

Is It Smart to Fly in an SHTF Scenario?

The apocalypse has been a popular topic in Hollywood for decades. Every era and genre is guaranteed to have at least one movie, TV show, or book about the end of the world. These earth-shattering events come in myriad shapes and sizes. Maybe solar flares knock us back into the Stone Age. Perhaps scientists clone dinosaurs, despite a series of movies repeatedly proving this is a bad idea.

Maybe aliens are invading, like Orson Wells had everyone thinking during his radio broadcast of “War of the Worlds” in 1938. Perhaps a massive asteroid or comet crashes into the planet, causing an extinction-level event. A disease could sweep the globe, killing millions and leaving the rest of the world struggling to cope. That sounds familiar. Maybe we destroy ourselves, in one of a million ways, because if humans are good at one thing, it’s violence.

One thing almost all these stories have in common is the fact that our heroes or heroines are usually reduced to traveling on foot, or if they’re lucky, in heavily modified bug-out vehicles explicitly designed for the apocalypse. Public transportation, trains, and airplanes tend to go the way of the dodo, converted instead into secured bases or scavenged for parts.

Flying During Apocalyptic Scenarios

If the opportunity presents itself, is it safe to fly in an SHTF scenario? Here are some of the most common apocalypse scenarios you might encounter, as well as a few safer travel options if you need to traverse an apocalyptic landscape.

1. Viral Pandemic

This depends on the virus, its infection rate, and the mortality rate. Living through the COVID-19 pandemic taught us that with precautions like masks, increased disinfection practices, social distancing, and vaccines, traveling by plane can be carried out in relative safety. However, that's with a virus that has a very low mortality rate. For a deadlier disease or one with no treatment, avoiding travel in a crowded aircraft will be your best choice for survival.

2. Nuclear Apocalypse

Traveling by air, in this case, will be a moot point unless you are keen on restoring some aircraft from World War II or before. Assuming you survive the initial blast and don't die from radiation exposure, nuclear explosions also cause massive electromagnetic pulses that knock out all modern electronics. Fleets of aircraft will be grounded permanently.

3. Solar Flares/ Geomagnetic Storms

Solar flares and geomagnetic storms create the same sort of problem nuclear strikes do, minus the radiation and devastation that comes with an explosion. A powerful storm could potentially knock the entire planet back into the dark ages.

Most modern consumer technology isn't shielded beyond what the FCC requires to prevent it from interfering with official equipment. It isn't designed to stand up to a massive solar flare, so flying safely would be impossible.

4. Super Storms

Even skilled pilots and hurricane hunters often find it challenging to navigate safely through massive storms. Climate

change is making hurricanes larger and stronger every year. If we reach the point where superstorms are constantly forming and lingering, trying to fly through them will not be advisable. Even navigating around them will be difficult because they can change air currents so dramatically.

5. War/Civil Unrest

This is a vast blanket that could cover many events and incidents, so we'll try to keep it very nonspecific. In general, flying during war or civil unrest should be avoided at all costs. There's no guarantee your plane won't be shot down, hijacked, or even forced to land somewhere other than your destination, leaving you trapped and unable to find your way home.

This isn't fiction or speculation – it happened recently in Belarus, and that was in an event limited to a single country. Imagine how dangerous it could be if the world is at war and you try to catch a flight.

6. Asteroid Strike

There are a lot of variables here to consider. What type of asteroid was it? Where did it strike? How big was it? These are moot points if a large enough asteroid hits land because it's game over.

There's no flying anywhere because there won't be anyone left to fly. If a smaller asteroid or multiple ones strike land and water, there is a chance of survival, but flying will still probably be a bad idea due to debris being thrown up into the atmosphere by the impact. These could easily clog airplane engines, sending you crashing to the ground.

7. Supervolcano Eruption

There is a massive supervolcano in Yellowstone. If it erupts, life as we know it will end. The explosion will destroy most of the American Midwest and throw dirt and debris into the upper atmosphere, where it will linger for generations. Flying will be impossible for much the same reason as the asteroid strike – clogged airline engines and the tragic crashes that result.

These are all common apocalypse scenarios, but what about the less likely ones that tend to pop up in Hollywood?

8. Zombies

No. God, no. When someone succumbs to the zombie infection, do you want to be trapped in a small steel tube 35,000 feet in the air? You know someone is going to hide their bite so they can fly.

9. Alien Invasion

Aliens are probably invading from the sky. Do you want to get yourself closer to their ships? Stay on the ground.

10. Sun Expansion

Unless your plane is heading out of the atmosphere, give up already. There's no surviving this event, so it won't matter how you're traveling.

Safer Travel Options

Even if flying is an option, it probably isn't the safest way to travel if SHTF. Here are a few safer options you should consider if you need to navigate an apocalyptic wasteland.

- **On Foot** – Sometimes, the best tool at your disposal for transportation in an apocalypse scenario is your own two feet. It isn't usually the fastest way to travel, but it will prevent you from getting stopped by cars blocking the highway or other obstacles that might be insurmountable in other forms of transport. It takes some more effort and will require a higher calorie intake to keep you moving, but in a pinch, your feet will get you where you need to go.
- **Bicycles** – While we are on the subject of human-powered transportation, we can't forget bicycles. A bike can carry you further than your own two feet in the same amount of time, doesn't require any fuel, and can even be rigged to haul cargo or tow a cart.
- **E-Bikes** – Bikes might be great, but what if you live in a hilly area, are out of shape, or don't want to waste all your hard-earned calories on pedaling? E-bikes might be the perfect solution. They give you the option to pedal but can also provide thrust assistance. As long as you have an off-grid power solution like solar or wind, you can [travel up to 70 miles](#) on an e-bike on a single charge.
- **Modded Cars** – It's time to get your "Mad Max" on. Stock cars might work for a while, but the gas will run out eventually, and you won't be able to use them anymore. Opt for modded vehicles, especially those that have been converted to alternative fuel sources.
- **Diesel Vehicles** – Speaking of alternative fuel sources, hold onto it if you have a diesel car or truck. It's very easy to convert a standard diesel engine to burn biodiesel, and you can make your own out of organic waste. It's a win-win.
- **Canoes/Kayaks** – Water shouldn't be a deal-breaker when it comes to traveling in an apocalypse. Canoes or kayaks require no fuel – other than the food you eat – and can navigate even shallow waterways. They're often lightweight, and if you opt for a collapsable or

inflatable model, you can easily transport them when you're not on the water.

- **Motorized Boats** – If you're not a fan of paddling, a small motorized boat can help get you where you're going with less effort. Be mindful of the engine type you choose – just like cars, diesel engines will be the best option to ensure continued use.
- **Ultralight Aircraft** – Just because commercial airlines aren't safe during an apocalypse doesn't mean you can't take to the air. Ultralight aircraft are designed for a single person, can take off from nearly anywhere, and have a decent range if you're not carrying too much weight. If you're planning to use an ultralight in an SHTF scenario, start practicing now. This isn't a skill you're going to want to try on a whim.

Should You Fly if the SHTF?

In most cases, the answer to this question is going to be an emphatic no. The best thing you can do during an SHTF scenario is to go to the ground. The only exception to this rule might be if you're a pilot with your plane and the details of the apocalypse don't make flying too dangerous.