Proper waste disposal after SHTF

The world is already a filthy place, and humans are known for creating a lot of trash and treating nature as their personal garbage can. Luckily, we live in a country where recycling and garbage disposal are not neglected activities like in less developed countries.

Have you wondered what would happen when the sanitation workers stop coming?

There are many reasons for them to stop picking up the trash, and unlike strikes and other union-organized protests, SHTF events are most likely to cause a permanent disruption of this service.

As a result, garbage will pile up quickly, and as days turn into weeks, pests and sanitation issues will become serious problems. This may not look like a pretty picture, but the worst is yet to come as you realize you must deal with waste disposal when no one comes to keep the neighborhood clean.

So, let's look at how we can deal with waste disposal and what every single one of us can do.

Dealing with organic waste

When discussing the topic of organic waste disposal, there are three major topics we need to address: organic waste produced by humans, feces from humans and animals, and corpses. Like it

or not, you will have to deal with feces and corpses if you've survived a large-scale disaster.

When dealing with organic waste produced by humans, the main option to dispose of it properly is to turn it into compost, and what's not compostable should be thrown in the burn pile or made into pig fodder. Pigs will eat all your kitchen scraps, and nothing will go to waste. And the good part is that you will have a good pork supply for hard times.

Feces from herbivores such as cows, horses, sheep, goats, rabbits, and chickens are commonly used in composting. These manures are generally safer to compost because they contain fewer pathogens compared to carnivore or omnivore feces.

Feces from carnivorous animals like cats and dogs, as well as omnivores like pigs, should be avoided in compost piles. Their waste may contain pathogens that are harmful to humans, such as E. coli and Salmonella.

Even human feces can be turned into compost, but the process is a little bit more complex. To find out more about this topic, I recommend reading the "Humanure Handbook" by Joseph Jenkins. It will give you all the information you need to turn human feces into humanure (compost for agricultural purposes).

If turning human feces into compost doesn't sound too appealing to you, then you can always dig a latrine and get rid of human excrement the old-fashioned way. There are various instructional videos on how to do so and even how to use dry toilets to make your life easier.

Now, the tricky part is dealing with corpses. This is hardly a discussion topic covered by preppers because most folks don't want to acknowledge that certain disasters may have a grim outcome. After all, seeing piles of bodies in your neighborhood is a shocking experience. Yet, someone will have to dispose of these bodies, and they will need to do it

properly to avoid the spread of disease.

Encountering deceased individuals following a significant catastrophe or natural calamity often entails witnessing distressing scenes of bodily damage, accompanied by unsettling fluids, odors, and sounds that may linger in memory. The process of discovering, removing, and interring these remains is inherently messy, particularly in the absence of essential materials to ensure a thorough and sanitary procedure, thus averting potential contamination.

To tackle this daunting task, it’s essential to equip oneself with particulate masks, latex gloves, and ideally, body bags. However, obtaining the latter might pose challenges, leading to the use of large, heavy-duty garbage bags commonly found in the emergency supplies of prepared individuals.

The most practical approach to managing deceased individuals involves establishing temporary burial sites where bodies can be laid to rest. These sites should be located no less than 600 feet away from any potable water source, taking into account factors such as regional water tables, climatic conditions (including the possibility of frozen ground), soil composition (which could hinder manual excavation), and the number of graves needed.

Dealing with non-organic waste

When it comes to non-organic waste, there is only one viable option that will work in the long run: recycle and reuse. By recycling, I’m not referring to sorting the trash, putting it on the curb, and letting the garbage man carry it away. You will be in charge of the recycling process, and once you start separating the trash into piles of similar materials (metal, paper, glass, etc.), you should figure out ways to reuse all the materials you’ve gathered.

Most folks will decide to burn their trash, but this is not a

viable alternative in the long run because there’s the risk of accidental wildfires being started, getting injured, or attracting unwanted attention. Those who burn trash on their homestead know that there are certain preparations that need to be made before igniting their junk pile. You also have to read the weather and make sure the fire doesn’t spread.

You can reuse most of everything if you put your imagination to work. For example, paper products can be shredded and mixed with water and cement to create **Papercrete**, a cheap building material thatis often used in the construction of houses in self-sustainable communities.

If you’re a skilled metalworker, you can make pretty much anything out of scrap metal, from knives to roof shingles. You can make all sorts of tools, or you can melt various metals and sell them (if there’s a market for such resources).

Plastic is a trickier by-product to reuse, and there’s not much you can do with it other than turn it into fibers or melt it into building blocks. In certain third-world countries, bricks are made out of melted plastic and used to build roads or other construction. There are even machines called Pyrolysis Plants (well, more like entire processing systems than a single machine) that can turn plastic into fuel, but as you can imagine, this is not an option available to everyone. However, there are various videos on YouTube showing you how to make your own fuel from plastic using much simpler methods.

Do your own research

One important aspect of waste disposal is figuring out how much waste your household produces and which type is the most predominant one. For a lot of families, food packaging makes most of their trash, and at a national level, more than 63% of solid waste derives from packaging materials.

Once you know how much waste you produce, you will be able to

look for ways to get rid of it when the waste management and recycling services stop working. There is a lot of information online covering this topic, and you will be amazed to discover how waste can be transformed into something useful.

Keeping your area clean

By your area, I'm referring to all the locations in which you do most of your activities. Waste management is a dirty job, and you need to make sure everything is disinfected after you've done your job. Certain folks will argue that they have stockpiled enough sanitation supplies to last them a lifetime or that these items will still be available to acquire (through various means) after things go south.

That might be true to some extent, but as preppers, we always have to ask ourselves that irritating question, "What if…?" that keeps pushing us forward. What if there aren't any clean supplies you can buy, steal, scavenge, or whatever? What if you run out of cleaning supplies or your stockpile is compromised?

I'm the type of person who likes to have backup plans in place for everything that I can manage, and I was fortunate enough to travel the world quite a bit and learn how people less fortunate than us deal with their sanitation needs.

First and foremost, I encourage people to learn about soap plants, those plants with a high saponin content that can be used as soap substitutes. There are certain plants that can be found all over this big country, and they have a long history

of being used as soap replacements. Even the Native Americans and the first pioneers used these plants to keep their bodies and their homes clean.

Secondly, If you're not an experienced forager or if this topic seems too difficult for you, how about growing some natural cleaners in your own garden?

If this sounds appealing, you can check this article and learn what plants you can grow and how to use them for your sanitation needs.

Lastly, sanitation should be a group effort if you live in a densely populated area. It's not your job to clean after others, and everyone should be involved in the cleanup process that follows a SHTF event. If things don't get back to normal and you see trash piling up everywhere, perhaps it's time to consider relocation to a cleaner area.

Concluding

Waste management and disposal is a topic that's hardly being discussed by survival experts because it's not pretty, and it doesn't sell. It's not as glamorous as building stuff, hunting, and other activities that make you feel empowered, but it's a necessary endeavor. The trash won't magically disappear, and sometimes you need to get your hands dirty to get things done.