

10 Tips for Time Management During Crises



I cannot think of any time where time management is more critical than during a crisis. Those of you who are first responders, who have served in the military or who have experienced life or death situations likely understand this, but most other people do not.

Until you have experienced the effect a true crisis has on your mind and body, it is very difficult to imagine. You might think you have time management down, but what if right this second, you hear on the radio or TV that nuclear meltdown has occurred or a nuclear weapon has been detonated nearby, and that fallout will reach your location in 30 minutes.

Too Many Questions

{adinsert bph}How are you dressed at this moment? What will you take with you? Will you have time to warn or collect your family? Where are they? For this scenario, let us say that your bug out bag is squared away. You can just grab that

and toss it into your vehicle since you would not have to flee on foot.

But what else or who else will you take with you? Are they all packed and ready to go? What will you need to bring for them? What season of year is it? What is the weather like? Where is your EDC gear such as your wallet, keys, cell phone, knife and sunglasses? Where is your concealed carry gear? Well you can just decide real quick, grab what you need and head out, right? ... Not so much.

You see, when you get the call or hear the message on TV or radio, as soon as you hear the warning, you will experience a huge adrenalin spike. You will probably get tunnel vision and tunnel hearing. Your body will tell you to run, but the smart thing to do would be to collect what you need before you head out the door. You may lack fine motor coordination.

It will be difficult to think clearly. You will find that you and remember, "Where is this?" ... "Where did I put that?" "What is the weather like?" "What will it be like tomorrow?" "Where is everyone else?" Emergency responders of all types have been dealing with this issue since they were first established. How do they deal with it? I'll list some "do's" and "do not's" to help you make the most effective use possible of your time in a crisis.

DO...

1. Organize Turnout Bags: You have seen them ... on TV if not in real life. Hopefully you already have one, but if not, right now would be a good time to start putting one together. This is typically the point where the rookies say, "But Cache, I already have a bug out bag and a get home bag."

Are you telling me I need *another* bag?! How many bags am I going to need?! How many bags can one person realistically carry?!" I am not painting them with a broad brush simply because they do not agree with me when I tell you I am pretty

sure that the person chiming in is new to emergency preparedness.

I know that they are likely a newbie because if they had responded to an emergency before or even practiced a bug out drill, they would not have said that. They would have said something more along the lines of, "Hey, that is a good idea." because it is very hard to think straight when you are in a hurry because lives hang in the balance.

Until you have a few emergency deployments or responses under your belt, meaningful thought and fine motor coordination go right out the window as soon as you get the call. A turnout bag should contain everything that goes on your person as opposed to inside whatever bag you reach for in that type of emergency.

Checklist for a sample turnout bag:

- Watch with stop watch: you will need to keep an eye on the time. Start the watch counting so you do not lose track of time.
- Clipboard with pen and checklist.
- Turnout bag: pack/duffle, rolling duffle or some another bag of appropriate size and construction for your purposes.
- Footwear & socks: a pack will only do so much good if you head out the door with it in flip flops or high heels.
- Clothing: Season-appropriate outdoor clothing provides shelter and decreases the weight of your pack. It is more comfortable to carry weight distributed over the body than in a pack.
- Sturdy trouser belt: and suspenders if needed.
- Fixed-blade sheath knife (on a dangler): I attach my sheath knife to my trouser belt with a dangler so it will not come off if I take off any outer belts or my pack and so it will not interfere with my pack belt or

body armor.

- Sidearm: however you carry it, make sure that you can get at your sidearm smoothly and that it does not interfere with your pack. If you do not want it to come off when you doff your other gear, attach a drop down panel such as HSG's Padded Leg Panel to your trouser belt like your sheath knife. Those particular panels have plenty of room for a spare magazine or magazines, a flashlight and a multi-tool in addition to your sidearm.
- Multi-tool: I carry my multi-tool in a pouch on my sheath knife's sheath or on a drop down panel or dangler to keep it out of the way of my pack.
- Hat: season and weather-appropriate.
- Basic SERE gear: in my opinion, this is best kept in your pockets so you will not ever set it down. If you wear it on your belt or pack and then take it off to rest, you may not have it when you need it and if it doesn't go in your pack, it should go in your turnout bag and/or on a checklist.
- Gloves: season and weather-appropriate.
- Headwear: season and weather-appropriate.
- Hiking stick or trekking poles: if you use them.
- Cliff bars: it is good to have a couple of granola bars or Cliff Bars on your person in case you get the call well after your last meal. That way you do have to dig into your pack right away.
- Base layer: season and weather-appropriate.
- Outer layer: season and weather-appropriate
- Bandana: shemagh or keffiyeh, balaclava, Shemaglava or face cover of some sort
- Field shield wipe: or sunscreen & insect repellent wipes
- Wet wipe: large, single.
- Batteries & compact battery tester:
- Rx medicines: some need to be refrigerated or are controlled so it may be difficult to store them in your turnout bag.

2. Use Checklists: Include a mini-clipboard, laminated checklist and a grease pencil in each turnout bag. In a crisis, people are often still able to follow simple instructions or checklists, but they are not likely to produce quality thought or remember things, sometimes even very important things. Using checklists will keep you on track and help you to not forget anything important since you will prepare your checklists in advance of any crisis, while your mind is clear.

Checklists save money. Many people cannot afford to prepare multiple packs containing (essentially the same) top quality gear. The checklist will go in your turnout bag or its document pocket. List everything that will need immediate attention. List any things that you cannot afford to store multiples of since you will need to gather them up, such as your sidearm, light, cell phone or other EDC gear.

For each major category of threat, such as earthquake, EMP (electromagnetic pulse) or NBC (nuclear biological chemical) create at least two checklists. One should be a To Pack checklist that lists gear next to checkboxes. The other should be a To Do checklist that lists tasks to complete.

By using checklists, you will not forget to pack critical gear at the last minute or to perform any critical tasks while rushed and preoccupied. I will give a short example of a checklist to prepare for a bug out. I will not list everything, just enough to illustrate the idea.

Sample to do checklist for a bug out:

- Make the decision: if the criteria that trigger your bug out plan have been met.
- Alert your group: anyone going with you needs to know to prepare or they will not be ready in time so you should play Paul Revere right away and let them know you will be leaving in 15 minutes.

- Canteen check: verify that canteen and hydration bladder are present, freshly filled and will not slosh.
- Sidearm check: verify presence, that it is loaded and chamber checked.
- Spare mag: verify presence and ammunition.
- Flashlight: verify presence and function.
- Sunglasses
- Keys
- Wallet
- Cell phone & spare battery: verify presence, charge state and function.
- PLB/GPS: presence and function.
- Communications check: verify radio(s) and head sets for presence, charge state, frequency and function.
- Gear check: jump up and down to make sure your load is secure and does not rattle.
- Fuel vehicle: top of fuel tanks and gas cans.
- Pre-travel vehicle check: check tire pressure, oil, coolant, clean glass, etc.
- Hide a key.
- Disconnect power.
- Lock up.

3. Put First Things First: In many scenarios, being late is not an option. List and do the most important things and gear to pack first because you will leave at a set time.

4. List Threats: Make a list of all known threats. Take geography, climate, natural resources, population density, geology and other factors into account before ruling anything out.

5. Assess Risk: Most risk assessment models are based in the following formula, $\text{Risk} = \text{Likelihood} * \text{Impact}$. This formula can be weighted and applied to pretty much any field to quantify or qualify risk. List known threats, assign values for likelihood or probability and impact such as severity and duration, to determine the risk they present. Determine the

risk associated with each threat and start planning for the greatest risk. Work your way down to the lesser risks.

Create a Plan for Each Threat: a plan that substantially reduces one risk, might dramatically increase risk if executed in reaction to a different crisis. Since what works for one, might make another worse, you need to match the plan you follow to the risk you face.

6. Prepare Ahead of Time: A crisis is not the time to fly by the seat of your pants. A little preparation beforehand goes a long way. As you plan, you will create lists of things that you need to accomplish in order to effect any given plan. You will encounter obstacles, such as running out of money.

Just keep in mind that a lack of funding might keep you from checking an item off your to do list, but do not let that stop you. Instead, look for the next most important thing you can do that you do not need money for. Keep pushing preparations forward and do not let an obstacle halt progress of tasks that it does not directly prevent.

7. Practice: Stage both scheduled and unscheduled drills. It is very satisfying to see your time improve. Stage drills that help you improve and debrief afterwards to discuss what can be done more effectively in the future. You will very quickly learn what does and does not work and identify details or issues that you could not possibly have anticipated.

DO NOT ...

1. Hesitate: Once the criterion to trigger a plan have been met, pull the trigger. The criterion must be clear cut. If they are mushy and too open to interpretation, you may go into denial and fail to act in time. This can be costly.

2. Practice in an Unrealistic Fashion: The idea behind training drills is to make you and your team more effective and to desensitize you to some of the stresses you will

experience. The last thing you want to do is to instill a dangerous sense of overconfidence in yourself or your team.

3. Apply a Single Plan to Mitigate All Risks: People usually fall into this trap by generalizing risks, lumping them all into a single risk they term TEOTWAWKI, SHTF, Armageddon, etc.as opposed to identifying individual risks and planning for each threat.

It had been said that those who are good with a hammer, you tend to see everything as a nail, even though it is not always the right tool for the job. Any action you plan or take should be to mitigate risk, increasing you chances of survival.

**The only way left to survive after an EMP hits
America's reset button**

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This article has been written by **Cache Valley Prepper** for [Survivopedia](#).