely to be any to find. All those other people out there, who haven't prepared, will need whatever supplies exist in your community. So unless you need something unusual, that they wouldn't be interested in, your chances of finding it are extremely slim.

The longer a time a survival situation continues, the less supplies there will be available outside of your homestead. On the other hand, in a true long-term survival situation, durable goods will become available, as people die off from starvation. At that time, scavenging for things like clothing, kitchenware and tools would be possible

However, we're talking months to get to that point. You'll have to survive with what you have at home until then. That means, in addition to your stockpile of supplies, you'll need:

Water

Water may very well become the biggest survival issue for most urban survivalists. The general assumption is that municipal water supplies will be down. If that is the case, you will be limited to water you can harvest from nature, either on your property or naturally-occurring water sources near your home.

While everyone talks about getting water from nearby lakes and rivers, doing so requires leaving your home, with the same risks I just discussed. You would be better off having the ability to harvest water from nature, right there where you live. That means either:

- Having a stream on your property
- Putting in a well
- Using rainwater capture

- Using fog catchers

Of all the projects you can do to help make your home into a workable survival retreat, building some means of harvesting water is the most important.

At the same time, you need some means of disposing of used water. If you have septic tanks, rather than city sewage, you're at an advantage. While they will eventually fill, at least you have something to last a few years.

But what if you have city sewage? What then? You'll need some means of waste disposal, such as building an outhouse. Another option might be to use a humanure process, turning that waste into fertilizer. Whichever you choose, you'll need to have the necessary materials in place, before the disaster strikes.

Heat

Modern home heating draws its energy either from natural gas or electricity; neither of which is will be dependable in a post-disaster world. Electric power is the first service to suffer damage in any disaster, leaving people in the dark and cold.

While electric companies are accustomed to dealing with this problem and providing quick repairs, that quick repair time is because they only having to repair one or two broken lines. That's not the same as a major disaster. It took over six weeks to restore electric power to everyone after Hurricane Katrina and six months after Puerto Rico was plastered by back-to-back hurricanes, there were still people without electric power.

The most common solution looked at by most preppers is to heat their homes with wood, in the event that they lose electrical power. But is your home prepared for heating with wood? Do you have a fireplace or wood-burning stove? If you don't, do you have a plan for temporarily installing one in an emergency? Do you have a sufficient stock of cut and split wood to see you through the winter?

What about the next winter? Assuming that you won't be able to drive your pickup truck to some remote location to cut wood, where are you going to come up with enough firewood to burn? Is there forest growth nearby that you can use? Are there enough trees for you and everyone else in the area?

Solving the problem of heat will also solve the problem of cooking, as whatever means of heating you manage to create, using wood, will also serve to provide you with a means of cooking over the fire. Even so, you want to make sure that you have the necessary cooking utensils for cooking over a fire. Not all modern pots and pans will handle that well.

Food

No matter how much food you stockpile, your food supplies will eventually run out. If all you're concerned about is a short-term survival situation, such as surviving the aftermath of a hurricane, that's not a problem. But if you're also planning for surviving a long-term disaster, such as the loss of the electrical grid, then you'll need much more than just your stockpile.

This means growing food on your property; essentially gardening for vegetables and raising small animals for meat. You've probably seen stories about people who grew all their own food in their backyard, so you know that it's possible. But do you know how to do it?

Gardening is actually much more complicated than most people realize, especially if you're trying to grow enough to feed your family. You'll need a lot more food than you can grow in a small vegetable garden. Rather, you'll need to convert your entire backyard into a vegetable garden, like those people who are growing all their food now.

Are you ready to do that? When the time comes, that's going to be a lot of work. It's also going to require a lot of supplies; specifically fertilizers to enrich the soil and seed to plant. Without everything you need, in order to grow that much food, your family is going to be hungry.

Then there's the issue of growing animals for protein. While it is possible to get protein from beans and some grains; we humans are omnivores. We need our meat. But just like the issue of growing vegetables for food, growing animals for food is much more of a task than you would expect. Not only that, but those animals require special enclosures to keep them in, food to eat and even medicines to care for them.



Defensible

There is also a fairly high chance that your home will come under attack in a long-term, post-disaster scenario. We've already seen how looters come out of the woodwork after even small disasters. But this will be nothing, compared to what happens when people become desperate because they are hungry.

Obviously, modern homes don't hold a candle up to the castles of the Middle Ages, at least not when it comes to being defensible. But there are things you can do, to make your home at least more defensible than it is. I'm not talking about the common security measures that are normally talked about to keep criminals out, as those aren't enough. I'm talking about things that are good enough to keep out people using a battering ram to try and break in.

There are a number of measures that you can take, both to create a defensible perimeter around your property and to harden your home against being broken into. If you are the only one in the area who has food and water, it only makes sense that some people will try to take it from you.

But home defenses can only go so far, if you aren't able to take up arms in defense of your home. Any passive defense can be defeated, if someone wants to. Since you can't turn your home into a bank vault, you can be sure that they will find that way. But those passive defenses will buy you the necessary time, so that you can put your defensive plan into effect and stand ready to defend your home.

Discreet

Somehow, you've got to be able to do all of this, without making it too obvious to any nosy neighbors, so that they don't know that you're the one person in the neighborhood who is ready for a disaster. If they know, then they'll probably come knocking on your door, looking for you to help them out.

It's virtually impossible to totally hide what you are doing from your neighbors. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't at least try. You can also use deception to your advantage, giving them other reasons for what you do and diverting their attention away from the idea that you are preparing your home to be a survival retreat.

I've done a fair amount of this with my neighbors. They all know that I'm a retired engineer who likes to tinker. So they don't think anything of my homemade solar panels, wind turbine or extensive vegetable garden. Rather, they just see all that as part of my eccentricity and ignore it.

Granted, they may realize what all those projects are for once a disaster strikes, but that's not quite the same thing. Since I can't hide those things, the best I can do is to create a reason for their existence to delay their thinking that I am in fact preparing for a disaster.



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