

8 Prepping Mistakes You Should Stop Making

As long as I've been preparing for disasters, I can't really say I've ever gotten to the point where I could say that I have everything right.

There are just too many variables in preparing for an unknown disaster, to ever get to the point where we can say our preps are perfect. If any of us ever feel like we have gotten there, I suggest that we take a reality pill, because we've obviously missed something.

One of the things I make a habit of doing is sort of an after-action review of any major disasters I find out about. Mostly that means whatever is reported in the news, although I do have few other sources that I use. My after-action isn't so much about what the people on the scene did; but rather, about what I would have done if I was there. I'm specifically looking for lessons I can learn from their situation, which will help me to do a better job with my own prepping.

One example of this was the Camp Fire in California. As I looked at the pictures of Paradise, California, I realized that having your home perfectly prepared for bugging in won't do anyone the least bit of good against a raging fire. That boosted my appreciation for remote supply caches.

Another situation I was in personally was being stranded on the I-12 causeway in Louisiana. While this didn't qualify as a disaster, it could have been a difficult situation, had it extended past the several hours I was there. Had the Highway Patrol not managed to open up the highway and clear it, I might have been stuck there overnight, with only my car and what was essentially a bug out bag.

As I stood there, talking to other stranded motorists and

thinking about the situation, I realized that even though I had food in my back pack, I had no way of cooking it. None of my fire starters would have done me the least bit of good, because I didn't have any wood to burn. I've since added an Esbit stove and fuel to that pack and my EDC kit. That way, I can cook when I don't have firewood available to burn.

The point is that even after all my years of study, preparing and helping others to prepare, I understand that I may not have everything right. How can I when I don't really know what I'm preparing for, other than "everything?" How can you?

With that in mind, I'm constantly reviewing my own situation, looking for holes in my logic and my preps. If you're smart, then you'll do the same, looking for ways that you can improve and eliminate anything you might be missing.

1. Thinking You're Prepared

As I just showed you, there are always things you can do to improve your personal preparedness. The problem comes when we decide "we've arrived" and no longer need to prepare anymore. I don't think there is any such place. To me, arrived happens the day the disaster strikes. It's not a destination, it's a test.

I know it can be tiring to keep prepping for a disaster that doesn't ever come; but that's the reality of what you need to do to ensure that you are protecting your family. Thinking that you've done enough or that what you have done will just have to be enough is just limiting the amount of time your family can survive. If it takes longer than that to recover from whatever disaster you end up facing, you could end up facing some pretty hard times.

Yes, there is a point where you can back off a bit on some parts of prepping, like building a stockpile. But that's not the same as just giving up and saying you're done. Keep

evaluating new threats and how ready you are to face them.

2. Forgetting OPSEC

Maintaining OPSEC (operational security) can be challenging and even a bit tiring. Constantly trying to hide what you are doing, while still doing it, requires creativity, resourcefulness and some occasional deceptiveness. But it's necessary to protect yourself and your family.

We all know the old saw about desperate people doing desperate things. When a real disaster happens and people run out of food, there's no question that they won't be desperate. If they know we have food, they'll end up on our doorstep. In today's world, they'll probably believe that we "owe" them a share of the preps we have worked and sacrificed to make sure we have.

The more people who know what we're doing, the greater the risk we face. That's all there is too it. Our best defense isn't the guns we all buy; but rather disappearing into the woodwork, where nobody is going to notice us. If they don't know what we have, chances are, they won't come looking for it.

3. Not Having "the Talk" with Relatives and Friends

Of course, there are some people who it will be just about impossible to keep in the dark about what we're doing. Close friends and family will most likely discover it, either through what we say or just being in our homes. When that happens, they'll most likely say that their emergency plan is to show up at our homes when everything goes bad.

That's a serious problem; especially since none of us are prepping to take care of our extended family and all our

friends. We need to take the time to make that clear to them, explaining why you won't be able to take care of them and why they need to be ready to take care of themselves.

You want to make that talk as positive as you can; not from the viewpoint that you're their savior, but rather that they can be their own. You don't have any magical ability to survive a disaster; all you have is a bit of knowledge and supplies. If you can do it, they can too.

Master List Of Items To Stockpile For The Apocalypse

water	chains and locks
food (canned, dehydrated)	sandbags
spices and sweeteners	water filtration supplies
cooking oil	gardening tools and supplies
coffee and tea	sewing supplies
vitamins	fishing supplies
firestarters	animal traps
firewood	fuels
heirloom seeds	synthetic oil
first aid items and medicines	biochemical hazard gear
dental care items	knives
paper items (paper towels)	archery items
feminine hygiene supplies	walkie talkies
soap/shampoo/detergents/bleach	batteries
hand sanitizer	blankets
sunscreen	tarps
insect repellant	flashlights
containers (water and food storage)	candles
canning jars	light bulbs
can openers	glow sticks
common tools	warm clothing
duct tape	hats/gloves
wd-40	bandanas
building materials	entertainment



4. Being a “Lone Wolf”

I have a problem with not wanting to bother with a survival team. There's just something within me that tends towards being a lone wolf. Even so, I understand that being a lone wolf isn't the best decision that I can make.

The reason why we have formed such a complex society, with such a complex infrastructure, is that survival is complex. It takes a wide range of skills, work and supplies to survive. Having all the knowledge and doing all the work to provide those things for yourself and your family is a bit beyond what any of us are able to do. Hence the need for a survival team.

Teaming up with other like-minded people gives you the opportunity to spread the burden around, with each person working to perfect certain skills. Then, when you come together, each will be able to do things for the others, ensuring that as a whole, you have everything you need.

I'd offer one precaution though; that is, there are always those who want to be a part of a team, but aren't willing to pull their weight. They want some job that's easy, thinking that they can do their easy job and leave the hard ones to others. That's fundamentally unfair and a good way to destroy any team.

5. No Bug Out Plan

A bug out plan is one of the most basic parts of prepping, yet many preppers don't have one. Yet, when disasters like the Camp Fire or Hurricane Harvey come along, it's that bug out plan which is going to ensure your survival. There's just no way you can shelter in place during some disasters.

Of course, having a bug out plan isn't enough by itself, if you're not prepared to put that plan into effect. That means having the necessary equipment and supplies either packed or pre-positioned wherever it is that you are going to go. It also means having that place to go to; someplace where you know that you'll be outside the perimeter of the disaster, as well as where you are sure you will have a place to stay.

6. Keeping Everything in One Place

Going back to the Camp Fire in California or Hurricane Harvey hitting Houston, it's clear that there are disasters which will destroy everything we own, including our preps, if we have everything in one place. We're much better off having some part of our equipment and supplies located in a remote location, whether that is at our survival retreat or some hidden cache.

I realize that this increases the cost of prepping, which may make some people decide not to do it; but think that through. What will you do, if your preps are destroyed by the same disaster that destroys your home?

7. Not Using Your Survival Gear

The skills we learn to use, in order to survive, are just that – skills. As such, they need to be used, so that we can retain proficiency. The same applies to our survival gear, which requires us using skills that we probably don't use every day.

I firmly believe in buying quality gear, with the idea that I will be able to use it for more than just an emergency situation. I take my bug out gear on camping trips and I use my solar oven to cook meals. The water that we drink in my home has been filtered by the same sort of system we'll use in a disaster and I even get my salt by making my own sea salt, taking water from the ocean nearby.

The point behind all this is both to hone my skills and to ensure that my gear is all in working order. I'd much rather have something break while using it on a camping trip, than to have it break when I'm bugging out. Even though the camping trip might be ruined, I will be able to survive.

Always be sure to take the time to properly maintain the gear that you're using. If you use a hatchet to cut wood, then be

sure to sharpen it. If you've used up the filter cartridge in your water purification system, be sure to replace it. For that matter, replace anything you use, keeping yourself fully stocked.

8. Stopping Learning

Finally, the last thing I want to mention is the need to keep learning. I've run across preppers from time to time who are satisfied with their level of survival knowledge and have quit adding to their skills. Basically, these people are counting on their gear and their stockpile to see them through. But what if it can't?

I've been in this game for well over 40 years now, and I'm still working to learn new skills. There's just so much to learn. Should we ever be faced by a major disaster, such as the loss of the electric grid, we will need many skills that aren't common today; skills like the old craftsmen used to use. If we are ever going to be able to rebuild society, it will be through the employment of those ancient and often lost skills.

I've long held that when you stop learning, you start dying. Well, I'm not in any hurry to die, so I guess I'll just keep on learning, seeing what else I can find to add to my knowledge and skills.

This list isn't complete

Please don't assume that this list is complete, because it's not. These are just the top mistakes I see being made by the preppers I'm in contact with. There are many more things we can, and probably have, done wrong. All any of us can do is to keep trying to do better, whatever that might mean.

Is there some mistake you've made or seen someone else make that we could all learn from? If so, we'd certainly like to

hear about it. How about sharing it with us, so that we can benefit from the lessons to be learned as well.