

What to Expect in 2024

We have a bit of a tradition around here, where I do an article on what I think we all need to be watching out for in the next year. I've been avoiding it this year, because every time I think about it, politics rears its ugly head. The year 2024 is an election year once again, so the news will be dominated by everything leading up to election day. But we can't just keep our eyes on that, as there are many other dangers in the world. As preppers, we need to keep our eyes on all of them.

Many of the problems dangers we face in the coming year are continuations of things that are already happening in the world around us. While we divide time into days, weeks and years, the world around us doesn't necessarily see those divisions. We can expect everything that has been a problem in 2023 to continue, while new things come along to bother us as well.

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The Economy

One of the big concerns today is the economy, which has not been doing well. Inflation is still up, although the official figures aren't as high as they were a year ago. But as we all know; those figures are doctored to the point of being unrecognizable. One thing they definitely leave out, is the cumulative effects of inflation. The inflation that we're experiencing now, is added to the inflation we experienced last year, it doesn't replace it. Putting it all together, we've experienced over 20% inflation since President Biden

took office. That's not going away.

What this means is that our buying power has decreased by a similar amount. While things like our mortgage payment or car note shouldn't have changed, anything new is at a higher interest rate. That has hurt both the housing and automotive industries, as people can't afford to buy at high interest rates. Of course, many people can't afford the loan in the first place, because everything has gotten more expensive.

High inflation isn't going away anytime soon, especially with people in Congress who don't accept the idea that their spending is driving inflation. Politicians and government functionaries love to blame inflation on big business greed, mostly to take the attention off of themselves.

We can expect the White House to take some sort of temporary action to reduce inflation as we head into the election season. But keep in mind that whatever action they take will be temporary and will ultimately cost us in the end. A good example is stealing oil from the strategic reserve to reduce prices at the gas pump. That will come back to bite us, when it is necessary to buy oil at higher prices to reestablish those reserves.

Our best protection against economic woes is to become as self-sufficient as possible. If you're growing most of your own food, then rising food prices will have little impact on you. The same can be said for repairing your car yourself and doing work around the house. The more of that you can do for yourself, the less you have to pay others to do it. With the labor shortage in the skilled trades, that sort of work is getting more and more expensive.

Energy

The president's war on energy is still going strong, although there are some pretty good indicators that his efforts to

outlaw natural gas stoves are running afoul of public opinion. As of the latest polling data, some 69% of people, across the political spectrum, are opposed to any sort of natural gas appliance ban.

What that means is that the government is going to have to go around public opinion, finding ways of banning natural gas appliances, without banning them. One such way is through regulations. Tightening regulations on either the appliances themselves or the construction of new homes could effectively have the same impact as banning them, while avoiding the word "ban." Interestingly enough, the Biden administration has just made millions of dollars available to states and municipalities for the purpose of "revising their building codes." Anyone wonder why they did that?

Biden's war on energy has been the single most consistent feature of his presidency and will not stop anytime soon. He may say some things during the presidential campaign to make it sound like he's changing direction; but like any other political "promise" it won't mean anything. He's still living under the fantasy that wind and solar power will answer all our energy needs; and that electric cars can really take over from the gas-burning ones we drive today.

The other big concern in the energy industry is blackouts. The average rate of severe blackouts has been on the climb for quite some time now and it can only be expected to get worse. With the government's push for green energy, meaning wind and solar power, we can expect blackouts to become a normal occurrence in our country. Just how normal or how frequent will depend on how long it will take for people to wake up to the idea that wind and solar are not dependable power sources.

Shortages

The string of shortages that began with the great toilet paper shortage of 2020 is not yet over, although things are looking

much better than they did a year ago. But that doesn't mean that we can all breathe a sigh of relief. Shortages will continue into the future, as the disruption that COVID caused to our supply chain will take years to fully repair. Our global supply chain is so complex, that there is a constant trickle-down process affecting the availability of almost everything.

One place we know that product shortages will continue is the automobile industry. The new car supply will remain low well into the new year. That means that the used car market will be struggling for a good three to four more years. We'll know that the car shortage is finally over when prices start dropping. They'll never hit the pre-COVID levels again; but they should lower somewhat.

Public Violence

If the last election cycle was any indicator at all, we can expect an increase in violent acts, as we get closer to the elections. This is an extension of our country's political polarization. There are apparently those who believe that acts of violence are an acceptable expression of their political opinion. I think you know who I'm talking about; the same people who say that words they don't agree with are violent acts.

This one needs to concern us, especially those of us who live in big cities, where most of those acts of violence take place. If you don't have the ability to defend yourself now, I'd recommend investing the necessary time and money to gain that ability. For those who live in states with laws that prevent you from being able to defend yourself, might I recommend moving to someplace where you can?

Of course, the best defense from any act of public violence is avoiding those who are committing the violent acts. That first means staying away from parts of town where such acts are

likely to happen. But the reality is that no place is safe. If unruly crowds happen to be coming down your street, your best bet is to bar the door and stay inside. Don't do like the couple in St. Louis, where they stood outside their homes with guns in hand, protecting their home. That might just motivate the crowd to become even more unruly.

Natural Disasters

We can always count on having natural disasters strike; that's just part of life. But there are two areas in particular that should concern us as we go into 2024. The first of these is winter weather. The Farmers' Almanac, which has had an amazing track record in predicting the weather in the upcoming year, is forecasting particularly harsh winter weather in January and February, with much colder and wetter weather than normal.

Of potentially greater concern is that hurricane activity is expected to be about 30% higher than normal in 2024. While the majority of those will probably be tropical storms, rather than hurricanes, there's still a potential for a dozen hurricanes. But tropical storms can cause flooding too; the biggest problem we usually face from hurricanes.

The country has been experiencing drought for several years now and that is expected to continue through the next year. Like inflation, drought conditions build from year to year. With water levels in our reservoirs and aquifers at historic lows, another year of drought is worrisome. Water rationing could become commonplace, not only for watering lawns and washing cars, but for more important uses as well.

This, at least, is something we can take action on. If you don't have a rainwater capture system in place, now is an excellent time to install one, giving your family a water reserve, should there be problems in your area. Build it with as much storage capacity as you can, so that you'll have enough water to last.

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Just the Beginning

Of course, the things I've listed here are just the beginning. I'm still expecting another major pandemic to come; I just don't know how long it will be before it happens. There are countless other problems that can happen, many of which can and will be caused by our own government. Long gone is the day in which the federal government worked for the betterment of society. They've forgotten that they work for us and instead think that we work to support them. Nature is at least as fickle as the government and will take every chance she can to throw us a curveball. What form those curveballs take will depend largely on what part of the country you live in. That's why we are preppers and we have plenty of reason to keep ourselves prepared.