PrepperCon 2015: Deals, Ideas & Hands-on Training

Expos such as PrepperCon 2015 have a lot to offer to regular folks who are interested in emergency preparedness: one shot deals, new products, and hands-on training.

But even though the self-reliance movement has grown steadily for some time now, our expos are most still only regional in scope. They certainly do not compare to the biggest international or national expos in terms of number of attendees or money spent, and it would be unfair to compare them to those events.

Regional is a step in the right direction, because many have been much more localized in years past.

Best about PrepperCon

The event was last weekend, in Salt Lake City, and attendance was estimated at over 6,000 but actual ticket sales had not been counted at the time of this writing.

But let’s start counting what I loved the most about this expo:

- Hands on training
- New ideas to help you prep
- Access to educators from TV, YouTube and print
- Heavily discounted merchandise

I sat down and picked a Master brand padlock with locking dogs on both the heel and toe shackles under the able tutelage of the guys at the ReadyMan booth.

Perhaps it was not exactly James Bond as E&E skills go, but it was nonetheless very satisfying to feel the shackle pop open after working the pins and tension with just couple bent pieces of metal.

This was very beneficial to the attendees.

The important thing is that we actually got to practice skills hands-on. I saw a video the other day by a guy who gives online instruction for a company that sells E&E picks and shims. Even he admitted that he has yet to open that type of lock with just a QuickStick shim.

So it is certainly no stretch of the imagination to envision the average prepper buying the tools and never learning to use them, as it is undeniably more convenient to click the PayPal button than to actually get out and put in the dirt time.

If you are addicted to convenience, do something about it. Prepping is as “Do-It-Yourself” as it gets.

There were a lot of good ideas that could help people prepare, including:

- A kit to reload .22LR
- An in-home freeze dry machine
- Bullet-resistant school bags for kids

- New types of covert body armor
- Very comfortable ventilated holsters for concealed carry
- New water filter technology
- And a stun gun cane.

I was surprised to find so many good people I respect from TV, YouTube, Print and arguably the best primitive survival school in the country to be there and to be so accessible, friendly and genuinely helpful.

For the average prepper, an experience like going to a PrepperCon expo may make the difference and help someone close to you develop a real interest in prepping. Sometimes they just need to hear it from someone beside you.

It may also help you determine who is "faking it" and who the "real deal" is. This may help you make better decisions in who you look to for instruction and make better use of limited training time and money.

Another benefit for most of us is that many vendors give deep discounts at these expos since they see it as a key part of their marketing in a highly competitive economic environment. The consumer usually benefits from this in the form of big discounts, no shipping and no minimum order.

This is especially helpful to preppers who need a few odds and

ends to round out a kit and do not want to have to pay shipping. Finding small quantities or single units of medical supplies to buy can be a challenge under normal circumstances.

Since the vendor has already paid the shipping and handling to the event (in bulk) the consumer often gets a good deal.

What Could Have Been Better?

1. Cosplay

I have attended ComicCon and PrepperCon was obviously trying to leverage that creativity and energy, but in my opinion, it failed to do so in the cosplay department.

I only saw one person in a costume walking around after the cosplay event.

The Cosplay was kind of …. "blink and it was over."

2. Fashion Show

The Survival Fashion Show was pretty good by the second day

and had some pretty good energy with the much larger Saturday crowd. They did have a DJ and presenters and those were good things, but there was a little too heavy of an emphasis on non-fashion or clothing-related product placement, which did not really need to be done because it was everywhere.

There is loads of concealed carry and survival-related apparel in our market and I would have liked to have seen apparel from vendors like 5.11, Arc'teryx, UnderTech, BLACKHAWK!, Master of Concealment, Woolrich, Cabela's or any of a dozen others.

I cannot imagine it would have been difficult to get some clothing from these companies and some models even if the manufacturers did not want to sponsor the event.

3. Wrist Bands

If you are the type of survivalist who likes to keep a low profile and you buy a two-day pass, that's kind of hard to do with an optic yellow band on your wrist with PrepperCon on it in big black letters, but I really do not expect this to change.

4. Parking

By Saturday, the free onsite parking was maxed out. I suppose that is a good problem for a survival expo to have, as problems go, but it was still an inconvenient.

Overall

At this stage in the progression of the self-reliance movement expos they are pretty much regional affairs.

The event was Friday-Saturday and if you want to avoid lines or speak with a vendor, your best bet would be to go on a Friday because Saturday was madhouse, especially for someone like myself who enjoys a much more rural lifestyle.

But if you want to use the crowd as cover in order to keep a low profile, attending an expo on a Saturday may be a better strategy.

All in all, I think they did a great job and I hope to attend an even bigger and better PrepperCon in years to come. This was the first one and it was really good, so I can only imagine that the event will improve each year.

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