

Welcome to Louisiana!



On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina became the largest natural disaster in United States history. After the levees failed, it became the largest man-made disaster in United States history. This blog is a chronicle of what happened to myself and my family during those events. It is also a documentation of lessons learned from a survival and recovery viewpoint.

This blog intertwines several elements. One element is the actual experience of disaster. Another element is a step by step guide to preparing yourself and your family for the day when you might face some unforeseen circumstance. I invite you to seriously invest the time, effort, and small cost in creating your own emergency plans. If you do not know where to begin, just follow along with me and I'll take you step by step.

Something I don't want to do is make anyone afraid. Fear isn't useful. You shouldn't do any of this out of a sense of fear or panic. You should do it from a positive, forward looking philosophy. However you work that, you should do it - especially if you have kids. Many times in my youth I walked around not knowing where my next meal was coming from. That can be a little disturbing, but it doesn't hold a candle to the rising panic you feel as you're riding along with nothing but the money in your pocket, unsure if your house is still standing, with your little girls in the back seat. Trust me.

The events and stories herein are true, but I have also taken the liberty of fictionalizing certain elements here or there for a number of reasons. Some names have been changed to protect the innocent, some names have been changed to protect the guilty, and some names have been changed to protect the naive. Even so, I will not spare telling you about my many failures while celebrating my several successes. I hope that these pages will prove to be useful to you in some way.

Enjoy.

Shane

Introduction



If you are not a 'survivalist', but you would like to learn how to make some basic, common sense preparations to safeguard yourself and your family in times of distress, then this is the place for you.

If you'd like to start from scratch and turn yourself into a super-survivalist, prepared to wage war with the hordes of zombies that will shortly rise in the Zombie Apocalypse, this is still a good place to start. You don't get to be the living legend of zombies everywhere overnight, after all.

I interject a lot of humor in my writing. Just because I lighten a subject doesn't mean I take the subject lightly.

I am not a Survivalist in the strictest sense of the term, although I fit the definition. Wikipedia defines Survivalism as 'the anticipation and preparation of a future disruption in local, regional or worldwide social or political order'. I was raised in a strict, fundamentalist Christian family where every day the expectation was that if Armageddon did not come a little later this afternoon, then it would definitely come tomorrow morning. Despite the daily promise of that, the world is still turning quite normally so I have come to question the basic premise of that particular anxiety. Even so, that kind of thinking sticks with you.

Living in south-east Louisiana also had an influence on my upbringing and mindset, because everyone who lives here knows that it is wise to always have three days worth of food and water - as well as some other supplies - in the event of a hurricane. Everyone also knows that it's a good idea to keep a hatchet in the attic so that if you end up in the attic and the flood waters are rising, you can chop a hole in the roof and get out. Katrina changed some of our preconceptions and our attitudes about what 'reasonable' preparations are.

From a young age, I have daily thought about practical preparations in expectation for 'disasters' of all kinds and for 'hard times' generally. I had read the books, subscribed to the magazines, visited the various websites, and more or less had myself together - until Katrina came along and taught me that not only are most of the books and websites a little misleading; a lot of times they are downright wrong.



There is - whether you know it or not - a growing subculture of 'survivalism' in this country. Like any other 'ism', there are good ideas and bad ideas. There are those yet weak in the faith, some stable believers, and a fair number of 'fundamentalist' hard-core fanatics. Wherever you end up on that scale, I invite you to Listen to Katrina. I did, and a lot of what I learned was rather interesting to me. If you are already a fanatical, hard-core survivalist who has all the answers figured out, this isn't going to be a good blog for you. Sorry about that...

This blog is a collection of the lessons I've learned after Katrina. I'm not going to tell you that all the books are wrong, but I'm going to tell you why some of them are wrong, and offer some practical advice on what to do - and more importantly what *not* to do - when making preparations and then actually putting those preparations into practice. I did 'survive', but I also learned that 'survival' just means breaking even. I like to think that I did very well after Katrina, even if I made some mistakes along the way. From personal experience, I can tell you that even though I *thought* about such things quite a lot, I never properly *considered* them, and I certainly didn't *appreciate* them until SHTF.



For those of you unfamiliar with the term, SHTF means 'Shit Hits The Fan'. To survivalists and preparedness people, this is the big disaster. Normally this means the total break down of civilization and social order. This should not be confused with TEOTWAWKI (The End Of The World As We Know It.) One note I would like to make here is that I use references to zombies and the Zombie Apocalypse. In the survivalist subculture, zombies are used two ways. One way is that it is a ridiculous, hilarious spoof on what we do. When someone asks why they do this, and they say, 'To prepare for the zombies!', they're making fun of themselves. There are many movies out today that portray various zombie horror scenarios. The second reason is that a theoretical Zombie Apocalypse incorporates many elements of several kinds of disaster. Biological, invading forces, and several others are all contained in that fictional, hypothetical scenario. When you see me refer to the Zombie Apocalypse or zombies generally, that's how I mean it. Please don't think that I think that I am expecting an actual Return of the Living Dead...

Throughout this work there will be some coarse language, disturbing images, and frank discussions.

None of which I will apologize for in advance.

Enjoy.

Shane

Run Away!

<JOURNAL ENTRY, AUGUST 30, 2005>

I have to admit that Hurricane Katrina caught us with flat feet. Andrea and I had been revising our hurricane plan, and we didn't do anything with it for awhile, and things were kind of disorganized. We did manage to pack up and were ready to go within 12 hours, but by that time it was 9:00 at night, and we decided to bug out the next morning at 4:00 AM.

My father is a fundamentalist Christian, and I grew up with the book of Revelation. When you grow up every day with the belief that Armageddon is probably going to

happen today or tomorrow, you kind of get immune to the idea of The End of The World As We Know It. (TEOTWAWKI).

When Katrina showed up in the Gulf, Brian said, "This one is just going to drift up to Florida. No problems." and I said, "You fool! This is the one that will kill us all!" Of course, I always say that, figuring that one day I'd be right... Alas...

Even so, making decisions about what to take and what to leave - and then trying to get all of that to fit in the car - is a little exhausting. I wanted to take supplies, and Andrea wanted to take mementos. We compromised by loading and taking both vehicles.

My biggest concern was for money. With two kids, we live hand to mouth - paycheck to paycheck. My friend (and boss) Larry was good enough to give me a paycheck on Saturday and wish me luck. He stayed in his home in Metairie, but evacuated his wife and daughter. Even so, all the money I have is all the money I'm going to have for quite some time. If you offered to sell me the world for \$1,000, I'd be about \$400 bucks short. \$600 dollars won't get you very far in this day and age, but the idea of being broke on the road was better than the idea of drowning in a disaster area.

We left at 6:46 AM on Sunday morning. I wanted to leave earlier, but we also needed the rest for the long trip on the road. As it turns out, we left in the nick of time. As we drove out, the traffic was heavy, but moving. We continually heard reports of gridlock just behind us. It seemed like we were riding a wave that was slowly freezing behind us.

It took us 15 1/2 hours to drive to Houston - a trip that normally takes just six hours. I had both kids in the car with me, and I didn't know it was possible to feed an infant in the back seat while driving. Strangely enough, I managed to pull it off several times... Virginia blissfully watched videos for several hours, but then became bored. We stopped a few times to get fuel and for bathroom breaks. It was evident that the panic was rising, and every time we stopped and got back on the road, the traffic was worse and worse. We had to keep moving, and we did.

I've done a lot of planning for this kind of thing, and a lot of thinking about it. I read all the paranoid schizophrenic stuff on the various lists about bugging out during a disaster, war, invasion, or alien landing. None of those 'plans' are really any good. Reality is very different from imagination or what Hollywood shows. Not being the kooky type, I noticed several things along the way.

Most folks were polite, courteous, and helpful. People who needed help were asking for help, and they were getting it. Folks would break down, and other folks would stop and help them out. There was some general shock, but there wasn't any overt panic - even if there was an urgency to the situation that was plain.

A good measure of the mental condition of your fellow evacuees is litter. The more panic people feel, the less they care about the niceties of society. Litter is a direct

correlation with the mental condition of the people. The roadside, rest stops, and refueling stations were quickly full of litter. Not a good sign.

Leaving everything you know behind isn't as disturbing as I thought it might be. "It's just stuff.", everyone says. That's real easy to say, though, when it's not YOUR stuff. I don't really have nice stuff. I do seem to have a lot of stuff, and I like my stuff. I mean, my refrigerator is kind of old and crappy, but I know just how to tweak it for ice and water. I know just how to load my old POS dishwasher. I know that the detergent door is busted, and I know just how much to pour into the open cup to get clean dishes. My shower is small, but I know just where to turn the knobs to make the water temperature just right. In many ways we ARE our stuff, because our stuff tells a story about us, our personalities, and our lives. I never really thought about the way I have to jiggle the back door key to get the lock to open as something that defined me as a person, but it's part of my story - a story that was changing radically behind me as I was driving.

Besides the stuff, there are places. There are places I know and love. Places I went as a kid. My first this, or my first that. I mean, we used to go to the pavilion in Lafreire Park and say, "This is the place where we got married." The places tell a story about us too, and now those stories were being erased in space if not in time.

I have been through hurricanes and storms before. Widespread destruction isn't anything new to me, but it has never actually happened to me before. As I drove along, getting past Baton Rouge in bumper to bumper traffic, it was apparent to me that a hurricane is a special kind of tragic play. Terrorist attacks, earthquakes, and other kinds of natural disasters happen fairly quickly. BOOM, and it's done. A hurricane, though, is like a nuclear bomb that explodes very slowly over the span of a whole day. You can watch it all unfold very neatly into chaos, and there really isn't anything to do about it but to try to exit the stage, the theatre, and get as far away as you can before you become a participant in the play rather than a spectator.

In the end though, I have become a character on the stage. As I was exiting the stage, Katrina made her grand entrance and I went from being an evacuee to being a refugee. As we passed Lafayette, I slid a new CD into the player and sang along...

"If it keeps on rainin', levee's goin' to break"

I said to myself, "Ain't no more good, mamma. No more good.", and I slid down the highway thinking about how I was going to explain all of this to Virginia when she stopped laughing at Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, took her headphones off, and started asking me hard questions.

When she did finally start asking questions, the question was, "Daddy! When are we going to eat!?", which was a much easier question than I thought it might be. We stopped at McDonalds and got her something to eat. While there we met two elderly ladies accompanied in the same car by a daughter and son. They had nowhere to go, and

nothing but the clothes on their back and the car they were in. We drove away feeling very fortunate.

We took another break in Texas somewhere past Beaumont. It was kind of a rough neighborhood, but I needed to take a break and feed Madeline. Not wanting to sit down anymore because my behind was pretty sore, I leaned against the truck and fed Madeline her bottle while Andrea took Virginia to the bathroom. While I was standing there with her in my arms, sucking gently on her bottle, an older man came up from behind the truck and observed my Louisiana license plate.

He asked, "Ya'll runnin' from the storm?" He was looking at Madeline.

"Yes sir. Trying to make it to Houston."

"Ya'll got a place to live? Ya'll can come live with me. I live alone in a big ranch and ya'll can come live with me."

I was really moved by that. I told him that we were going to family, but there were plenty of folks coming up behind us that had no place to go. I hope he found a family that needed the help.

The kindness and generosity offered by friends and strangers is quite overwhelming. We are now staying with Ken and Aggie, and they have welcomed us with open arms. We are living in an average sized bedroom upstairs, but we have the run of the house, showers, laundry, and regular meals.

We are, in all of this, very thankful. I know that there are a lot of people not as fortunate as we are.

I have talked to several people who stayed, and Bob, who spoke with the mayor of Harahan. (Helps to have friends in high places...)

Many houses in and around New Orleans have water in them. Some up to the ceiling. A lot of roofs were damaged, and there is a lot of debris. It is in some ways worse than what the national media is showing, and in some ways better. Some neighborhoods did better than others, some didn't. My grandmother's house, my parent's house, my bosses house, Billy & Paulette's house, and a few other houses of people I know took no water, but everyone sustained roof damage to some degree. Some damage worse than others, but the roofs are still there. Some roofs of some houses did come off, but not many as far as I can tell. Metairie and Harahan weren't hit as bad as some.

The Airline Highway sandbag levee let go, and Kenner took some water. There was water in homes as far south as the Harahan Recreation Center, but that area is low. It's a little ways from my house and Bob's house, which is a little higher. I have an expectation from all reports that my house did not take water.

As far as wind damage, I just don't know. The asbestos tiles on my roof are very strong. The structure of my house is very good, and shaped in such a way that it can withstand high winds. The problem is that the attachment of the roof isn't very good, and having settled, isn't entirely sound. The other problem is that I have two large trees that I don't expect survived the winds, and I expect that one (or both) may have struck the house. I expect the metal carport to be gone...

There are various horror stories not being reported by the national media. A car was crushed by something falling near Airline and Clearview, trapping the occupants. Nobody could get to them, and the expectation is that they were killed. Two people were rescued off a floating mattress. There are reports of a number of people on the roofs of their houses. There are reports of bodies floating in the 9th ward.

That's all I know for now. As soon as I can put a few things together, I'll be going back in.

Shane

Philosophy

Before we get down to some meat and potatoes, I want to have a little dessert first. The various books, magazines, and websites on the general topic of 'survival' eventually get into discussions about 'mindset' and specifically the 'survival mindset'. They sometimes go on endlessly about that crap and then try to sell you pre-assembled 'survival kits' or other such non-sense. I want to outline a few things that I am going to come back to time and time again, under the heading of 'Philosophy' - not a 'Survival Philosophy', but a 'Philosophy of Success'.

1. SURVIVAL IS NOT A KIT!
2. If you prepare to survive, you will, but survival means breaking even.
3. If you prepare to succeed, you can do much better than survive.
4. The best 'survival kit' is the kit you carry. If you have the greatest kit in the world, and you don't carry it, then it's worthless.
5. Skills and knowledge are more important than stuff.
6. If you're having fun, it's not survival, it's camping out.
7. Anybody who tells you that survival is 90% mental and 10% physical has never actually been in a survival situation. Those numbers can swing wildly...
8. The best way not to get lost is to never leave home in the first place.

9. Lazy people do not prosper.

10. In any survival situation, you should try to keep your friends alive as long as possible. They stay fresh longer that way.

We'll be expanding on and adding to this list as we go along.

Shane

Bugging Out - Theory and Practice

bug out, *Slang*. to flee in panic; show panic or alarm.

The Theory of 'bugging out' as it is known to survivalists is really quite simple. When SHTF, hop into your large, fueled, well stocked (and preferably armored) BOV (Bug Out Vehicle) that you keep ready at all times in your indoor garage and drive to your BOL (Bug Out Location). Your BOL is some place safe - preferably deep in the mountains where you have a second, strategically placed, fortified house full of every conceivable necessity to last a lifetime which is surrounded by walls and a moat full of laser guided robot sharks.

Now that I have actually done the bug out thing for real, I'm here to tell you that the actual Practice of 'bugging out' sucks. I'm not talking about Tootsie-Roll-Tootsie-Pop sucking either. Bugging out sucks the big one...but I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start from The Plan, and go from there.

When disaster strikes, there are two - and only two - options. You can either stay in your home, or you can leave. Sometimes you will have no option, however. If the house is on fire, you're gonna need to leave. If the streets are clogged with angry, rioting circus clowns, you're gonna have to stay home. In either event, you need to be prepared for either of those two eventualities. While I'd prefer to skip all this and go right to the derring-do tales of armed resistance against hordes of bloodthirsty looters, the mundane truth is that you win or lose the disaster survival game before the disaster even gets close. If you have prepared to 'win', then win you will. If you don't prepare at all, then you have to roll the dice like everybody else who watched Oprah reruns when they should have been developing The Plan.

Survival is NOT a kit, but it helps to have a few things together. The very first thing to think about is The Plan. What are **you** going to do to make sure that **you** don't end up in a place like the Louisiana Superdome or New Orleans Convention Center after a major disaster? Believe it or not, it doesn't take a lot of money or a lot of time to be ready for many eventualities. Developing The Plan doesn't have to cost you anything. It can be free. If you can't afford free, then you need to switch careers.

The Plan

You should establish with your family The Plan. Every family should already have a Fire Escape Plan, and what I call The Plan just has a broader scope. The Plan should be written down on paper and kept in an obvious location - like on the refrigerator. If you have polite company coming for dinner, you can shove it in a kitchen drawer or something until they leave. You will actually have two plans, but I'm going to talk about the bug-out plans first, because if you have the bug-out plans in place, then we can use those as a foundation for the stay-home (bug-in) plans.



While some people make bugging out sound like an easy extended vacation, the actual practice is rather serious - which is why it is important to have The Plan well thought out on three pages of paper.

Page 1 - ESCAPE PLAN ALPHA, also known as the 60 Second plan. The 60 Second plan is just that. You will be out of the house in 60 seconds. There are all kinds of possible needs for that. Perhaps the house is on fire. Perhaps there is some kind of terrorist attack. Perhaps a tornado approaches. Perhaps a foreign power is invading your town. Perhaps alien space ships have landed in the next block. Perhaps your mother-in-law called, but she's two miles away and if you hurry you can miss her. Whatever. If you play, "Why?", games with yourself, you'll only waste time. The point is that you need to have the ability to get out of your house in 60 seconds and drive away. You will attain some clarity on this if you stand naked in the middle of your living room and think to yourself, "OK, I am going to leave this house in 60 seconds or less and I am never going to return to it." What do you grab?

This is not an evacuation. This is an escape. You are fleeing for your very lives. Your spouse and children need to be on the ball too. If they want to know how many stuffed animals they can pack, the answer should always be zero. Children shouldn't be doing anything but going to the car and putting on their seat belts in anticipation that you will drive off without them if they aren't there. (Well, you wouldn't, but they shouldn't know that - it insures that they are where they need to be when you are ready to drive.) Older kids and teenagers should have some reasonable role in either evacuating younger children or some other responsibility. I am of the opinion that most pets should be left behind, but many people will call me a soulless monster for that opinion. YMMV.

For folks rich, lucky, or crazy enough to devote the significant material wealth to keep a school bus packed with supplies and essentials in the garage, this exercise is somewhat boring. Most of us though, will never win this game and make it out of the house in 60 seconds if we haven't done some serious prior planning. I'll go into the actual planning in later pages. Right now I just want to invite you to consider that having such plans is important.

Page 2 - ESCAPE PLAN BETA, also known as the 1 hour plan. For whatever theoretical reason, you are standing in the middle of your living room in nothing but a sombrero when the need arises for you to 'get out of Dodge' quickly. You are in no immediate danger, but you have to leave the area and you may never return. The 1 hour plan involves less rushing about, swearing, and general panic. You still need to consider those things that you need to take with you, and those things that you need to do to secure your property.

Page 3 - ESCAPE PLAN GREEK ALPHABET LETTER THAT COMES AFTER BETA (Gamma), also known as the 12 hour plan. You can see some danger - like a hurricane - coming a long way off. You have time to pack the car, secure the house, maybe have a nap, and then drive out. You are standing in the middle of your living room in your sombrero, drinking Thai iced tea when you are suddenly struck by the notion that you should leave in a few hours for a long vacation from which you may or may not return.

After the escape plans, there is an evacuation plan. Most people in most parts of the country will not really need this one, but for those persons who live in areas affected by hurricanes, we have the Hurricane Evacuation Plan. This starts about five days out. The NOAA issues a hurricane watch, and you start thinking about what you need to do to get the house ready to go. You put all the potted plants in the garage, you board up the windows, and you have a lot of time to think about whether or not you are going to evacuate or if you will take the chance that the storm will miss you or that it won't be that bad.

These are plans that I have always known about, and for which I have usually been ready. For some stupid reason, though, despite years of strategic thinking, I was caught with my pants down when Katrina rolled into the Gulf of Mexico. Andrea and I had been reworking our hurricane preparedness plan, and things kind of fell apart the prior year

and we didn't do anything about it. (LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!) All my preparations are mostly made around staying in the house. That was an idea that wasn't viable any more, however, because Virginia was 5, and Madeline was only three months old. I had a duty to take them out of harm's way. Having two young children who need a bunch of stuff to come with them doesn't simplify the escape and evacuation plans. In fact, even just one child complicates things.

All of these plans require similar components. The primary component is that you actually escape whatever it is that you are trying to escape. The second most important component is to escape with your Life, Health, and a significant portion of your Wealth. The third component is to have some place to escape *to* - and you should know the location without having to think about it. When you escape a fire, have some place to meet outside the home. At the mailbox or at the neighbor's house, for instance. If you are escaping the region, have a place to go no matter what direction you travel. Some people buy homes and property in remote areas for this purpose, but I don't have those kinds of financial resources. We were very lucky in that we had family in Houston, Texas that had the space in their home and the space in their hearts to take us in. If you have escaped, that's all you really need. All four of us slept in one small bedroom, and we were very thankful to be so well accommodated. If you are so inclined, camping could be a part of your escape plan. I always liked that idea, personally. The problem is that all the campgrounds filled up really fast...which brings me to the next part of this long winded piece...

Bugging out sucks. If 'sucks' is a little vague, then let me just say that bugging out is a wonderful theory that works out less than optimally in actual practice, to the point of being a very bad option in many circumstances. Large scale evacuations generally turn into unworkable nightmares quickly. People put every conceivable POS car on the road, and breakdowns are common which further complicates the traffic situation. Given the size and timescale of the evacuation of south-eastern Louisiana prior to Katrina's landfall, it was carried off *very* well by all involved. Unfortunately, just a few weeks later...

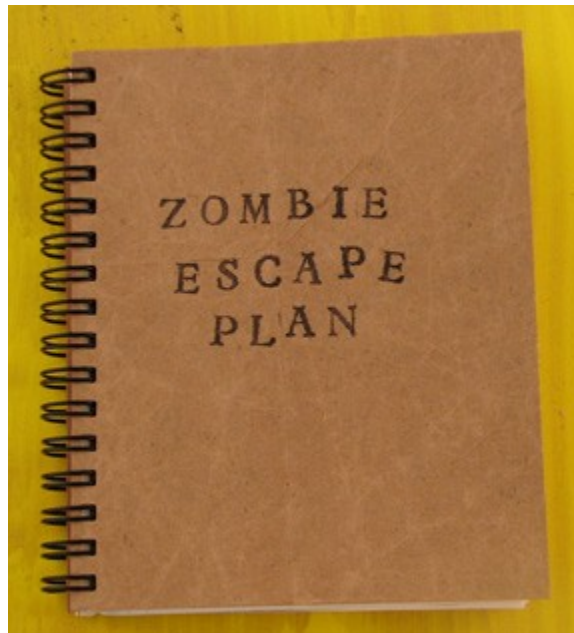
Thousands Fleeing Rita Jam Roads From Coast Evacuation Is Ordered as Hurricane Veers Eastward

By Blaine Harden and Sylvia Moreno
Washington Post Staff Writers
Friday, September 23, 2005; Page A01

GALVESTON, Tex., Sept. 22 -- As they joined a vast, traffic-snarled exodus from Houston and the upper Texas Gulf Coast, hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Hurricane Rita were stuck in their cars throughout much of Thursday, with many running out of gas and sweltering on roadsides in 100-degree heat as they waited for authorities to bring them gasoline.

OK... Does anybody here think it's good planning to be stuck in your car in 100-degree heat waiting on the government to bring you gasoline? Anybody? Anybody? Bueller?

Bueller? Hmmm... No, I didn't think so... Now, I know you just glossed over that piece, so I want to draw you back to it. Read it again. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. Gads...



Most roads leading into and out of major cities aren't designed for large scale evacuations. Hurricane evacuations are somewhat better because the evacuation can be coordinated over a longer time period. Those closest to the danger can escape first, and critical areas cleared in advance. Unfortunately, if there is some sudden disaster, terrorist attack, or zombie uprising, the roads will quickly be clogged with people fleeing for their lives. If you can't put your 60 second plan into immediate effect and get out before the roads clog, you are going to be sitting in traffic with thousands of panicking people.

Putting your 60 second plan into effect while you are at home with your family is one thing. Putting your plan into effect while you are at work, your kids are in school, and your wife is at the salon is a multi-level nightmare of epic proportions. Even thinking about it for a few minutes will give you that 'Holy Shit!' feeling.

So, what is a practical person to do in such a circumstance? Over the next few pages, I'm going to tell you about my plans, and hopefully give you some things to consider when you are making your own plans.

The escape plans you formulate for your family *all* involve several phases. If you follow the steps I detail, you will eventually find yourself meeting the primary criteria of all escape plans which is:

HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!

If you are starting from scratch, this will be your mantra for the next few weeks.

Planning to Make Plans

You cannot be ready for an unforeseen disaster overnight. Such things take careful planning and advanced forethought. This is the part of the lecture where I'm supposed to insert inspirational quotes like, "He who fails to prepare, prepares to fail.", but I'm going to spare you the rhetoric and get down to business. Like I said previously, the escape plans you formulate for your family *all* involve several phases. If you follow the steps I detail, you will eventually find yourself meeting the primary criteria of all escape plans which is:

HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!



Surviving a disaster means living through and beyond it - which is a break even proposition. After the dust settles, if everyone you care about is still breathing, then you've met the 'survival' criteria. Give yourself a gold star.

I, personally, want to do better than just survive - and I hope you do too. I will try to articulate that throughout these pages. If you approach a disaster as an opportunity, you can certainly do much more than simply survive. I am personally better off in many ways post-Katrina because I recognized that while Katrina destroyed many things, Katrina also created many opportunities. In order to seize on those opportunities, however, it is necessary to HYST.

I'm going to say it over and over again - Survival is NOT a kit. Having Your Shit Together (HYST), however, is a critical step in beating not just the disaster game, but the game of life generally. Having Your Shit Together (HYST) means being physically and mentally organized for unforeseen eventualities. These eventualities do not necessarily have to be disasters. You may, for instance, be suddenly struck by the idea on a Friday afternoon that you will take the children and spousal unit down to the coast for the weekend. If you HYST, you can just toss a few clothes in a bag, toss a few things in the car, and off you go. Being prepared for the ugly side of life prepares you for the beautiful side of life too, so don't take all of this stuff too grimly.

To be clear, we are preparing for some unknown disaster and we have to take all the known kinds of disaster into account. Disasters are not just physical sometimes. They may be natural, man made, physical, economic, mental, emotional, public, or private. By taking the time to consider all of these in turn, we can tame that overwhelmed feeling we have in the beginning and turn it into a positive outlook on life.

OK. So much for the pep talk. Let's get down to practicalities. In the game of life, your game piece lands on DISASTER!. Do not pass GO. Do not collect \$200. Before we can talk about the actions you need to take at that moment, you have to HYST.

There are several areas and subheadings under HYST. You will need to HYST in several locations - in your home, in your car, at work, and/or at school. You will need to be prepared to stay where you are, and you will need to be prepared to flee. All of this will seem very overwhelming at first, but stick with me and it will be easy. Once you HYST, you'll thank me. The first thing we have to do is appreciate the different areas for preparations (preps) to be made. We need to GHOST (Get and Have Our Shit Together) in several areas. Personal, home, car, work, and school. We also have to coordinate those preps in ways that make sense, and we need to be able to implement them at GO (Get Out!) time.

Shane

HYST - Documents

Remember our mantra: HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!

This page has a worksheet in the workbook.

I really am going to tell you some amazing stories of desperate struggles against impossible odds...but not on this page. HYST really is, bar none, the #1 thing that will prepare you for the unexpected. Follow me through this even though it's a little dry. It's important.

Successfully winning the disaster game requires that you safeguard two things.

1. Your Health
2. Your Wealth

Your Health includes, of course, your life - and the life and health of your family or immediate group. Your Wealth means several things. People tend to think of wealth in terms of money, but when SHTF money can mean very little. Wealth is best broken down like this:

1. Money (which fluctuates in value).
2. Major Assets (Home, vehicles, real estate holdings, etc.)
3. Material Possessions (other valuables, including contents of your home).

That's usually about as far as people think about wealth - because most people only think about wealth in the present tense...but wait!.....there's MORE!

4. Your Identity
5. Your Education
6. Your Skill Set
7. Your Earning Potential

These four things (IESSEP) are closely related, but they translate to future wealth. Before Katrina made me think about things in this way, I never did. When I got to Houston and settled in, within a few hours I was looking in the newspaper classifieds in the employment section. I figured that if New Orleans was down for awhile, I might need to get a job where I was, and lots of other people would probably be thinking the same thing. It would certainly pay off if I were first in line. As it turns out, there was a job in the paper for the exact job that I do and have done for ten years. The best part? It paid \$20,000 more than I was making! I damn near broke my arm trying to pat myself on the back for being so very clever. Unfortunately, it quickly settled in on me that I wasn't going to get that job. Why? Because I had not one shred of documentation to prove my Identity, my Education, or my Skill Set. Everything by which I could document those things was in a house and office that was potentially being wiped off the face of the planet forever some 350 miles away. Not only was my resume hopelessly out of date, but no potential employer was going to be able to check my references anyway! I had failed to safeguard wealth, and the reality set in that the money I had in my pocket might be the most money I had in my pocket for quite awhile.

I was Katrina's biatch, and for the next few days there wasn't anything I could do about it.

When thinking about your IESSEP, understand that as your life circumstances change, so will your needs in this area. If you are a retired person, for instance, you will not be too concerned with finding employment - but you will want to secure your investments, pension, SS, or other retirement benefits and accounts. If you are a college student, you will want to actively safeguard your transcripts and records of the current semester, as well as any financial aid you may be receiving.

If you are going to abandon your house in 60 seconds, never to return, what are you going to want the most? Are you going to run to the filing cabinet and try to pull out all your critical documents? Are you going to try to save those irreplaceable pictures? Run to the bedroom and snatch up the valuables? Try to figure out which of grandma's medicines you should toss in a bag while your spouse tries to get her out of the house? Are you going to try to pack some clothes? Come on! Make a decision! The house is on fire!

Wouldn't it be fortuitous if you had everything you needed packed into one box all ready to go? All you need to do is grab that one box or bag and go? Well, that's our first HYST project. We are going to make a kind of survival kit that the books and magazines don't tell you about. We are going to make a survival kit for your wealth! There are some things that cannot be replaced, and there are some things that are difficult to replace. Among the things lost by people to hurricane Katrina, I most heard about irreplaceable family photos. The second most lamented loss was vital records such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, and other documents that are tremendously difficult to replace when the government is shut down or only running on one cylinder. Third was cherished heirlooms, and way down in fourth place was the balance of personal property - including homes and cars.

If we are going to secure our documents, the first order of business is to collect these documents into one place. This is a universal necessity of any emergency plan. This may be somewhat difficult, because pictures may be mounted in frames, and other documents scattered about your home, office, and bank security boxes. So, take some time and get all of your priceless photographs and personal documents together. I have made a handy list that you can print out and check off. Feel free to add anything I have missed:

DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

1. Photographs
2. Vital Records
 1. Birth & Death Certificates
 2. Social Security Cards
 3. Marriage Certificates
 4. Divorce Papers
 5. Wills
 6. Immunization Records
 7. Business Licenses and Permits
 8. Passports
 9. FFL, Class 3 tax stamps, etc.
 10. Military records
3. School Records
 1. Report Cards
 2. Diplomas
 3. Transcripts

4. Training records and certifications.
 5. Awards & certificates.
4. Work Records
 1. Current Resume
 2. List of accomplishments
 3. Awards and certificates
 4. Pay Stubs
 5. Latest W2 form.
 6. Licenses, permits, and other work related documents.
5. Wallet Contents
 1. ID Cards & Driver's Licenses
 2. Credit Cards
 3. Special licenses and permits. (CHP, CCW, etc.)
6. Insurance Records
 1. Health Insurance Cards
 2. Auto Insurance Cards
 3. Homeowner's Insurance Policy
7. Property Documents
 1. Real Estate Documents
 1. Home Purchase Documents
 2. Rental and/or Lease Agreements
 3. Inspection documents
 4. Receipts for property improvements
 2. Auto Titles
 3. Auto Registrations
 4. Receipts for big ticket items
 5. Firearms records and receipts
8. Medical Records
 1. Comprehensive lists of medications for each family member.
 2. Dental records & x-rays.
9. Current bills.
 1. Utility bills.
 2. Car payments.
 3. Mortgage payments.
 4. Etc.
10. Any other records, receipts, or documentation that would be difficult or impossible to replace in the event of an emergency.

Go ahead and get all of it.

There. That didn't take long, did it? Different people will have different needs. If you are not good with technology, then simply collect all of those items and organize them in some way. You may choose to keep them in a small fire safe, but whatever method you use to collect them, be sure that you can pick them up and walk out of the house with them easily. A briefcase or file box may be just the thing. It doesn't really cost anything

to do this, and HYST is mentally and emotionally beneficial even if you never experience a disaster.

METHOD 1 - CHEAP & EASY

If you are the cheap and easy type, then take all those records down to a Kinko's and photocopy each and every one of them. Now you have two sets - or at least an original set and a copy. If you want to take it a step further, you could go down to a Notary and have certain things notarized as true copies. Tuck all those copies some place safe. Maybe you'll put it in a locked drawer in your desk at work. Better yet, put it in an envelope and send it to a trusted friend or family member who doesn't live in your state.

METHOD 2 - WHAT I DO

My personal planning is somewhat more elaborate, and in the modern age, technology can be very handy. Technology can be doubly handy when SHTF. I like to leverage technology in my own way, but if you have other methods that work for you, by all means use them. My experience is that my laptop was very high on my 'useful technology' list. I strongly recommend that part of your HYST plan is to have several pieces of technology available to you:

1. Laptop computer.
2. Document Scanner.
3. Color printer.
4. USB external hard drive of at least 500 GB.
5. USB Flash Drive of sufficient size to store all scanned documents. (At least 1 GB.)

The hard-core survivalists have all just scoffed a mighty scoff. "A LAPTOP COMUTER IS NOT A SURVIVAL PREP! ONCE THE POWER GOES OUT, IT'S USELESS!"

That's the problem with a lot of hard-core survivalists, though. They are looking forward to the end of the world, and so they focus on that. They focus on, "What do we do when the lights go out?" None of them ever think far enough ahead to ask the actually important questions of, "When the lights do go out, what do we do to get them back on?", and, "When the lights come back on, what do we do then?" If the lights never come back on, then all the preps in the world aren't going to insulate you from that. You can hide under your security blanket for only so long...

(Yes, that's my shot for today... I will talk about The End Of The World As We Know It (TEOTWAWKI), but that's for a later chapter. Much later.)

A laptop is far more portable than a desktop computer, and our escape plans are all about being portable. I will actually come back to the laptop computer over and over again. It was one of - if not the - most useful thing I had post Katrina. A laptop is many things all in one package, but few people appreciate them for what they are - a communication device. They are useful for email, internet access, file and data storage, document

creation, and many things besides. If you have a DVD drive, you can watch movies. You can listen to music. You can listen to internet radio. Dollar for dollar, a laptop can provide more value than anything else in your kit.

Our first order of business will be to scan all of our pictures, vital records, and other documents and store them digitally.

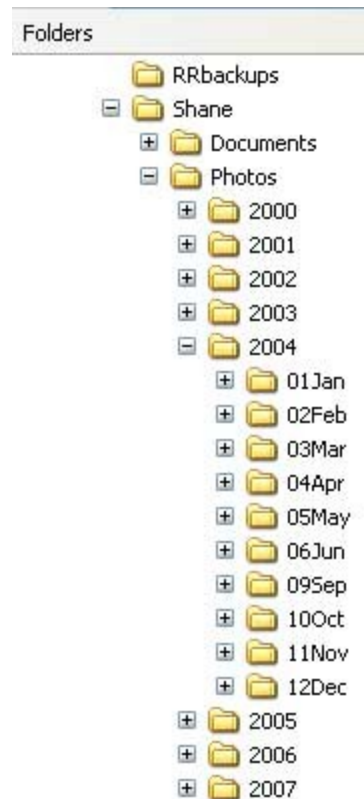
"WOAH! Hold on! You want me to scan all of my documents and keep them on my laptop!? What if somebody hacks my computer or steals the laptop!? They will have all of my personal documents!"

Now, just calm down, Virginia. Daddy has an answer for everything...

If you think about it, somebody could steal the hard copies of your documents too. Physical security only goes so far. The answer in the digital arena is to use encryption technology to secure your digital documents. I recommend TrueCrypt, which is what I personally use because it's free and I'm the cheapest man alive. I am going to recommend a few things, but it is up to you to learn exactly how to do them. One of the Preparedness Projects pages discusses how to use TrueCrypt. It's on the Encryption 101 page. I recommend that you use TrueCrypt to create a file volume on your hard drive. This will create a secure container (volume) file for all of your vital documents. Be sure to use a very long password known only to you.

Once you have your TrueCrypt file protected by an adequate password, you can copy that file anywhere - like onto your backup drive, and USB Flash Drive. It is totally portable. You obviously see where this is going. You can tie that USB Flash Drive around your neck like a necklace, run out of the house otherwise naked, and you'll have a copy of every vital document. The value in that is tremendous.

My personal organization is somewhat elaborate, but I will detail the minimum level of HYST in this context.



1. Scan all of your irreplaceable photographs at at least 300 DPI (Dots Per Inch) in full color and save them on your hard drive. You don't need encryption for photographs, but you should organize them in a way that is logical. I use a basic folder structure that breaks them into years and months. As I use a digital camera, I also keep all those images in the same folders in the same way. Of course, you will not have digital files of such things as pictures from your grandparent's wedding, so you will need to scan those and store them. If you scan them at a minimum of 300 DPI, you will be able to replace them by printing them out on a color or photo printer. As an aside, these 'reprints' make great gifts for other members of the family. Copies of the files turned into slide shows and put on DVDs and CDs also make great gifts and provide an extra level of security. You could always get a copy off the copy you sent to Aunt Martha, for instance, if anything ever happened to yours. If the images you are scanning came out of frames, and you want to put them back on display, print a copy and put the copy in the frame so that you will be able to keep the original in your escape kit. With modern scanners and printers, you will not be able to tell the difference.

2. Scan all of your vital documents, storing them in the secure volume created by TrueCrypt. If you are in doubt about what to scan, scan *everything*, including the full contents of your wallet. If you lose your wallet, you will be very grateful to have a record of exactly what was in it. Replacing vital documents after SHTF may be difficult or impossible. Having digital copies will be a great relief, even though reprints may not be considered legal documents. In the process, collect other valuable documents - like your resume - into a folder in the TrueCrypt volume.

3. Copy the vital documents (encrypted in the TrueCrypt file) onto the USB flash drive and keep it with you. You will be able to reference credit card numbers, and driver's license information, and many other things besides, securely from any computer using TrueCrypt's traveler disk feature.

4. Copy your photos, vital documents, and any other files you want to secure, onto the external hard drive each week. If your laptop is lost, stolen, or otherwise malfunctions, you will have a full copy of its contents.

For some extra instruction and detail on this, see the Preparedness Projects page entitled Data in the Bank.

There are many variations on this theme. You may decide to place a copy of your encrypted documents onto your MP3 player, for instance. That way, even in the gym or out running laps or sitting in your deer stand or duck blind, you are never separated from a copy of your vital documents.



Scanning is a rather slow process. I accomplished mine over several evenings while watching TV or doing other things in the middle. As you scan each document you will also want to file it and organize it in some way. A portable file box is one easy way. The method I chose was to use some report binders from Office Depot. I created a report binder for each member of the family, and one for 'other' records. I then inserted the documents into the clear plastic protectors. When I need to find a document, I can quickly flip through the binder.

Once you finish this, you will be able to proudly know that you are well on your way to HYST. Now we need to think about the escape. You will want some kind of case for your laptop. I use an old Targus bag. There are many different ones on the market. You will want something that will hold and protect your laptop, any small accessories - like

the power plug and cables, and a few other items besides. Every night before you go to bed, you should put your laptop away in its bag, zip it all up, and put it in your bedroom. If you have to suddenly leave in the night, all of your critical documents and precious photographs are easily saved. If you have to carry small children out of the house and cannot be bothered to carry your laptop bag, then throw the laptop bag out of a window. Throw it through the window if you have to - although this method may not be advisable if you live above the first floor. I suppose you could lower it out of a window with a rope...but the clock is running...

You will not, of course, need to 'rescue' your printer or your scanner. All you need is the bag with the laptop. If, for some reason, you cannot take it, then take the backup hard drive and USB flash drive. If you can't take the hard drive, then just take the USB drive. I have the ability to copy my laptop store onto my computer at work, so that's an extra security against loss. Anywhere that you can keep an additional copy of your files will be an additional security. Just remember to keep your secondary copies up to date.

That brings me to a final admonition in this context. HYST isn't something you do just once. It's a process that you may have to start at some point, but once you HYST, it doesn't stay that way by magic. You have to continuously maintain it. When you get a new license, for instance, you need to scan it into your encrypted store and then make sure that all your secondary copies get updated as well. This does not have to be overly grueling. I usually do my updates once a week. Once a month may work for you. Whatever you do, keep those files up to date, and you will be very far ahead of the curve if SHTF.

Shane

HYST - BOB 1

Remember our mantra: HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!

At this point, we have a rescue plan for our documents and irreplaceable photographs. We now need to turn this into a survival kit for our wealth. We keep these in a bag which becomes our BOB (Bug Out Bag), aka a 'Grab-n-Go' bag. Different people have different needs, so there is going to be some diversion past this point as to what people choose to put in that bag beside the vital records and photographs.

The most important part of the bag is, believe it or not, THE BAG. Your BOB should be a dedicated bag that you use ONLY for that purpose. If you are cheap, you can use an old pillow case or go buy a \$10 duffel bag at Wal-Mart. Some people turn their BOB into an uber-Survival Kit that weighs 80 pounds. DO NOT DO THIS! If you cannot lift your BOB with one hand, then it is too heavy.

Our next topic for conversation, then, is supplies. I don't mean supplies in the context of having food and water available, I'm talking about critical supplies. Things that you need

to get through the next 24 or 48 hours. For most people the #1 item on that list is going to be their prescription medications, if any.

We need to establish some criteria for making decisions about what goes in the bag, but first, let's get every person in the house set up with their own BOB. This is the bag that each member of the family can grab during Escape Plan Alpha - the 60 Second Plan. The bag that each member of the family selects should be large enough to hold all the essential items on their list. It should also be small enough for them to carry. Any child over the age of 5 will be personally responsible for his or her BOB. I find that a small or medium sized duffel bag works well. If you are strong enough to carry two bags, then you might have your own BOB in addition to your laptop bag. That is what I do since my laptop bag doesn't have enough room to accomplish the BOB task.

Let's talk about what does *not* go into the BOB. First, no luxury items. Remember that we want a kit that contains only essentials. The things we need for the next 24 to 48 hours. Nothing goes into the bag that can be replaced. Video games, toys, and other non-essentials do not belong. Your pistol does *not* belong in your BOB. Your pistol belongs in its holster on your hip. Your rifle goes over your shoulder. Spare ammo can go into the BOB, but remember that you have to carry it so don't make it too heavy. Resist the temptation to fill your BOB with crap. If you really think you *need* a toothbrush and a razor to survive, then make sure they are small and light. Your BOB is not a Dopp kit.

Always have the towel. The towel is not optional.

A basic starting adult BOB contains the following: 1 or 2 16oz bottles of water. High energy snacks like Snickers bars or other energy bars - but not more than one or two. (Chips don't last well in BOBs... Remember to change out food and water items at least once a year. A five year old Snicker's bar is kind of stale.) A change of clothing. Two changes of undergarments. You may have to change the clothing out seasonally. A working flashlight. I prefer small, light LED headlamps. A personal first aid kit. A small radio or MP3 player that is radio capable. A small towel. A supply of prescription medicines. Maps, travel information, detailed rendezvous information for each member of the family, and a copy of all of your families emergency plans. (The easy way to do that is to just keep your Preparedness Workbook in your BOB. A pen and some paper or small notebook. A full duplicate set of house and car keys. That's only the start, but it's a good start. If you can fit all of that into your BOB and you have room left, don't worry. We'll need that space a little later on.

The personal first aid kit does not have to be elaborate. Some aspirin and a few Band-Aids in a Zip-Loc baggie is fine. What you're trying to avoid with this is having to pull out your 'big' first aid kit every time someone has a scratch or a little headache.

The contents may need to be adjusted for children. Infants and toddlers should have a diaper bag, which will essentially be their BOB. Taking a long drive with an infant and

no disposable diapers is one of those long nightmares that is best avoided at all costs. Especially if you have cloth seats.

Assembling your BOBs does not have to be expensive. I like to use a small backpack for my BOB. Other items may be included, so long as they do not make the bag heavy, especially for the kids. There are some other things that go into your BOB, but we'll get to those a little later. For now, just get it started and have it ready.

The various books and magazines all tell you how to put these bags together, with some variations on the theme. They tell you all about all kinds of useful stuff you need in your 'kit' - but remember, Survival is NOT a kit! What the books and magazines do *not* tell you is what the bag is actually for - which seems so intuitive that nobody ever explains it. Well, I'm going to explain it to you now and then you'll say, "Oh. I never thought of that." Either that, or you'll say, "Well, DUH! Everybody knows that, doofus."

In any case, I'm gonna tell you, so just stick with me, OK?

In one year, fire departments respond to about 400,000 residential fires that claim the lives of over 3,100 people. Residential fires are *the* most common disaster in the United States, affecting more families than any other. Floods - especially flash floods - are #2, claiming almost 150 lives each year. Fire, though, is the big one. You are more likely to wake up to find your house on fire than you are to experience a widespread disaster of any kind.

I'm going to give you the brief sermon about smoke alarms now. Now that you know that fire is the most common disaster, you should install smoke alarms in your home. If you already have them, make sure the batteries are fresh. Fire is your most likely disaster. Smoke alarms are your primary warning system to help you protect Health and Wealth. Do it.

A lot of those 3,100 people die because they do not have working smoke alarms in their homes. Either they do not have them, or the batteries died a long time ago. Studies also indicate that people die in fires because they do not get out of their homes in time. They do not get out because they stop to look for pets, call 911 from inside the home, or stop to get dressed. Let's look at two scenarios.

Pre-HYST, you wake up in the night to the sound of your smoke alarms. The house is on fire! You roll out of bed naked, stumble about trying to put some clothes on and eventually manage to be 'decent'. You dash out into the living room, which is now filled with smoke, and you start searching for Whiskers the Cat, who you finally find under the sofa. He doesn't come when you call, and you can't quite reach him so you spend some time working on that. When you do manage to fish the ungrateful creature out from under there, you stand up with him to try to get out of the house - but it's too late - you are overcome by smoke and you die on the floor.

Post-HYST, you wake up in the night to the sound of your smoke alarms. The house is on fire! You roll out of bed naked, snatch your BOB and your wife's BOB out from under the bed, grab your laptop bag, and dash out of the door. Your wife, who grabbed Junior out of his crib in your bedroom is right behind you. She's naked too. (May as well get as much play out of that as I can...) The whole family rendezvous at the mailbox, where you all unzip your BOBs and pull on some clothes. Whoever is dressed first dials 911 on the cell phone. If the weather is warm, you can call before you get dressed. Health and Wealth protected.

Too bad about Whiskers, but you were more of a dog person anyway...

Shane

HYST - Get a Camera

Remember our mantra: HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!

At this point, you've got your critical documents and your BOB (Bug Out Bag). I want to take half a step back and talk about another piece of 'survival' gear that many people ignore - a digital camera. You don't have to buy an expensive one, and if you can't afford a digital camera at all, then an old time film camera will do - but I'm going to talk about cameras in the digital context.

No, I am not high on smack. A camera really *is* a critical piece of SHTF gear. Why? Well, for one thing, insurance companies suck.



They suck so much that there are entire webring devoted to throwing online fits about it. Like this one: <http://www.allstateinsurancesucks.com/>. You've heard all your life that

you should take pictures of your home and valuables, but almost nobody does it. After Katrina, a lot of people got caught by that.

"Well, do you have any proof that there WAS a house here? Hmmm..."

The great thing about digital cameras is that the pictures don't cost anything to take, so take pictures. Take lots of pictures. Take pictures of your house inside and out, your garage, your car, your pets, your kids, your spouse, your air conditioner, your appliances, everything. Take pictures of things from both sides. Open your closets. Take pictures of every wall in your home, and all the ceilings, and all the floors. Don't forget to take pictures in the attic, and under the house if you can go there. Take pictures of your trees, your fences, your driveway, your mailbox. Take pictures from the street. Take pictures of the view up and down the street. Take pictures of all your valuables, jewelry, electronics, guns, ammo, art, CD collection. (You can put those into your encrypted TrueCrypt volume if you want.) Take pictures of your office at work. (Unless you work for a secure facility or something...) You should do this at least once a year. If you buy something new, take some pictures of it, scan the receipt, and add that to your documents. If you ever have to file a claim with your insurance company, you will thank me, thank Kodak, and thank God that you have pictures and documentation.

Pictures will also help you document your trials and tribulations during a SHTF event. This can turn into quite the hobby, and will also satisfy the people on Arfcom who will yell 'bullshit' unless you post pictures. I am going to have more to say about cameras post SHTF, but they belong in the HYST section as well. Get one.

If you buy a small, light camera, it can go into your laptop bag.

Shane

HYST - Completing the Circle

Remember our mantra: HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!



At this point, you've got your critical documents, your BOB (Bug Out Bag), and a complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera. By now you are talking to all your friends about how you HYST - and in fact we're very close to completing the first step of HYST.

We have been slowly drawing a circle around different elements in what we will call Data Wealth. Data Wealth includes the documentation we have previously covered, and includes elements of your Identity, Education, and Skill Set. There are other elements that we should also include. Here are some other things that you will want to collect together as Data Wealth and store them on your laptop, backed up to your external hard drive, and possibly kept in your TrueCrypt volume on your USB flash drive.

1. Letters, postcards, and other correspondence.
2. Data and files from your place of business, if allowed by company policy.
3. Digitized copies of video or sound recordings that cannot be replaced.
4. Digital address book. (Windows Address Book is actually portable. Search for .wab files.) You can print this out and have a hard copy in your BOB. If a digital address book doesn't work for you, then keep a good paper one.
5. Investment and retirement account information.
6. Information about other financial accounts.
7. Information regarding membership in clubs and organizations.

There may be other elements you want to include when completing the protective circle around your data wealth. If there is something I have obviously missed, please let me know and I'll include it in the list.

Congratulations. You have now completed Step 1 of HYST - Personal Documentation is complete when you close the Circle of Data Wealth. If you have your BOB too, then you're half way on Personal Supplies. We haven't covered communications yet, but your Plan is starting to come into a kind of dreamy focus. The next step is to fully comprehend the broad topic of communications, and actually start putting our Plan on paper. So far we have been *collecting* and *documenting*. The next step is to start creating. First, let's close the circle on our laptop bag.

I am going to detail out everything that I have in my Laptop Bag. I really need to come up with a cool sounding name for that. Laptop Escape Capsule? Hmmmm... SURVIVAL IS NOT A KIT! True, but kits can be so handy sometimes...



Last night I pulled everything out of my bag. An unfortunate side effect of having a bag like this is that it tends to collect various junk over time. I cleaned it all out and spread everything I had left on the coffee table. In the upper right is the portable file box I use for ancillary files. These are things like utility bills and other bills to be paid and then filed, tax receipts for the year, tax returns for the last three years, and other non-critical documents that I like to keep organized and portable. I also keep my extra checkbooks and other 'important' things in this box. In your escape plans, having such a box where everything is all together makes it easy to just toss it in the car and know that you have everything. You can keep these things in a small fire safe as an extra security. If you are strong enough, you can simply carry the fire safe out to the car or transfer the contents into the portable box if you need to leave. (That won't work for the 60 Second plan, but it would for any other.)

On the left is obviously the laptop bag, which is a Targus bag that is six or seven years old now, and the laptop itself. To the right of the laptop is an external mouse, and in front of the laptop is the power cord and adapter for the laptop. I do not have a car adapter, but I should. Going back to top, at the right of the bag is a coiled blue wire. This is a CAT-5 cable, which is used to connect the laptop to networks. The laptop also has a built in wireless connection, which allows me to connect without wires when such service is available. In the middle of the blue coil is a blue 'cartridge' that contains a spooling phone cord. Any phone cord will do to connect the laptop to a phone line if no other internet access is available. An ISP (Internet Service Provider) is needed to make a phone line connection. Continuing to the right, there is a neatly wound and tied bundle of USB cables that are used to connect various devices (like my camera) to the laptop. The short wire just below that is for my MP3 player. Continuing right is the power adapter

for the external hard drive, and then the hard drive itself. Below that is the coiled USB wire that connects the external drive to the laptop. To the left is a Princeton Tec Aurora headlamp. A headlamp is a very useful light because once on your head, both hands are free to do things that hands do.

Below the file box is a yellow note book. This is a Write-In-The-Rain note book with weather resistant pages. Yes, you really can write in the rain, which is handy for taking notes in a rain storm, I suppose. On top of that is a pencil and two ink pens. Moving right, there are two bottles for medication. One is an empty prescription bottle (antibiotics) shown for dramatic effect. The other is a bottle of aspirin, which I keep handy because I sometimes develop sudden headaches. I did not get these headaches before I had children, and I frequently wonder about that... Below the drugs is a checkbook. To the right of the checkbook, at the top, is a Fenix flashlight in its belt holder. These small, very bright lights are handy and useful - and bright; as in burn-out-your-retinas-and-scream-like-a-girl bright. Below the light are three different USB Flash Drives. Below those is a Leatherman Charge tool. (Hi, Tim!) If you buy one, buy the Wave. Below the Leatherman is a cheapola screwdriver set that I use for working on computers. Below that, with the Mickey Mouse sticker is a Witz See-It Safe. I picked it up for less than 10 dollars in Disney World, and it is quite brilliant. Very handy for keeping spare identification, a little cash, and maybe a spare key in. It has a lanyard and hangs around your neck. I bought one for every member of the family while at Disney, and they worked very well. It was easy to visually check that everyone had their ID and tickets.

Below the very center of the table is a small digital camera. It's a Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ3. Below the camera is a spare battery, two extra SD cards, and the battery charger. To the right of all that is the camera case (shoulder strap not seen). Attached to the camera case, I have a little red clip-light. To the right of the camera is a set of ear phones, and then my Sandisk Sansa MP3 player. Keep going right, and there is my spare set of keys. The only other thing on the table is to the left of the camera charger, and that is an Ironmind "Captains of Crush" grip strength device. I like to fidget, and the gripper gives me something to play with. Not to mention that after several years I have a Grip of Doom. This allows me to eat walnuts, pecans, and Brazil nuts without the need for a nutcracker. No, I don't do parties.



All of this stuff fits into one of the side compartments of the laptop bag, if packed neatly. Small objects go into the outer pockets, and large object all go together in the main compartment. The laptop itself goes into the middle compartment. On the other side is a file pocket that I haven't shown you yet, so here we go:

Everything is packed away, but now I've opened the file pocket and pulled out the report binders with our critical documents. Gads, but that's a crappy picture, eh? Well, you can see that I have four books. One for my wife, one for myself, and one for both daughters. As the daughters get older, they'll need their own books. I use a fourth as a record book for other things. My wife's book is opened to the first page, and you can see her birth certificate, safely stored in a space-age plastic sheet. Each book is laid out the same, and if I need any critical document, I can quickly find it by flipping through the book.

You may not be comfortable with carrying around such crucial documents everywhere you go, and if you wish to otherwise secure them, then I don't have a problem with that. No matter where you leave them, however, there is always a chance that they can be lost or destroyed. Even a fire safe is no guarantee against loss. I keep mine with me because no matter where I am, I know that they are safe. My wife's objection to this is, "What if you are in a fiery auto crash and horribly killed!?", to which my response is, "Well, then I won't need any of this stuff..." The point is valid, however. Nothing is ever truly secure against loss or destruction. You will need to make your own decision on how you want to answer the catch-22 between safety and security.

The report covers stack neatly if you invert every other one, and they fit neatly into the laptop bag. Once zipped up, it makes a compact package. My, but that's another bad picture. Alas. Despite the bad images, the bag looks and functions well, and all told weighs less than 20 pounds.

There is also a shoulder strap that makes for handy carry during an escape, but I didn't photograph it as it is just like any other shoulder strap that you have ever seen.

Other elements may be added to the bag as needed, but this is my basic setup. During the work week, I slip a bottle of water into the bag, maybe a snack and some lunch. I'll add other things depending on need.

The last thing that I want to say about this bag is this: **DEFEND IT!** If you assemble such a bag, you will realize that you have invested a tremendous amount of time, effort, energy, and wealth in its creation, and it contains a very major portion of your Identity. What do I mean when I say, 'Defend it!'? I mean that you should safeguard it as your prized possession. Do not leave it on the front seat of the car with the windows rolled down while you go grocery shopping. Wherever I go, this bag goes. At home, at work, wherever. OK, well no, I don't take it into the shower with me...

Hmmm...

OK, so that seems a little psycho. What I'm trying to communicate is that you should always attend to the safety and security of this bag and its contents. Do not be careless. Replacing it and its contents will cost you thousands of dollars and many hours of work.

This is not the only way to accomplish HYST with Data Wealth, but it is a way that I have found to be very successful. You may have other needs and other choices. If you have something that works well for you, I would like to hear about it.

Now that we have our Data Wealth Survival Kit, let's move to the next step and start documenting The Plan.

Shane

HYST - Not Just 4 U

Remember our mantra: HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!

At 10:15 PM on Sunday, August 28, 2005, after being on the road for 15 1/2 hours, we crash landed in Houston, Texas.

This was both a disastrous failure of planning, and the best thing we could have done.

"But wait! You're supposed to tell us about death and destruction and looters, Oh My! Besides, you said we were going to document our Plans next!"

Well, yeah, but I warned you that I might skip about. Now, where was I... AH! Yes. Crash landed.

You see, we had no idea where we were going, except that Andrea has a lot of family in Houston. Not the kind of family you see on the Jerry Springer show either, but Family. With few other options, none of which was more appealing, we crash landed at Andrea's mom's brother's house. Uncle Ken and Aunt Aggie.

I had enough composure to smile and make pleasantries while we unloaded our cars and began occupying one bedroom - which had been vacated by one of the cousins who had to double-bunk. We had brought a queen sized Aero-bed with us, and Madeline's port-a-crib. The bedroom we were in came furnished with a desk and a single bed. Once the Aero-bed was inflated, there was about 10 square feet of free space on the floor by which we could shuffle around. I set up Virginia's DVD player on the desk, and we were about done.

I'm here to tell you, though, that while that sounds somewhat meager, I couldn't have been any happier in a Hollywood mansion.

I wasn't entirely sure of my protocol with Ken and Aggie. I had met them, yes, but now here I was with wife and children like some kind of refugee. Refugee is, in fact, the right word. Ken pulled me aside and we had a talk which clarified my situation without any reservation. Actually, all he said was four words.

"This is your house."

They were the four words I guess I needed to hear because I suddenly felt a tremendous mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual relief.

Ken and Aggie successfully raised seven children, and so they were (and are) used to the commotion of children. In a matter of about an hour, I felt like I had always lived there, and it was the most normal thing in the world. While I had arrived in a state best described as 'freaking the F**K out', I went to bed with the sense that everything was gonna be OK. I felt loved. Over the next few weeks, Ken, Aggie, all their kids, and the entire rest of the Houston clan proved something so incredibly clearly that it was almost shocking.

These people absolutely and beyond a shadow of doubt had their shit together.

That's a part of HYST that the survival books never seem to cover. You don't just have your shit together for you, but you have your shit together so that if a situation arises that you suddenly find refugees on your doorstep that you aren't at all bewildered by this. We are going to start documenting The Plan now, but as we do we want to think of that Plan from two directions. The first direction is how we make that plan serve ourselves, but the second direction is how we make that plan serve other people who are important to us - even if we may not know those people very well.

This is one of the things that pre-Katrina I had thought about, but never seriously considered.

Well, I'm here to tell you that if I ever open my door and I find some lost relatives who have become refugees in their own country, this is going to be their house. I am going to pull out the stops and make sure that they have what they need when they need it, but more important than that I'm going to make sure that they have the love they need too.

Shane

PLAN - Begin at the Beginning

True to my word, I want to take us step by step in thinking about and developing The Plan. In the process of that, we're going to be collecting a few additional things that we need and generating some documents that let us coalesce our thoughts into a viable action plan. Let's start from the beginning. I know that this is a little dry, but stick with me. Some of this early stuff is going to be old hat to some folks, but I want the folks who haven't ever thought about this to have a chance to catch up. It gets better near the end...

Go get some paper and a pen or pencil. Either that, or open a word processor. Got it?

60 SECOND PLAN

This is *my* plan, and *your* plan may deviate from mine because of your particular circumstance. My only real expectation is that telling you my plan will help you think about yours. The major exercise of the plan is to help you Have Your Shit Together (HYST).

Why 60 Seconds? Well, for one thing, it's one minute, which is a nice round number. For two, you should be able to do this in 60 seconds. I know for a fact that I can do it in under 30. (Best time is 22 seconds.) For three, sixty seconds is the time it takes from the time a smoke alarm goes off until you lose the entire room where the fire started. Watch this video:

[ONE MINUTE FIRE VIDEO](#)

By 120 seconds, you can lose all adjacent rooms. If your house is poorly constructed, the entire structure can be engulfed in less than 3 minutes. 60 seconds is the maximum time you should shoot for for a house fire. Anything past that and you're tempting fate.

This is the only plan you are going to have to memorize, but it's also the shortest of the plans. It looks like this:

60 SECOND PLAN

1. Sound the Alarm
2. Communicate
3. Children in danger?
YES - Rescue & Escape

- NO - Continue
- 4. Decide if you can safely retrieve your BOB.
 - NO - Escape
 - YES - BOB Mantra
- 5. Bug Out Bag Mantra:
 - BAG
 - ASSETTS
 - GUN
- 6. ESCAPE!

Let's take it one step at a time, and flesh out the important ideas. The plan has six steps by design. It should not take you any more than 10 seconds to perform any step. If you perform any step in less than 10 seconds, then you should escape early and not try to 'use' the time you save. If you cheat, you could die. Remember that the primary focus of this drill is a residential house fire. There are going to be a lot of people who will say that you shouldn't be doing any of this if the house is on fire, that you should just get out. Well, we'll talk about that as we go along. This plan is useful for more than just fires. If nothing else, it will help you to clearly identify how you want to Have Your Shit Together (HYST).

60 SECOND PLAN

60 Seconds, and 60 Seconds ONLY! The sooner you get out, the better. If the house isn't actually on fire, you might be able to squeeze a little more time. Maybe turn it into 120 seconds. Maybe five minutes. Let's focus on 60 seconds, though, which is plenty of time to do the things that we *need* to do.

1. Sound the Alarm

Just that. If you are home alone, you can skip this step, but if there are others in the house, then you need to Sound the Alarm. The alarm itself might be an alarm like a smoke alarm, fire alarm, NWS Tornado Warning, or other alarm device. The alarm may be risen by a human being, in which case it becomes important to:

2. Communicate

It isn't enough to start screaming, "OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD!" over and over again, or to take to shrieking. Shrieking has the benefit of being very alarming, but it doesn't communicate anything. Likewise, screaming obscenities isn't useful. It might entertain the children, but it isn't useful. I like to clearly communicate the danger itself, and then the proscribed action. For instance:

"FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! OUT! OUT! OUT!" or "FIRE! GET OUT! FIRE! GET OUT! FIRE! GET OUT!"

Whatever your initial alarm communication, it should be repeated three times. The first time only alerts people to pay attention. The second time they may be listening but not hearing. The third time, they will get it. When they hear it, they should sound the alarm themselves. That serves two purposes. It lets you know that they heard you, and it spreads the alarm. You will need to have certain phrases that your family will recognize. You should discuss them often enough to keep them fresh in everyone's mind. Depending on your local circumstance, you may have different alarm phrases:

"TORNADO! CELLAR!"

"EARTHQUAKE! GET OUT!"

"JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES! RUN OUT THE BACK!"

"ATF! HIDE THE DOG!"

The individual phrases you agree on and the specific actions required can be added to this part of the plan.

3. Children in danger?

YES - Rescue & Escape

NO - Continue

Now that I have children, I have more clearly understood the responsibility involving them. If a child is unable to escape the house on their own, you will need to assist them before any other consideration. You should communicate with your children as soon as they are able to understand what they are supposed to do in an emergency. Once the children are old enough, they should be able to self-rescue, and escape the house on their own. Do not assume that they can do this or that they know it. You should have a regular emergency drill centered around the 60 second plan at least four times a year. At least one of these drills should be in the middle of the night while everyone is asleep. If you really want to test them, cut the power to the house and see what happens when you start yelling, "DRILL! GET OUT! DRILL! GET OUT!"

4. Decide if you can safely retrieve your BOB.

NO - Escape

YES - BOB Mantra

If your bedroom is engulfed in flames, then the BOB plan isn't going to work out. If you can get your Laptop Bag, go with that. If you can't even get that, then just get out.

5. Bug Out Bag (BOB) Mantra:

BAG

ASSETS

GUN

Here's where we get to use the extra space in your BOB. We use the B.A.G. acronym.

BAG - Get the bag. If you've done your homework, it is under the bed on your side of the bed. You grab the bag and put it on the bed. Unzip it, and pull it open.

ASSETS - Grab some wealth, man! My wife is not into jewelry, but she has a little trinket box that has more sentimental value than monetary value. I have been tempted to take it down to the pawn shop one day just to watch the guy gag. Still, in my plan, I grab that and one or two other items of 'value' be that cash value or sentimental value. I don't really have much in the way of expensive things, so mostly this is going to be the trinket box. If my spare pistol is not in the safe, then I'll snatch that off the dresser along with my carry pistol and toss that in the bag. If your pistol does not have a safety, this can be dangerous, so consider that beforehand. If I am not wearing my pants, then they are hanging just inside the master bath door, and I'll grab those and stuff them in the bag because those pants will contain my wallet, some keys, my knife, a spare magazine, and one or two other things. I will not stop to actually put them on. They just go in the bag. I now zip the bag and proceed to the next step.

GUN - If you don't like guns, then we're going to need to have a talk about this later. My plan calls for me to take my primary defense gun (in addition to my pistols) with me. I, and I alone, am responsible for the protection of my Health, Wealth, and Family, and the firearm is a key instrument in that philosophy. A gun is not only wealth, but the means to defend that wealth. I am not speaking to you from a theoretical standpoint. Get one.

6. ESCAPE!

Just that. Depending on your home, there will be various means of escape. Out the front door, back door, or out a window. If you live in an apartment building or condo, you will have various exits. If you live in an abandoned missile silo, then you're gonna have to climb some stairs. Whatever the various escape paths are, you should communicate with your family about these as part of your plan. You should practice the entirety of your plan at least four times a year.

What you do past the point of actual escape is up to you, but I would recommend some more communication. Make sure everyone is out, and then perform the next logical step. In most cases that means calling the fire department, getting into the car and driving away, or standing around in the yard until the earth stops shaking.

Once you have all that in place, written out neatly, and you have had the Family Meeting and reviewed The Plan, there is some bad news which falls under our Philosophy. If you haven't guessed it already, it's closely related to SURVIVAL IS NOT A KIT! This one is SURVIVAL IS NOT A PLAN! To steal something from my friend Jerry, "One of the reasons I dislike rules and the people that insist on them is that it frequently leads to an inability to use your head." Jerry also says, "You'd be surprised at what you can do when you experience a lack of a viable plan 'B'." No matter what your plan is, it is *not* a suicide letter. Do what you have to do when you have to do it.

Why make the Plan at all then? Isn't it enough to think about it and then just be adaptable when the time comes? No, not really. You should make the Plan, you should communicate about the Plan, and most importantly you should practice the Plan. Why? Because the 60 Second plan is a clever game that serves many purposes.

1. It makes you *think*, and thinking saves lives.
2. It forces you to HYST at least in a narrow context.
3. It gets you and your family communicating. You *know* all this stuff, but your kids don't. If they hide in the closet when the house catches fire, that's not going to end well.
4. When SHTF, you will do what you have practiced. If you haven't practiced, then you might do nothing or waste valuable time. Any time you waste is a potential loss of Life or loss of Wealth.

Practicing also helps you arrange your living space in ways that help you when SHTF. In my particular case, if the hallway is on fire in the middle of the night, I need to exit my bedroom by going out the window. Virginia cannot open her bedroom window, however. I will have to destroy it to get her out. In practice, I know that I can toss my laptop bag out my window, get out of my window and be standing in front of hers in seven seconds. The problem is that I'm likely to be naked or mostly naked at that moment, and the idea of destroying a window in that state is against my general philosophy of dermal integrity. To help with this, part of my preparation is that I have a pair of heavy leather gloves in the top dresser drawer. If I'm going out the window, the gloves are coming with me, because I know that I'm going to have to destroy Virginia's window to get her out. Another prep that I've provided for is to have a fire extinguisher in the bedroom. My friend Brian has just convinced me to have a larger one in the bedroom, because it might buy a few seconds - at least in theory. If nothing else, it would be good to smash a window with... Hmmm...

So, another purpose of the Plan is

5. It helps you figure out what you might need and might want when SHTF so that when S does HTF, it will be there like some kind of miracle.

The final purpose is

6. It prepares you for other, unforeseen circumstances.

Like what? Well, how about a medical emergency. Your wife faints, your kid breaks a leg, your mother-in-law drinks poison, or some other accident requires a ride in a helicopter, a ride in an ambulance, or some other immediate transport to a hospital. When you get to the hospital, the doctors ask you what medications or allergies this person has...and what do you know...you grabbed your laptop bag on the way out the door to jump in the ambulance...and you just happen to have the medical history right here...

Shane

HYST - Comm Check!

Remember our mantra: HAVE YOUR SHIT TOGETHER BEFORE IT HITS THE FAN!

At this point, you've got your Laptop Bag, your BOB (Bug Out Bag), a complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera, and a plan to escape your house in 60 seconds. If you've followed along and actually managed to HYST that far, then you're already ahead of 90% of Americans, and by now you are talking to all your friends about how you HYST.

Before we move on to the next plan, I want to talk about communications. Comms. There are three levels of communications for SHTF - before, during, and after. This is another area where I already 'knew' all the answers before Katrina came along and spanked my nuts with a ruler.

There are different time periods of communication. Most people communicate in the present. Here we are, talking about what we are doing right now. Sometimes we reminisce, and talk about the past. Sometimes we project, and talk about the future. This is usually a concrete communication, as in, "Meet me in the graveyard at midnight." I am communicating about the future. Sometimes, though, that communication is not concrete, but conditional. "If we get separated, meet me at the next rest area on the interstate." You should think about and use all of these methods of communication before, during, and after SHTF.

Before SHTF, you should have some open and clear communication with your family. This will usually revolve around your specific plan.

During SHTF, you should be very clear about your expectations and your movements with your immediate group. As far as possible, you should communicate with other people regarding where you are, your intended destination, and your intended route. (If you are bugging-in (staying home), you should also communicate that to someone responsible outside the area and to those persons in your immediately local group (neighbors)). Everyone in the car with you (or in your caravan) should know where you are, where you are going, and what is expected of them both during the journey and once you arrive at the BOL (Bug Out Location). They should know because you told them ahead of time.

After SHTF is where it gets sticky. Comms are down everywhere, and you might not know where anyone is. Establishing communications with friends and family is important for two reasons. The first reason is to verify that everyone escaped or determine if someone needs rescue. The second reason is to coordinate cooperative support systems with as many people as possible.

This all *seems* vastly complicated, but it isn't. After we go over the 12 Hour Plan, I'm going to talk about opening a dialog with your family, your friends, and your neighbors about reasonable preparations, expectations, and organized support plans. If SHTF and

it's *really* bad, you're going to have to rely on conditional communication. In order for that to work, you are going to have to integrate it carefully in your Plan, and broadcast that plan to everyone who needs to know it. You should accomplish this so well that you do not actually need to call anyone because they will all know exactly when the conditions are met to trigger the action plan contained in your conditional communication.

This means that you need to clearly communicate to the relevant people - to the point of writing it down and giving it to them on paper - exactly where you will be in the event of certain events. That doesn't necessarily mean that you will be in one exact place. It does mean something like this: "If I am forced to flee my area, here are the three places that I will work to reach. You can attempt to contact me in these places." - and then list the places. In formulating that communication, you should answer simple and relevant questions:

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Example: "I will meet you at Paul's house in Ponchatoula when a sudden disaster strikes and we cannot otherwise communicate. You will go straight there, I will pick up the girls from school. Do not try to come back into the city."

We aren't going to start that quite yet, but I wanted to put the bug in your head so that it could start eating away at your brain.

Hmmm... Well, it's just a metaphor...

What I would like to encourage you to do at this point is some more collecting and building. Do not be intimidated by this one. You don't have to do it all at once, just do a little work on it each week and you'll be surprised how fast you get it done. Either buy a paper address book, a good notebook, or keep an electronic address book. Just because I am in love with technology doesn't mean that I entirely trust it however, and you should keep a hardcopy of your address book in your Laptop Bag or BOB. Every member of your immediate family should have a copy of this. It's not a bad idea to create a little booklet out of it, and print them up and hand them out to family and friends at holiday time. Collect as much information as you can on your family, your friends, and even distant (but still living) relatives. Any one of these people may become a communication center, and you want to have their information on hand just in case. Having all the addresses in an electronic address book also makes it easier to send out greeting cards. (There is an insidious plan regarding greeting cards that we will come to much later, so this will be handy.)

There is a contact sheet that will help you keep track of contact information if you do not want to use the computer.

Collect the names and addresses of people at work, and your boss or supervisor. Start finding out what the emergency protocols are for your company. Are you to call a certain

number, visit a certain website, or perform some other attempt at communication with the company if SHTF? If you are a boss or supervisor, then you should have the contact information for every employee, have contact information for a friend or relative outside the area for a communications point, and a communication plan to communicate with your employees in the event of an emergency.

There are many reasons for doing this that will become clear in the next few pages. For now, just get started.

Be proactive.

LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!

Shane

PLAN - Where Y'at?

Before we get into the 1 Hour Plan, let's review.

At this point, you've got your Laptop Bag, your BOB (Bug Out Bag), a complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera, and a plan to escape your house in 60 seconds, and a collection of people to communicate with. Do work on that address book. We're going to want it before much longer.

The 60 Second plan is universal. Everyone has the potential need to evacuate their home quickly. The rest of the plans, however, become very specific to your particular context. Where you go when you leave the house is very specific to your circumstances. I am not going to pretend that I know the best answer for you or your family. I am going to tell you about my context, but there are some things in my plans that will not work for you. There are some things in my plans that will be outright wrong for you. My only intention is to give you a framework upon which to build your own Plan.

My context is rather simple compared to some. I live in an area that is affected by hurricanes. Some people will think that to be quite foolish, but no matter where you live there is always some risk. I, personally, think that people who live in earthquake zones are nucking futs - but that's the choice they make. A little wind and some rain seems timid compared to the ground moving... No matter where you live, you will need to assess the various risks and plan for and around them. I'm not worried about tsunami, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, blizzards, and my tornado risk is very low. I can see the hurricanes coming about five days out, and I have plenty of time to pack up and take a vacation. The primary focus of many of my plans is to secure the house and take a vacation 300 miles from here.

My friend Peter has a similar situation, but he lives on St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. He lives there with his wife, dogs, and 52,000 other people who all live on an island in

the middle of the ocean. This island is 31 square miles - 13 miles long and 4 miles wide. Along with the amazing views and perfect beaches comes the additional bonus that this island is in a hurricane corridor. When a hurricane comes, there isn't anywhere to go. Unless you are lucky enough to have prior airline tickets, you're pretty much stuck. Peter's plans will primarily focus on securing his house and hoping the roof doesn't leak. The two philosophies are very similar in some ways, and radically different in others.

Survival is not a kit. Survival is not a plan. Survival is a philosophy. Lazy people do not prosper.

It's time to start developing the philosophy and the strategy that will serve you best when you need it.

Make a short list. Write WHERE Y'AT? at the top, and start from there. What are the primary risks for your area? My #1 concern is for residential fire (or other sudden destruction of the house). That's probably universal, and we've covered that already. My #2 concern is hurricanes. #3 is heavy rain and flooding - which is sometimes common here even without a hurricane. Following those three are industrial disaster, civil unrest, and terrorist attack - although I don't really think that there is very much in this area to interest terrorists. There are a number of refineries in the area, and I live exactly a mile from the Mississippi river which carries large ships with sometimes hazardous cargo. When I was six years old, there was a train derailment a few blocks from my childhood home, and we had to get out and spend the night at grandma's...

At this point, stick to physical disasters. We will eventually talk about other disasters - economic, for instance - but our primary concern for the time being is preparing for physical security. Once we have established those preparations, everything else becomes much easier.

Shane

PHILOSOPHY - What's it worth?

WARNING: GRAPHIC IMAGES ON THIS PAGE

I know that many of the previous pages have been rather dry, and perhaps you are not sufficiently motivated to actually do all the things I have recommended to you. The title of this blog isn't 'Listening to Shane', it's 'Listening to Katrina'. I did that on purpose. If you won't listen to me, maybe you will listen to Katrina...

I'm not going to go over the entire history of the people 'stranded' in the Superdome and Convention Center. One of the best accounts of that situation was reported by Melissa Phillip of the Houston Chronicle called Voices of Katrina. I really recommend at this point that you go and read it and listen to her audio reports. It's only one page. Start from the bottom of the page. She calmly gives a very good overview and it will only take you 20 minutes or so. Once you're done, we'll continue.



The City of New Orleans, and the surrounding parishes (counties) was (and is) in a very unique place in some ways. The people have a *laissez faire* (from the French, meaning to leave alone or to allow to do) attitude towards life. We are all pretty laid back people. Some of us are more *laissez faire* than we should be - to the point of being downright lazy. Unfortunately, that worked against a lot of people during Katrina...

Katrina was a weather event. In reality, it was just another storm. For some reason, though, people like to assign names to things, and so the weather pattern got a name. When folks around here talk about Katrina, we talk like Katrina was (and still is) some kind of minor deity - and a real biatch of one at that. "Katrina killed him." "Katrina took my boat." "Katrina cost me..." Katrina did this, Katrina did that, Katrina didn't give me the courtesy of a reach-around.



By now you have seen so many pictures of the aftermath of Katrina that you are likely numb to it. You have, by now, seen many pictures like this, outside the Louisiana Superdome. It is not my intention to mock, deride, or otherwise throw metaphorical stones at these people. It is my intention to listen to these people. I want you to sit with me at their feet and pay attention to the lessons they have to teach us. They are, in a very real way, all gurus that can lead us to preparedness Nirvana.

From a distance, it's not too pretty, and up close it isn't any better. You do not have to imagine what it would be like to spend a few days with tens of thousands of strangers in a large building that does not have electricity, running water, food, medicine, or any other essential service because tens of thousands of volunteers did just that when Katrina came to party.

Let's try it out, mixing all the elements, shall we?



Deciding to take advantage of the city's Refuge of Last Resort, you arrive at the Superdome as it starts to rain... You sit in the seats with 20,000 of your closest friends. Katrina makes landfall while you wonder if the roof will come off this place, or if it will fall down around you. Part of the roof goes away, and the sound is indescribable. Ten thousand banshees are screaming outside. You sort of expected to be able to go home in the morning, but the game goes into overtime. Unlimited overtime... This quickly turns into a multi-day misery as the lights go out, the water stops running, and the toilets start backing up. There are no concession stands. Nobody is walking up and down the aisle selling cold beer. It's hard to get anything to eat or drink at all, because unless you brought it with you, there just isn't any. The vending machines have all been looted. The smell of hot garbage lingers powerfully.

It's hot, it stinks, you're hungry, thirsty, and tired. You are surrounded by people you do not know, probably didn't like after the first fifteen minutes, and you'd surrender all your

worldly possessions including the filthy clothes on your back to get out of there. No longer able to tolerate the stench, heat, or the personalities all around you, you decide to go outside to get some air.



The problem is that there isn't really anything outside either. It still stinks. The sun is hot. Your kids are hungry, and you've run out of snicker's bars.

On the whole good/bad scale (1 being not that bad, and 10 being global thermonuclear war), having your kid say, "Daddy, I'm hungry.", and not having anything to give her is about a thirty-five on the good/bad scale.

You hear a rumor, though, that some people are going to the Convention Center. They say that busses are going to come and start taking people out from there. It's only a few blocks, so you decide to take the walk. It's hot, and you sweat profusely as you stroll along slowly.

When you finally make it to the Convention Center, none of the things you have heard are true. The situation isn't any better. A group passes you, carrying a dead body out. They lay the body on the median, and cover it with a dirty blanket.



The people here are no different than the people at the Superdome. There are no services of any kind. Sometimes you see police, but they aren't doing anything. Most of the time you do not see any at all.

In the process of walking along, wondering what you should do next, you come across this woman. She is drenched in sweat from herself and her child. The child is naked - having no clean clothes or diapers after the second day - and from the smell of them, the woman is drenched in his urine as well. There isn't anything you can do for her, and there isn't anything you can do for yourself. You sit on the curb, upwind from the dead bodies, and wait. You aren't sure what you are waiting for, but there doesn't seem to be anything else to do... There is nowhere to go, no one to call, and no one who cares - or at least it seems that way from your perspective.

Hold that image, and that feeling in your mind while you consider an important question: How much is it worth to you, personally, to insure that you are never in that situation? Put a dollar figure on it.

As you listened to Melissa's account, and as you look at these pictures, name the one thing that all of these people have in common.

The answer doesn't have to do with race, class, or the fact that most if not all of them were registered Democrats.

Whose fault is it that these people were in that condition?

What are some of the other lessons that you learn while listening to Melissa's account and looking at these pictures?

If at this point the idea of a good vacation is to congregate with large crowds of unwashed, angry people for a few days and then take a government sponsored bus ride to a location where you will spend a few weeks with crowds of washed, angry people then you really need go no further.



There are some people who obviously think that this is a good idea. They figure, "Hey! No work, no school! We'll pick up one of those fancy cars from the abandoned dealership, pick up some beer and ramen noodles, and cruise around havin' a party!"

Personally, my beer and ramen days are behind me.

If, however, you would rather not experience the Federal Vacation Plan first hand, the rest of this is for you.

The first and obvious lesson is this: No matter what happens, if the government sets up a Shelter of Last Resort, do not go. Let's listen to the tens of thousands of people who did go, and try to see if they have some more lessons for us.

Name the one thing that all of these people have in common.

There are two answers to this question. One is simple, and the other complex. The complex answer has to do with demographics. The majority of people who found themselves in the Dome or at the CC were either poor or elderly. The lesson in that isn't, "Don't be poor or elderly.", but we'll come back to it. The simple answer is simply that all of these people - for whatever reasons - made bad choices.

None of these people had their shit together.

Their bad choices didn't start on August 30, 2005 either. These are people who, for the most part, habitually made bad choices. If you do not prepare for unforeseen events, then you actively choose to take the Federal Vacation Plan. You do not have to be rich, smart, or particularly well educated to figure out that you should have *some* kind of disaster plan that doesn't rely on government. You don't have to be rich, smart, or particularly well educated to put that plan into effect over a long period of time either.

Whose fault is it that these people were in that condition?

The only responsible party for the condition of those people are those people themselves. Not the government, not society, not the Red Cross. City and State government told all of these people in advance that they needed to get out, and they actively selected their fate. They all *chose* to be there.

How much is it worth to you, personally, to insure that you are never in that situation yourself? Put a dollar figure on it.

Well? What's it worth to you? I, personally, would rather strip myself, wife, and kids naked and walk to California (We're comin' to your house, Helen!) than to end up in a government camp of *any* kind. I'm not talking about the Red Cross and other shelters that these people were taken to in Houston and other places where they were given a bath and a sandwich - we'll talk about those later. What I'm talking about here are places like the Superdome and Convention Center that became designated 'Evacuation Points'. I hover on the brink of using the term 'concentration camps' because of the emotionally charged nature of that term. Let's just stick with 'government camps' and try not to get too conspiratorial about it.



Speaking of Government, where was everybody? Where are the cops? Uh oh. The cops have got their own problems. What about the State? Where are the Feds? Where is FEMA? Well, all that is coming. Just hasn't gotten here yet. That's part of the Federal Vacation Package, you see. We're going to talk about all those things in turn as they affect your Plan and as they affect your decisions and actions before and after SHTF events, but for now let's keep moving forward.

How much is it worth to you, personally, to insure that you are never in that situation yourself? If you haven't done so already, shouldn't you be assuming the personal responsibility for your welfare?

This raises the question of money, and we can declare, "Ah ha! That's one answer to why people ended up in government camps! They didn't have the money to do anything else!" If there are some social democrats in the readership, they will be thinking along the lines of 'economic justice' and other socialist ideas that would force more and more of us into the Federal Vacation Plan. (Yes, that's my shot for the day...)

Katrina was a bad hurricane, but it was still just a hurricane. It's not like Katrina was the first hurricane either, and certainly not the first hurricane to affect people this badly. Katrina just affected more people than ever before, but not in a new way. In law enforcement, detectives call that a 'clue'. Ah ha! Lesson 1: GET A CLUE!

Yes, many of these people were poor people. Of little means. Living hand to mouth. What I would like to tell you is that all of these people were (and are) hard working, honest, industrious people who simply were experiencing hard times. The truth of the matter, though, is ugly, so let's be frank about it. It's a truth that comes back to our Philosophy:

LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!

I have read all the accounts, watched endless hours of video, listened to thousands of radio reports, and held person-to-person interviews and I notice a trend. I want you to

notice it too. Remember Melissa's Voices of Katrina report on Day 5? Remember the Skywalk People? They were mostly tourists who were trapped here, who pulled together, got their shit together, and started trying. What's everyone else doing? Not moving much. Asking when the help was coming. That's called a 'hint'.



Eventually, men with guns and food show up, pack everybody up into busses, and take them on the part of the vacation we call the Federal Vacation Bus Tour.

Doesn't that look grand?

GET A CLUE. Once you have a CLUE you have a Clear, Lucid Understanding of Everything. You KNOW what the risks are in your area. Plan for and around that. Failure to do so is LAZY, and LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER! Can I get an, 'AMEN!'?

I have already admitted some guilt to the charge of 'lazy'. I didn't have all my shit together before Katrina, and I only had 600 dollars in my pocket when we left town that day. Lazy, though, isn't the real problem, it's only a symptom. It's a symptom of poverty. Not an economic poverty, but a different kind of poverty that is related to a different kind of wealth.

Think about your Laptop Bag. The items and gadgets in the bag are worth something. They have a cash value. They are a kind of wealth - an economic wealth. They cost you something to put together. If you are cash poor, you don't have a laptop, but at least you should now have all your important papers together in a grocery bag or something. Those papers, documents, and other data are another kind of wealth. Data Wealth. We have taken steps now to secure these kinds of wealth.

On the last page, I asked you to start putting together an address book with friends, family, and work related people. This is another kind of wealth - and a kind of wealth that you will not find discussed in any of the survival manuals. This is rather surprising to me, because it is, in fact, the #1 most valuable kind of wealth. Good family relationships and deep friendships are a kind of wealth that you cannot buy with money. It is a kind of wealth that cannot be stolen from you. I am not trying to go mushy. I am entirely earnest about this.

It's not just that the people in the Superdome and Convention Center didn't have the means to escape - because I'm willing to bet that most of them did. They could have found SOME way out. Certainly there would still have been some remaining. People who are too ill to move, for instance. It's not the means of escape they were lacking, but the end. The destination. They had nowhere to go. Nobody to take them in. Nobody to worry about them. Poverty...

In the beginning, I said I would be honest with you. I actually don't like people that much. I'm not a very social creature, and for the most part I suck at relationships. Sometimes I wonder why my wife tolerates me at all. Even so, I work to establish friendships and family relationships because without them I may as well dig a hole and throw some dirt over myself. Our lives only have meaning insofar as we have relationships with other people. Otherwise we are just any other animal living alone in the woods, and who cares if we live or die?

The people in the Dome had an economic poverty, but many also had a social poverty. That's not the kind of poverty that is the real problem, though. The deep problem is a poverty of *imagination*. I'm not entirely settled on that word, but it seems to me that some people simply cannot imagine their lives any different from the way they are today - and indeed the way they have been for whatever period of time. Tony Robbins said, "People are not lazy. They simply have impotent goals - that is, goals that do not inspire them." Perhaps that is what I am trying to express. An inability or unwillingness to reach for future goals and to plan for future needs.

I know all about living hand to mouth. I have been unemployed. I've been kicked out of places. I know that life sucks sometimes. In that situation it takes a certain resolve to keep a dollar for tomorrow when things are so hard today - but it needs to be done. Why do some people come from poverty and achieve wealth? Why do some people come from wealth and achieve poverty? It seems something deeper than simple laziness, but what that something is can be hard to define...but the ones that succeed seem to be the ones that have their shit together on a better level than the ones who fail.

It doesn't take much money to HYST. It doesn't take much money to get out of a disaster area. In fact, it can be cheaper to leave. You don't have to pay your rent if your apartment is under water. I didn't really appreciate this as I was driving to Houston with what I *thought* was all the wealth I had in the world in my car. I was wrong about that. I was soon to learn that I was a very wealthy man, but that I had no appreciation of it.

The #1 kind of wealth to have in a disaster - assuming you bug out rather than stay home - is to have a place to go. It doesn't have to be a great place, but if you have no place, then your poverty registers on the deep end of the Destitute scale. I will talk about this at some length another time.

Even with planning, you may get caught with your pants down. You may be too ill to do anything else. You may misunderstand the nature of the event. You may be trapped by unforeseen circumstances of all kinds. Sometimes you are just unlucky. There are always going to be some people who cannot for some reason escape, and we have an expectation that government will try to help those people if it can.

Here are some of the lessons I came away with. There are some others, but we'll cover those another time.

1. Get A Clue
2. Don't be lazy. Be active.
3. Do a little something every day. It adds up.
4. Make good choices.
5. You don't have to have money to be rich.
6. The Federal Vacation Plan sucks.
7. If you get caught unlucky, remember the Skywalk People. Do what you can, where you are, with what you have.

If you've been stuck on lazy, it's time to get up, get busy, and get rich.

Of course, if you don't, the government camps serve their own version of Happy Meals, so maybe it's not all bad, eh?



OK. Now I'm ready to talk about the 12 Hour Plan. I just needed to get that out first.

Shane

PLAN - Escape Pod

Let's start with the 60 Second Checklist. You won't have time in the 60 Seconds to read the checklist, but let's have it for reference. If survival is not a kit, it's not a checklist either. The checklist is just a tool we use to organize our thoughts and make our plans efficient.

We're going to create our 1 Hour Checklist as we go along. The 1 Hour Plan is still an escape plan. We are trying to leave as fast as possible, but we have some additional time to secure our homes. The first order of business, actually, is to talk about your Escape Pod - your car. In some circumstances - like living on an island in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, you aren't going to be going anywhere. The considerations for your vehicle will be minor - unless you have a big yacht, but we aren't going to cover that here. For most of us who need to drive away - like to get away from hurricanes - our vehicle becomes our escape pod. It also becomes our home away from home.

I do not personally own a dedicated BOV. I will be leaving town in the same car I drive every day back and forth to work - and so will you. This is assuming that you have a car

at all. If you do not, then your mode of transportation will control the shape that your 1 Hour Plan takes. I know people who do not drive. I know people who cannot drive. If you fall into those categories, it is wise to make some kind of arrangement to get a ride with someone who is like minded. Otherwise, you will have to depend on the Federal Bus Tour, and we already know how reliable that is.

I use a car, though, and so I'm going to talk about that for a little bit.

Your car, as I said, is your Escape Pod. That's kind of funny because I own a Ford Escape, and that's the vehicle I used to evacuate for Katrina. My wife owns a Honda Element. Both are good BOVs in a pinch. When you buy any vehicle, look at it with the idea in your head that this may be your escape pod. Is it suitable for the purpose? Is there room for your entire family? Some families are larger than others...

Your vehicle represents wealth. It has cash value, no matter how small, but it also has the value of being able to take you away from a disaster zone quickly. Transportation is a kind of wealth. Taxi companies would not stay in business otherwise. You should always maintain your vehicle so that you are comfortable that you can put it on the road instantly, and you can get at least 100 miles out of it. Before I bought the Escape, I always had crappy vehicles but they were mechanically sound, and I never had a problem driving long distances in them. You should learn to maintain your vehicle. You should learn where the dip stick is. You should know how to read it. You should know how to add oil, coolant, and transmission fluid. These things are not difficult to learn. Read your owner's manual.

If we are going to use our vehicle as an escape pod, it is a good idea to have certain things in it at all times, ready to go. If you have more than one vehicle in your family, try to plan to take as many of them as you can. This goes against the government recommendation to only take one, but there are several reasons which we'll cover before too many more pages go by. For now, plan to have what we are talking about for every vehicle.

The primary thing to have in your vehicle is fuel in the gas tank. Trying to buy gasoline while everyone else is trying to buy gasoline is a real nightmare. Conventional wisdom says to never let your tank drop below 1/4. I don't usually let mine drop below 1/2. Sometimes, though, it happens. You drive around after a hard day at work, get the kids, go to the store, and by the time you manage to make it home you just don't feel like stopping to get gas. So, for every vehicle you own, you should have a 5 gallon gas can full of gasoline so that you can fuel your vehicle as part of your 1 Hour Plan. You should rotate this gasoline every so often - at least once a year - by pouring it into your tank and then refilling it with fresh gasoline.

Let's talk about our BOV Checklist. This topic is done ad-nauseam everywhere. There are whole websites devoted to car 'kits'. We already know, however, that SURVIVAL IS NOT A KIT! I can't believe I'm actually going to do it, but let's go over provisioning your car. I'd hate for you to go somewhere else and get bad information. As previously

stated however, what I do works for me in my context and location. It doesn't snow here. Black ice in the hammer lane just isn't a problem that I have to deal with. If your conditions are radically different than mine, then modify the checklist. This is not an exhaustive list. If there is something you think you need, then get it. Avoid gadgets, cheap junk, and the temptation to buy things off QVC.

1. Vehicle well maintained.

This is key. A vehicle that doesn't go anywhere isn't much of an escape pod. If you break down on the side of the road, you will be at the mercy of strangers. Know your vehicle's maintenance intervals. If you cannot afford to pay someone you trust to maintain it, learn to do it yourself. Replace your battery every five years, even if it seems fine. Maintaining a vehicle can be expensive sometimes - but failing to maintain it and ending up in a government camp is even more expensive.

2. 5 gallon gas can, full.

If you do nothing else, do this. A car with no gas isn't much of an escape pod either. Do not ever travel with the can (full or empty) inside the passenger compartment. Putting it in the trunk may be OK, but it's better to attach it to the outside of your car somehow. A roof rack is good for this...

3. Good spare tire, jack, and tire tool.

Or two. Post Katrina, the #1 vehicle problem was flat tires from all the roofing nails. There is no reason not to have a good spare, jack and lug wrench. Cars are supposed to come with them.

4. Fix-A-Flat and/or portable air pump. Tire plugs.

Fix-A-Flat is a product that comes in a can. You screw the little hose onto the valve of a flat tire, and the can will inflate the tire and plug the leak - if the leak isn't too large. They're cheap. Have two. I also like to keep a small, portable, 12 volt air pump that runs off the vehicle's cigarette lighter receptacle. If the air pump does not have one, you will want a tire gauge as well. These things can all be had at any auto parts store on the cheap. Tire plugs can be bought as a kit with the tools. Read the instructions. Tire plugs are a Grace of the Lord. Get some.

5. Jumper cables

Everyone should always have jumper cables. You should read your owner's manual to make sure that you know the proper connection points. Spend real money and get good ones. I've seen cheap ones melt under load... In a pinch, jumper cables make a handy torture device, so you can always threaten the children if they won't shut up with the, "Are we there YET!?" stuff.

6. Small tool box with assorted tools

If you are a natural born auto mechanic, you will already know what you need. If you are not good with tools, have some pliers, screwdrivers, a good wrench, and a decent socket set.

7. Oil, coolant, transmission fluid

Again, the natural auto mechanics will know what to do. You should have at least two quarts of oil, two quarts of transmission fluid, and at least one gallon of coolant. Refer to your owner's manual to find out the right kind to buy. I like to keep all these in the back of my vehicle in a milk crate that I got from the neighborhood milk crate fairy.

8. Spare fuses, radiator hose tape, and other parts that you are comfortable changing.

Refer to your owner's manual. If you are very handy, you can buy whatever you like. Having spare belts and hoses is never a bad idea. If nothing else, you should get at least one roll of hose tape - available at auto stores. Some people will want to add to this list. I once changed a head gasket on the side of the road in my Honda Civic when I was young and industrious. If you don't know what a head gasket is, then you shouldn't mess with it.

9. Umbrella

For me, rain is a consideration, so I like to keep at least one good umbrella in the car. Climatic conditions in your area will dictate to you what you want to keep in this regard. Snowshoes? I have no idea. Tire chains, and all kinds of other snow and ice gear don't mean anything to me here. If you don't know what to do, find a local survival nut and ask him (or her).

You may also want a rain suit, poncho, or something else, but I have always found the umbrella handy.

10. Backpack

I like to keep a medium to large backpack in the car. This is a second BOB, and contains a change of clothing for each member of the family. You can use a duffel bag or small suitcase. If we escape the house naked, we'll have something to put on. Running around wrapped in a sheet and trying to say that you are going to a toga party isn't really funny when SHTF. The backpack has other uses. If you end up on foot, the backpack can carry items of value. Some people call this a GHB or Get Home Bag. You may put additional items in this bag, but avoid catching the Go-Go-Gadget backpack syndrome. It's handy if your laptop bag fits in the backpack.

11. Gloves

Two kinds. One, a sturdy pair of work gloves. You should also have a few pairs (or a box) of surgical gloves. These are very handy for changing tires, checking oil, and to help you clean up your 3 month old daughter's vomit out of the car seat. Mmmm... Corn... These can be had cheaply almost anywhere. You can always steal some on your next doctor's visit. They also are great for inflating like balloons and drawing faces on. This serves the dual purpose of entertaining the kids and also making the people at rest stops think you are some kind of freak and so they leave you alone.

12. Baby wipes

Before I had children, I did not appreciate the utility of baby wipes. They are useful for just about everything, and when you end up with monkey butt* from not having a bath for a day or three, they can provide a certain freshness. You didn't really want to hear that, did you? Whatever kind you get, try to get them without perfume or lotion. As plain as you can get. Keep them in a Ziploc freezer bag so that they don't dry out. They are constantly handy. Just don't try to clean windows with them.

13. Claw Hammer

You never know when you will be invited to a hammer party...right? A hammer is one of those ubiquitous tools. There's just something inherently useful about a chunk of steel on a stick. A hammer can get you into places, get you out of places, and ranks second only to the ubiquity of a hatchet. Get one. I like a good claw type framing hammer.

14. WD40 & Duct Tape

As the theory goes, if it moves and shouldn't, use the tape. If it doesn't move and should, use the WD40. I don't actually carry WD40 any more. I carry Break Free CLP. Miracle product.

15. Road flares or triangle markers.

I carry triangle markers now. Road flares might cause a fire, or even better, an explosion. Or is that supposed to be 'even worse'? I get confused... Some kind of warning and signal device can save lives. There are some battery powered warning 'flares' now, but the cheap ones are too cheap, and the good ones are too expensive. Get some triangle markers, and you're good to go.

16. MREs.(Meal, Ready to Eat)

In addition to providing calories, MREs have gum, matches, and instant coffee. MacGyver would know what to do with that.

17. Fire Extinguisher

Don't escape a house fire just to watch all the stuff you saved burn up in your car. Keep a good one, and keep it handy. If you have to fish around in the trunk for it while the car burns, that's not going to end well.

18. Shovel

Useful for snow and mud operations. Remember: Friends know where the bodies are buried. Good friends bring a shovel. You can get a 'trench' tool from army surplus on the cheap.

19. Piece of old carpet.

Line your trunk or back of your SUV or station wagon with a piece of cut carpet. I like to use shag in crazy colors. It is useful for sitting on, crawling under the car on, or for getting you out of snow and mud in a pinch.

20. Cell phone charger.

Keep those comms running!

21. Windshield washer fluid.

Maybe. I don't carry this. I'll put plain water in if I need to. Some people say this is useful in areas where they put salt on the road.

22. Insect repellant

If you wind up in a buggy area, they will eat you alive before you ever get the tire changed.

23. Roll of plastic-wrap (such as Saran-wrap)

If a window motor gives out, or gets stuck open, or a window is broken somehow, you can wrap plastic wrap around the door to cover the opening. Use the whole roll. Yes, it's temporary, but it beats driving home in the rain or snow with no window.

24. Drinking water.

This is very important in arid regions, especially in the summer. I carry a little at all times, but I don't have any danger of thirst. I'm less than a mile from the largest source of fresh water in the Americas. If I don't want to walk, I just wait 15 minutes and it rains. It's raining now...

25. Two towels.

Not optional. Get some.

26. Tow Strap

Be aware that not all tow straps are created equal. Make sure you get one that is rated for the weight of your vehicle.

27. Flashlight

I prefer LED headlamps, like the Princeton Tec Aurora headlamp. A headlamp is a very useful light because once on your head, both hands are free to do things that hands do.

I realize at this point that I need to take a bunch of pictures and insert them into this page, but it's nearly midnight and raining outside so that will have to wait.

Let's talk about what you should *not* do, because that's important too. Don't just dump all of this crap into your trunk and let it all roll around in there for the rest of time. It's not going to do you any good like that. You also shouldn't assemble it as a 'kit'. Put things where you need them. The fire extinguisher should be handy at all times, for instance. Resist the temptation to buy 'gadgets' for the car. They waste money and you don't need them. We'll come back to the actual organization of the car as we go through the rest of the Plans. For now, just start working on the checklist and we'll come back to it. For now, let's get into the 1 Hour Plan, and see where that leads.

Some people are going to go beyond this, and some *way* beyond this. If you have a Winnebago or other travel camper, that can obviously work for you. So can a small travel trailer, or even a little utility trailer. Most people do not own those things, though, and neither do I. I have kept this simple because I want to take baby steps with everyone. If you already have your armored bus put together, that's great. The rest of us, though are still working on HYST on the cheap.

Shane

*The most clever description of monkey butt that I have ever seen is, "monkey butt = ape a\$\$, it is a condition when sweat has maxed out on the dark side of your back side. The moisture no longer is wicked from the skin but remains in the valley of thunder and wind. The friction/heat created between the hills that make the valley of thunder and wind dries the surface on the valley floor to the extent that the floor is worked painfully dry. Some common factors that may cause this anomaly range from excessive thunder and wind in the valley floor to a misguided wipe by the sacred valley cloth. But the over riding factor in the cause of ape a\$\$ and monkey butt is moisture." If you have your ass cradled in a leather seat for 15 hours, you **will** experience this.

PLAN - T-Minus 60 Minutes

Yes, boys and girls, it's time to talk about the One Hour Plan. At this point, you should have:

1. Laptop Bag (or box of important documents)
2. BOB (Bug Out Bag)
3. Complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera
4. 60 Second Escape Plan
5. Collection of people to communicate
6. Dependable escape pod.

All you need now is a space suit, and you're ready to travel! Uh... Wait... That's not right...

If you stop with the items you (should!) have now, and do nothing else, then you're actually doing fairly well. You're more than halfway done with your emergency preparations - and you've actually done the hardest half. The tasks you accomplish during the One Hour Plan are extra gravy poured over the meat and potatoes of the 60 Second plan. Exactly what that gravy entails will be very specific to your particular context. Where you go when you leave the house is also very specific to your circumstances, and we'll cover that in due time.

Like I said on a prior page, "I am not going to pretend that I know the best answer for you or your family. I am going to tell you about my context, but there are some things in my plans that will not work for you. There are some things in my plans that will be outright wrong for you. My only intention is to give you a framework upon which to build your own Plan."

Let's assume that you need to leave your house quickly, but you have some additional time to prepare. Let's say that there is a wildfire a few miles away and you are down wind. The fire is going to come into your area, and you have been instructed by government authority to evacuate. The first thing to do is execute the 60 Second Plan. Get your laptop bag and your BOB into the car as we have planned. Step two is to ready the escape pod. Pour that 5 gallons of gas into the tank. Check the vital fluids if you haven't done so recently. Tires properly inflated? Good. Given that you know what you are doing, all of that shouldn't take you any more than 10 minutes. Everything else is gravy.

No matter what you do, always do those things first. If you are leaving, the dependability of your escape pod is more important than any other wealth you might save. You are about to put the most valuable, most cherished, and most precious items you own into this vehicle and entrust your fate to it. If it fails you for whatever reason, you are going to be on foot - or worse, find yourself a guest of the government vacation plan.

As we develop the 1 Hour Checklist, keep in mind that SURVIVAL IS NOT A PLAN. Your Plan is also not a suicide letter. If the danger gets closer faster than you anticipated, then leave early. That's why we put the laptop bag, BOB, and other critical things in the car first. We are ready to go, and now we use the balance of our time to secure wealth.



To talk about it in that way, in the laptop bag we have secured our priceless photographs, our Identity, and Education along with many other documents of a critical nature. Speaking of that, I've found a few of my childhood pictures that I've started scanning. Seems like I didn't like to wear clothes back then either... Hmmm...

The clock is running on us, though, so let's spin through our One Hour Checklist so that we can get out of here! The wealth we focus on most in the One Hour Plan is material wealth.

The checklist is actually the largest part of the plan. We've already covered 1 and 2. There are seven items in the checklist. Again, that has a purpose. You should spend no more than ten minutes on each item. The first item should only take 60 seconds, so you'll have to make that minute up somewhere else. If, at any time during the Plan, the danger becomes greater, escape sooner rather than later.

We should write a song... "When the danger gets greater, bug-out sooner rather than later!"

For this plan, you will want to keep some items handy. Boxes of various sizes. I like cardboard file boxes. They have built in handles, and a lid. They are a perfect size for carrying, stacking, and packing. You can get them at any office supply house cheaply. You will also want a roll of packing tape, for taping the boxes. Once you fill a box, tape the lid down securely. Having your suitcases handy saves time. You should also have your checklist and a pen, pencil, or blue crayon to check items off. We're actually going to cover these preparations and more on another page.

1. Execute 60 Second Plan

By now you should be good at it, so faster is better. This is not a drill.

2. Ready the Escape Pod

- Fuel.
- Fluids.
- Tire Pressure.
- Windows clean?

You can skip the windows if they are passable. I just like to have clean windows, especially for night driving. If you perform regular maintenance on your vehicle, it should always be ready to go so you may save some time in this step by being active about your maintenance. Keeping the vehicle clean will also be a benefit. Not necessarily washed and polished, but if your kids are like mine, the back seat tends to fill up with unidentifiable trash rather quickly...

If you have more than one suitable vehicle, plan to take them both. You can also carry more wealth that way...

Any room not needed for passengers should be arranged for maximum carrying capacity. Fold seats down, and otherwise arrange your vehicle as necessary. If you are going to hitch a trailer or camper, this is the time to do it.

3. Secure additional data.

- Files, documents, original photographs.

This would include your ancillary file box with additional documents. If you have original photographs that you would like to rescue, collect these and put them in a box. Scrap books, compact disks, DVDs, or other media that cannot be replaced (like video of your wedding). Computer software disks may also be desired. If your laptop crashes, you may need to reload it.

4. Secure additional wealth.

- Medicines
- Cash, irreplaceable valuables.
- Firearms

If you have not already done so, put all of your prescription medicines in a bag and put them in the car. Now proceed to secure additional wealth.

This is where we need to talk about insurance, but I'm going to leave that for a little later. Do not try to load your brand new large screen TV into the car. Items of that nature should be properly insured. In fact, you should have your receipts and photographs of those items in your laptop bag and/or ancillary file box.

The things that you should secure are any items of an irreplaceable nature. For me, that list is rather short. I do not tend to accumulate valuable stuff. I have a small collection of things that I inherited over time that are not terribly valuable, but impossible to replace. I consider them in this step because that's where they rank for me.

You should also secure all of your firearms, and practicing all of the rules of safety, pack them UNLOADED into the car. You should have a suitable carrying case for each firearm you intend to evacuate. If not, roll them in a blanket. In all cases, all firearms being stowed and packed this way should be unloaded. Check it twice, save a life. Firearms being actively carried for personal defense should be loaded and properly holstered or otherwise on 'SAFE'. Check that twice too.

If you have too many firearms to pack into the car, then you are going to have to make hard decisions. If you leave firearms behind in the house, render them inoperable in case they are stolen or looted. I have a number of .22 caliber single shot rifles that are not particularly valuable and I left those in the house when I left for Katrina. I did, however, take all the bolts out and took the bolts with me. No operable firearm should be left in your home - even if it is inside a safe. The last thing you want to come home to is a bunch of thugs living in your house armed with your own guns. Hide them somewhere. Putting them in the attic, laid under some insulation is a good place for hiding rifles from would-be looters who are too lazy to check there. People in the know - like police - will look there, but looters tend to be of the dumbest sort of people. It's a bad idea to keep your firearms there, but for hiding them quickly, it's good. You may have other favorite hiding places that work for you in your home. I have such places, but I'm not going to tell you about them for obvious reasons.

In this step, you can also grab a couple of cans of ammo for those weapons you are taking with you. Remember that ammunition is heavy. Over-loading your escape pod is a bad idea. Use common sense. We'll get into this on another page.

5. Pack additional clothing.

If you are leaving, you don't have any real guarantee as to when you might return. Limit this to one small or medium suitcase for each member of the family. Have at least two sets of clothes that you can go to work in. Children should have three sets of 'play' or 'school' clothes, and one set of 'good' clothes. Additional socks and underwear are a good idea. If you are inclined to wear pajamas, you can pack those. If you won't sleep naked, sleeping in street clothes can be uncomfortable. A bath towel and wash cloth in each suitcase is also a good idea. Everyone should pack their shaving kits, which should be ready to go. Ladies will want their makeup bags - which should also be ready to go. Items like soap, bottles of shampoo, and other things should be left behind. They are heavy, and inexpensive to replace.

6. Secure 'comfort' items.

Children's items.

Items of sentimental value.

The car is pretty full at this point. The kid's favorite stuffed animals come next. Some bedding items, favorite pillows, favorite blanket or two. All of these items will make your living conditions more comfortable wherever you end up. They also smell like home, which is oddly important at times.

After Katrina, many families wound up in hotel rooms or with friends and family who were not readily equipped to handle the sleeping arrangements for so many people. A dozen or more people may be forced to sleep in cramped quarters. Having your own pillow and blanket will make sleeping on the floor less tortuous. We carry our own Aero-bed, which is an inflatable mattress. If you are a backpacker, you will be familiar with sleeping pads of all kinds, and some of these may be just the thing.

Use the pillows and blankets to pad and stabilize everything you have packed so far.

Assuming we are just about ready to go, but still have some time, get a box about the size of a cardboard file box. (A cardboard file box actually works perfectly.) Move quickly through the house, imagining that when you leave you will never return. Fill the box with items that you would dearly miss. If you have two cars, you can have two boxes, but not more than one box per car for this.

Pull everything off your refrigerator and put that in the bottom of the box. You'll miss your refrigerator magnets. Trust me. Keep the magnets away from your laptop bag.

7. Secure the house.

- Lock windows
- Adjust thermostat
- Unplug all appliances
- Turn off unneeded utilities
- Make a sign

While we may not be returning ever again, there is also the outside chance that we will return, and so we want to secure our homes in order to protect wealth. Window and door locks are no deterrence to thieves and looters, but go around and lock all the windows anyway.

Adjust the thermostat, or turn it off. For Katrina, I turned the air conditioner on and the thermostat up to 80 degrees. My theory was that if the house took some water, but the air conditioner managed to come back on when power was restored, then I would have less moisture to deal with. You may live in a cold climate, and you will need to act accordingly. The safest thing to do is turn all heating and air conditioning OFF.

Turn off your ice maker. (Lift the wire bar all the way up until it locks.)

Unplug all appliances. Toasters, televisions, clocks, everything within reason except your refrigerator and freezer. Unplug computers and other items that aren't coming with you. Unplug lamps. Everything.

Turn off your water heater.

Turn off unneeded utilities. Throw circuit breakers on everything but your refrigerator, freezer, and air conditioner. Know in advance which breakers these are. Turn off the gas

- unless you've left a gas heater on, which I wouldn't recommend. If you turn off your own gas, **DO NOT TURN IT BACK ON!** If you know exactly what to do, then you will need to make that decision. If you do not know what to do, you will need to wait for someone from the gas company to turn your gas back on for you. If you have no idea what I'm talking about, just leave the gas alone. You don't need to bother disconnecting telephone or cable lines.

Turn off the water. Do not do this unless you are sure you have turned off the hot water heater. There should be a valve where your main water line goes into the house. Shut this valve off completely. If there is any risk of freeze while you are away, drain your pipes. Do this by opening all the valve in your house and then opening a lower valve - like a valve for your garden hose - and let all the water out of the pipes. After you've done that, flush all the toilets. This will empty the tanks of water which may freeze and break them. Even if you have left heat on, turn off the water and drain the pipes and toilets.

The last thing to do is to make a sign. Make it out of something durable, seal a piece of paper in a ZipLoc bag, or spray paint it on your door. The sign says, "EVERYONE EVACUATED. NOBODY HOME HERE." If you don't do that, rescue workers *will* do whatever it takes to get into your house and 'check for survivors'. We'll be talking about this in later pages. **MAKE THE SIGN!**

That, my friends, is your framework. You still have some work to do. You should fill in the framework and make a step by step checklist. When the end of the world is approaching, you won't have the presence of mind to remember even common things. Write ALL of it down, and actually draw a line through each item as you accomplish it. When you leave, take the list with you. That way, when you are having a nice freak out several hundred miles from home, and your wife asks you, "Did you remember to unplug the Orgasmatron?", you can refer to the list and know for sure.

I know this sounds incredibly stupid, but really do spell things out very simply and in no uncertain terms. Bugging out is incredibly stressful in every way possible - mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If you make a simple list that you can check off, you will be very glad to have it should the need arise.

The other benefit of having a straightforward list is that you can split the list with your spouse. "I will ready the escape pod! You go save the priceless bronze earwig collection!" Another reason to have such a list is that someone else can follow it if they need to. If Uncle Eddie happens to be over for a visit when SHTF, you can put him to work locking the windows and pulling appliance plugs.

3. Secure additional data.

Files, documents, original photographs.

As an example of this item, my personal list looks like this:

- My wife may have additional things that I do not know about, so I need to involve her in the list. Recognize that some things that you may cherish are actually replicable. We have large poster size photos of the girls up in the living room. We would not take them with us, however, because we can replace them from the digital files from which they came in the first place.

For now, though, I am going to leave you to work on your One Hour Plan. As you do so, you will find it helpful to walk through and around your house and make some rough notes and fill in the details as time goes on. This is a project that you can do on the weekend in just an hour or so. Once you get started, you'll find that it's very easy.

PHILOSOPHY - Why are you doing this?



What are we trying to do here anyway? What exactly are we afraid of? Why are we doing all of this stuff? Beyond the obvious purpose of building an insanity plea in a later court case, I mean...

I think it's useful at this point to start exploring some of those questions.

I used to have the mindset that I was preparing for Armageddon. The big one. The End Of The World As We Know It (TEOTWAWKI). God unwilling, and the creek startin' to rise.

I had (and have!) various preparations, stores, kits, and a tremendous amount of knowledge and ability. I got mad skills, yo! If I got on the Survivor TV show, I'd have my pants off, a fire going, a shelter up, and be eating roasted road-kill by the light of the silvery moon while listening to the crickets before you could say, "Boo!"

But why? At some level, yes, it's nice to imagine that you are prepared for the collapse of modern civilization - but the possibility of such a thing is so remote, why bother at all? Is a laptop computer *really* going to be useful for *that* kind of thing? No, probably not.

While Listening to Katrina, one of the lessons I learned was that when civilization collapses, people are going to put it back together to whatever extent they can. When the lights do come back on, we are all - collectively - going to have to figure out where to go from there. Preparing for the end of the world helps with that kind of thing. Before Katrina, we had some theories on how to do that. Post Katrina, we have some very good practical experience. Katrina was Armageddon light. Low sodium, fat free, diet Armageddon. No sugar added Armageddon.

According to FEMA, 950,000 applicants (one applicant per family!) required housing assistance following Hurricane Katrina. 550,000 applicants in Louisiana and Mississippi were placed under the DHS Transitional Housing program for homes that were inaccessible to inspectors due to persistent flooding. Never before had the world seen an evacuation on that scale, a disaster on that scale, or a reconstruction on that scale outside of war zones.

I have invited you to provide for yourself the following things:

1. Laptop Bag (or box of important documents)
2. BOB (Bug Out Bag)
3. Complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera
4. 60 Second Escape Plan
5. Collection of people to communicate with
6. Dependable escape pod
7. One Hour Escape Plan & Checklist

Why? Because if you went around to those 950,000 FEMA applicants and you asked them one year later, "Knowing what you know now, what would you have done before

Katrina?", the most common answer would be, "MOVE!" The second most common answer would be some variation on the checklist above. The third most common would be, "Bought more (or better) insurance."

Under the GET A CLUE rule, we can argue that "MOVE!" is the right answer. Living in a flood plain is obviously tempting fate. The fact of the matter is, though, that 12% of Americans live in a flood zone. Shuffling 12% of the American population just isn't workable. If you live anywhere west or just east of the Rockies, you live in an earthquake zone. Trying to move all those people is impossible by several orders of magnitude. Millions of people live in tornado alley. People live in fire zones, tsunami zones, near nuclear power plants, around areas of strategic military value, and in other areas of some risk. A lot of people live in places where more than one of these zones applies.

The question arises, then, "Is the preparedness list (above) all inclusive? Does it apply to all types of possible disaster - real or imagined - that may occur in the United States?" I think you will find that the answer is, "Yes." There are obviously some preparations that we have yet to cover, but so far everything on that list applies to all disasters - widespread or local, public or private.

If you agree, the question becomes, "If you don't have these preparations, and you aren't working on them, WHY THE HELL NOT!?"

Some of the accomplished survival type persons reading this think that they already have it covered. Even to the point of having an 80 pound backpack full of stuff that will be handy if they find themselves on foot, having to scavenge in the wilderness and live off the land. I, myself, still have that backpack...I've actually got more than one...but the backpack is a lie. It's a lie that we have bought into because all the books and magazines tell us that we need such a bag, which seems perfectly logical until you start asking questions like, "Where are you going to go?"

"Into the HILLS! To live like MEN! To WEATHER the storms of FATE until civilization ARISES from the ASHES of DISASTER!"

Yeah. Try that with 30,000 other people who have that plan all worked out too, and who happen to have picked the same 'wilderness' area that you have. If your wife is anything like mine, that shit is going to get *real* old *real* fast, and your kids are going to hate you - especially after the beef jerky runs out. In a matter of days you will run out of toilet paper, and we all know where that leads.

When survivalists grow up a little, we figure out that the backpack is a lie. That doesn't stop us from having one, making more, and purchasing enough ammo to thwart the undead hordes that will assault our positions when the Zombie Apocalypse comes to pass in accordance with The Prophecy. (If your sarcasm meter is broken, you're going to be in trouble on this page.) Yes, I still have my Backpack of Apocalypse Survival and I still maintain it, but Katrina has made me wonder what the thing is really for - if it really *is* for

anything more than some kind of psychological pacifier. Please don't ask me how many I have, gentlemen. It's embarrassing...

If you have been backpacking, or otherwise lived in the woods for any period of time as I have, you discover two things. The first thing that you discover is that connecting with nature on a primitive and personal level is more satisfying than any civilization. The second thing that you discover is that while nature is lovely and all, eventually you need to resupply. Eventually, you'd like to sleep in a real bed, have a real shower, eat a decent variety of food, and have a stable living arrangement. Being past my hobo years, I now like to have a house, a car, a refrigerator full of ready-made eats that I can pop in the microwave and then stuff gluttonously into my pie hole while I watch Oprah on my wide-screen TV. In order to do that, I need to have an income. At my time of life, that means I have to have a job. In order to have a job, there has to be some kind of civilization, some kind of organized cooperation between people, and some peace and security. I've had life both ways, and I'm here to tell you that living out of a backpack when you know you have a home to go back to and living out of a backpack when you don't have anywhere else to go are two vastly different experiences.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not disparaging that kind of preparation. I'm even going to talk about how I do it in later pages. A person has to have a hobby, after all... Still, despite the fact that the evacuation of southern Mississippi, Alabama, and south east Louisiana was the largest successful evacuation in United States History, how many people needed their 'live alone in the woods' preps? Despite the fact that Louisiana ranks last in many things, and New Orleans is generally agreed to be the arm-pit of the nation, the residents of New Orleans collectively carried off the first, last, and only successful evacuation of a major U.S. city EVER. To my knowledge, only one person actually walked out of the disaster area. Everyone else was smart enough to use a vehicle.

While living in the wilderness has its advantages, if you have no money in your pocket, no home, and no means of living, then we have a word for that. Homeless. Before political correctness, the word was bum or hobo. After a disaster, you can use the word 'refugee'. When in that situation, the first thing that some people do is start lamenting, "Where's FEMA? Where's the government? Where is someone to give me something that I feel owed?" Folks like that could be found at the Superdome and the Convention Center in some abundance.

There are some other people who, when finding themselves facing refugee status, make their way to their carefully prepared remote Bug Out Location where they intend to be self-sufficient for as long as they need to. Sitting around in your mountain cabin with a bunch of books on sustenance farming is endlessly fascinating for a week or three, but in the end, you're going to miss microwave popcorn. I'm not disparaging that kind of preparation either. If I had the wealth to buy an abandoned missile silo somewhere, I'd write the check and be writing this blog from deep underground, safe from nuclear war, alien invasion, and government mind control. Seriously. I'd do it in a heartbeat - and before you ask, yes, I'd get laser guided robot sharks if I could afford those too.

The rest of us, though, are in the middle. We want to avoid the Government Vacation Plan, but we also don't have a long-term shelter in our ASSETS column. We have to appreciate our options (which I hope this blog is helping you do!) and we have to have a long term strategy in mind. All the preps we have been making so far are all about tactics. Tactics are the specific methods that we use to achieve the objectives of our strategy. Even hard-core survivalists rarely think of their strategy. They are frequently too focused on the tactics and gadgets. (I have been guilty of that before, and I'll likely be guilty of it again. Gadgets are just *so* sexy. Gads... Now everyone knows I'm a geek. Alas...)

We are going to talk about strategy as we go along, but for now let's plant that brain-eating bug in your head so that you'll start thinking about it. The goal in all our planning is revealed as a three part strategy. The first part is to escape any danger and to safeguard our Health and our Wealth. The desirability of that is self explanatory. (We have yet to talk about staying home as a means of 'escape', but we're coming to it.)

The second part of the strategy is that once we have escaped the immediate danger, we want to be able to put our lives back in order as soon as possible. We want to go back to our homes, return to our jobs and schools, resume making our car payments and surfing Arfcom after the kids are in bed. If we are unable to go back to our homes, then we need to find (or build) new homes, get new jobs, find new schools, avoid having the car repossessed as long as possible, and go back to surfing Arfcom after the kids are in their new beds. We want to go back to making preps and planning for Armageddon, because the *idea* of post-apocalyptic survival is a lot sexier than the actual realization of that idea.

We want to ESCAPE, and then we want to find HOME. If your plan is (like mine was for so many years) to ESCAPE and then wander the earth, then I invite you to reconsider that. If you can manage it, going back to your old neighborhood and making a stand for civilization is one of the most useful things you can do. If you cannot manage it, then we need to find some kind of stable living arrangement that doesn't involve eating roasted road-kill.

What we have done up to now is the basic minimum to ESCAPE and then to REBUILD.

The third leg of the strategy after ESCAPE, and doing the HOME thing, is to use the rebuilding as an opportunity to grow wealth. The cheat-sheet version is ESCAPE - HOME - PROFIT. By Profit, I don't mean to sell water for five dollars a gallon to thirsty people, and I don't necessarily mean material wealth either, although that happens too. I have had friends open successful businesses post-Katrina that they would never have gotten off the ground before. Again, we'll talk about all of that as we go along so that you will be ready if the opportunity presents itself.

There is, however, one more angle on this that doesn't involve disaster. If you HYST and have your plans, strategies, and tactics in place, your life will be better on several levels - and who wouldn't want that?

Shane

EVENT - Yellow Alert



Living in any region affected by hurricanes - and especially on the gulf coast - is like living on a missile range. You never know when things might get exciting...

Fortunately, whoever is firing the missiles doesn't shoot too many of them, and their targeting system obviously leaves much to be desired. You can also see these missiles coming from a long way off, and track their slow progress. This allows all of us living on the missile range to avoid being there when a missile lands.

Over the last 50 years, six major hurricanes have affected Louisiana. That's an average of one every eight years or so. Louisiana has a large coastline, so just because a hurricane affects Louisiana, not all Louisiana residents are greatly impacted.

Despite the risks being low, whenever a hurricane enters the Gulf of Mexico, we all watch it. People who are new around here and have never experienced this are rather excitable, and take to running around in some kind of mild panic trying to buy some bottled water and last minute groceries. Those of us who have lived here for awhile tend to watch hurricanes with a bored malaise.



When the Missile Tracking Center...er...National Hurricane Center issues a tracking advisory, we all check it and read the relevant theories about where the storm is tracking and why. When we saw this we said, "We won't even get rain from that one. We didn't get any rain from Ivan...not one drop..."

The people in west Florida, on the other hand, were not in the position to slack. They had work to do. Of course, everyone takes these predictions with a grain of salt. Modern meteorology is a fascinating science that mixes the latest advances in technology with voodoo and chicken blood to concoct an untrustworthy 'forecast' that has the same vague feel as one of Nostradamus' quatrains. Despite all the various weather prophets, the weather goddess rarely reveals her hand ahead of time. That's why we all dearly loved a man named Nash Roberts.



People outside the religion (and region) may know Mr. Roberts as a man who helped develop the modern 'science' of Meteorology. He was on the first airplane to pierce the eye of a hurricane. The man knows more about weather than the entire staff of the Weather Channel combined.

Local people recognize Nash as something else. He is the True Prophet of the Weather Goddess. Nash would get up there on TV, with his black markers and paper drawing map from the early 1950's and work his voodoo. Wherever Nash said a storm was going to go, there it went. All the younger guys were standing around with their computer models and their dicks in their hands while Nash proved time and again that he is the Master.

Nash retired in 2001 to take care of his ailing wife, and the Faithful were left without their Prophet. We have no True Guidance except for the cunning priests of NOAA and all their fancy-schmancy technology. Without Nash to guide us, we are at the mercy of the NOAA. We don't like it, don't trust it, but we need it because it's all we've got. While some people take the NOAA predictions as Gospel, there are others of us who use various other forms of augury, from anticipating the worst to reading the zodiac. I, myself, like to use water vapor motion maps and bear fat. I had the feeling that Katrina would be closer to us than the weather service was predicting.



It came as no real surprise then, when the updated forecast came out at 5:00. NOW we've got something to be excited about. It's time to turn off Oprah and start watching The Weather Channel. We've got 72 hours on the outside to be ready if this is going to be the big one. Our bored malaise turns into an eyes-wide-open malaise and we start asking questions like, "I wonder if Home Depot has any plywood left?"

Still, Ivan went in on that track, and not a drop of rain fell on my house, so even such a close pass wouldn't be so bad. I'd need to have the house ready and be prepared to lose electricity for a little bit, but it would just be a long weekend. I just didn't trust those water vapor maps...they were trying to tell me something, and I had that queasy feeling...



When the 11:00 advisory was posted that night, I was heavy on the REFRESH button. The image didn't change, though, and a pattern was starting to emerge. I was starting to GET A CLUE.

The eyes-wide-open malaise turns into a HOLY SHIT! moment and now it's time to say a prayer to Saint Nash Roberts even though he isn't dead yet. I try to go to bed, but my brain is spinning like a Cray Supercomputer. I'm reviewing my situation, which isn't all that great. A storm of Katrina's size and magnitude isn't something I am entirely certain my house will withstand. I've got a four year old and a three month old baby, and I have a duty to take them out of harm's way. I have no idea, however, where anything is that I need. I most definitely do not Have My Shit Together, and I've got 48 hours on the outside to make an escape.



I awake at 4:00 AM, CST, which is when they post the 5 AM EDT update. This is getting better all the time...

My friend Billy (Hi Billy!), was in pretty much the same situation I was in. He lives a few miles from me, and has two daughters about the same age. Our three month old babies were born in the same week... Billy, however, had his shit together in a way that I didn't, so he put the kids in the van that morning and drove them over to Lafayette to visit with family for the weekend. No mess, no fuss, no lines at the gas pump, no traffic. Zoom.

I, on the other hand, was still trying to figure out if we were really going to need to leave. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I was having a bad case of stupid that morning for some reason. When most disasters hit, they are rather sudden. The earth quakes and your house falls down. There really isn't any time to think about it. You're either ready or you aren't. With a hurricane, you sort of sit there watching it. You start cheering for it like it was a sports team, only you're cheering, "MISS! MISS!" This leads us to two lessons that are closely related. The first lesson is:



Shane

EVENT - Eject! Eject! Eject!

WARNING: GRAPHIC IMAGES ON THIS PAGE



KNOW WHEN TO PULL IT!

'It' being the ejection handle. Both the real one and the metaphorical one.

My friend Rick (Hi Rick!) told me that when he was learning to fly military aircraft, one of the instructors said, "When you need to eject from the aircraft, you will not have time to make that decision. You need to make that decision now, today, and then follow through when the time comes."

I'm paraphrasing here, but if the airplane is on fire, it's time to get out.



If you HYST, then you have a parachute. If you don't HYST, then you don't have a parachute. It's going to be a hard landing. If you rely entirely on the helping hand of Jesus, that doesn't work out so well sometimes.

Knowing when to eject - which is a metaphor for bug-out, evacuate, head for the hills - is harder than actually doing it. There is another principle that military pilots use, called the OODA loop, which is Observe, Orient, Decide, Act. It looks sort of complicated on paper...but it's really a fairly simple idea.

Observe - "Hey! There is a massive hurricane coming this way!"

Orient - "Holy atmospheric disturbances, Batman!" For us that's GET A CLUE.

Decide - "Hey! We need to get the flock out of Dodge!"

Act - "OK, Fire up the 12 Hour Plan!"

Problems arise for various reasons. One of them is sheer laziness. You don't really **want** to pack all your crap in the car and take a long drive. Especially not with little kids. There are plenty of reasons - excuses, actually - *not* to make the hard decision. There's also a little voice inside your head that says, "Well, these weather people have no idea what they're talking about anyway, so maybe they're wrong. Let's just wait a little longer and see what happens..." Of course, if Nash Roberts had said we should go, then everybody would have went - but like I said, he wasn't available. Why? Because *he* was

evacuating. If we'd have known that at the time, every man, woman, and child would have fled instantly. When the Weather High Priest gets out of Dodge, you should too.



This leads to the second lesson. If a train is coming, GET OFF THE TRACKS. Pedaling faster isn't really an effective strategy... If you happen to find yourself standing between two steel rails with a train coming - no matter how slow - it's a good idea to get off the tracks. You cannot play cat and mouse with a train. For the metaphorically challenged, that's both a metaphor and a concrete rule. I'd turn it into a simile, but I'm going to get off this track now.

I was standing dead smack in the middle of the tracks on Saturday morning, August 27. I was stuck in the STUPID loop - endlessly fascinated by the approaching train. I just sat there in front of the computer, hitting the REFRESH button. Fortunately, I was not always a domesticated male, with wife, children, and a mortgage. I had long ago thought clearly about my hurricane evacuation criteria. My criteria was that I would stay for a slow moving category two, or a fast moving category three. Katrina was possibly going to be a category five storm at landfall. A category two storm is a bad weekend. A category three storm is a bad weekend during which the neighborhood bully takes your lunch money. A category five storm is like Hiroshima or Nagasaki, just not so much fire.

After the domestic man hit the REFRESH button for the thirty seven thousandth time, the Man with The Plan said, "OK, dumbass. It's time to pack the car." Not being the

kind of person to argue with myself, I reached on down to pull the ejection handle...but then I realized that it's just a metaphor.

"Get in the car, kids! We're goin' on a road trip!"

Unfortunately, not Having My Shit Together, things weren't that easy. Yes, I could just toss a few things in the car and go. Pre-Katrina, that was the usual thinking of most people. Just pack a weekend bag, leave town for three days or so, and come back when the coast is clear. The other prevailing plan was to make sure that you had three days of food and water in the house, because for some reason three days is the magic number - after which everything supposedly goes back to normal. I'm really not sure where that rule of thumb comes from...but somebody should GET A CLUE...

Let's play a game. Really play! Don't just fake the orgasm on me. OK. Ready? Pretend you're going to leave your house in 12 hours. Now get up and go walk around your house. Try to figure out all the things you're going to pack, the things you're not going to pack, how you're going to fit all that shit in the car... Is the car ready? Have enough gas? The things you pack are the only things you will save. Everything else will never be seen again. REALLY imagine it. Are you *really* only going to pack three days worth of clothes, a few personal items, and your collection of Elvis CDs?



My personal theories on such matters were radically different from the norm. If nothing else, I appreciated the magnitude of a category 5 storm. I had read and seen many things about many hurricanes including Hurricane Andrew and the aftermath of that in Florida a few years before. I had a CLUE. If I was going to leave, I was going to leave like I was never coming back. I had a clear understanding that my house might be nothing more than a pile of sticks within 72 hours. I was going to be sure to take everything with me that I knew I should take, and that was going to cost me something that I was quickly running out of - time - because I absolutely did NOT Have My Shit Together.

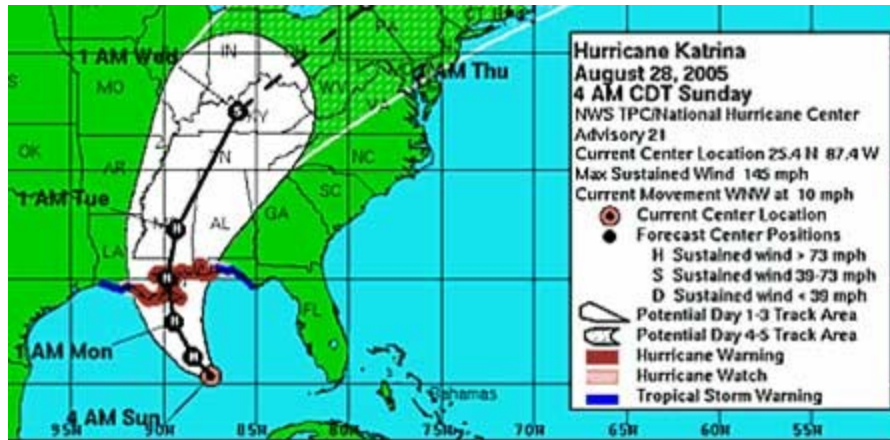
I did manage to pack it all up in about 12 hours - which is a ridiculously large amount of time. When we start putting together our 12 Hour Plan, I'm going to tell you about my experience with that nightmare... Let's gloss over that for now, and just say that without the agreement, cooperation, and support of my wife, it never would have happened.



I stopped my furious escape preparations long enough to watch the 4:00 PM NHC Advisory. I kept a radio on, and Mayor Nagin first called for a voluntary evacuation of the city of New Orleans at 5:00 PM (August 27) and subsequently ordered a citywide mandatory evacuation at 9:30 AM on August 28, the first such order in the city's history. In a live news conference, Mayor Nagin predicted that, "the storm surge most likely will topple our levee system," and warned that oil production in the Gulf of Mexico would be shut down. President Bush made a televised appeal for residents to heed the evacuation orders, warning, "We cannot stress enough the danger this hurricane poses to Gulf Coast communities." Many neighboring areas and parishes also called for evacuations. By mid-afternoon, officials in Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, Lafourche, Terrebonne, and Jefferson parishes had called for voluntary or mandatory evacuations - because by this point, the tracking map first did this:



And then did this:



Despite a lack of faith in the Weather Prophets, even the unbelievers had a pretty good CLUE at this point. The little NWS tracking maps are kind of quaint. Like a throwback from the 1970's. The high resolution satellite imagery is a little more gripping on the bowels. Like this:



Which leads me to another lesson called LISTEN TO YOUR BOWELS!

While everyone who was under this particular gun understood the gravity of the situation, little did any of us suspect the the full magnitude of the colorful, overly dramatic nature of the play that would unfold in the coming weeks involving the social, economic, emotional, political, and personal dramas that would engage the nation for many weeks to come. Many of us - almost three years later - are still engaged. All we knew at the time was that the politicians were so stirred up that they had called for MANDANTORY evacuations - which is something that they could not legally do, something they did not

have the power or resources to enforce, and something which did not work anyway.

Why it did not work, what might have worked, and what actually happened are topics for future pages. At this point, I'm only trying to paint a very broad picture of the stage upon which this play is performed.

Any person with as much brains as a cucumber ought to have had a CLUE by 4:00 AM on Sunday morning, August 28th. Unfortunately, for reasons that we will explore in time, some people failed to make the right decision...

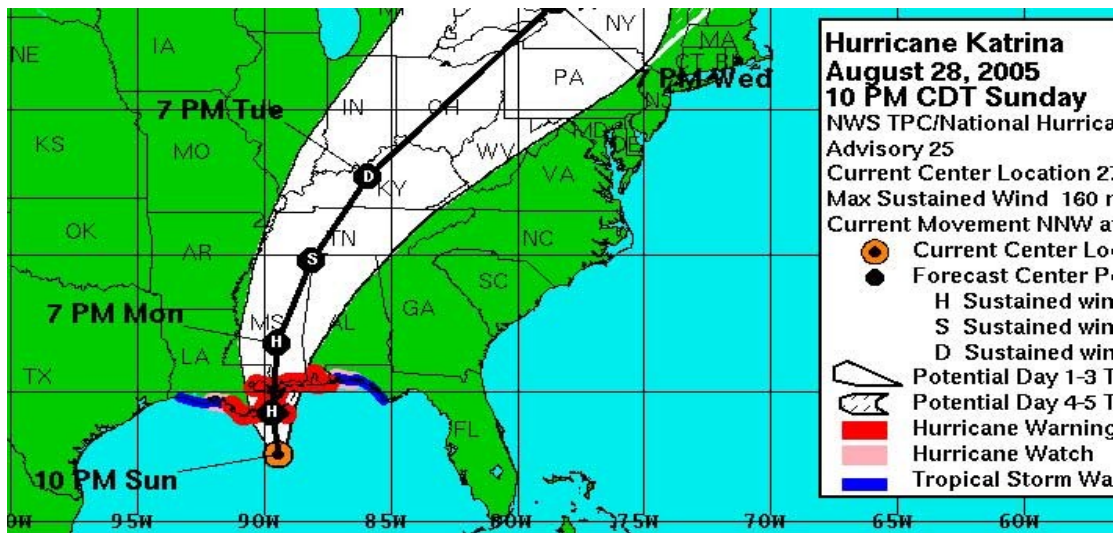
In less than 48 hours, people would start dying. The events that we had all prayed against - to whatever gods - were about to unfold. The fuse was lit. There was nothing left to do but get as far away from the bomb as possible. To pull the EJECT handle. To GET OFF THE TRACKS before it was too late. For some people, it was already too late - they just didn't know it yet.

We are quickly passing from the time when I am boring you with metaphors to the time I start letting reality speak for itself. I cannot apologize for reality...



Shane

EVENT - 12 Hours Till Doomsday



According to the [NOAA](http://www.noaa.gov), Katrina officially made landfall in Louisiana 6:10 a.m. CDT on August 29 "with sustained winds of 140 mph (a strong category 4 hurricane) during landfall and possessing a minimum central pressure of 920 mb (third lowest on record) at landfall, Katrina caused hundreds of deaths, prolonged human suffering, and widespread devastation along portions of the US Gulf Coast."

The landfall time isn't the important time, because hurricane force winds extended out for 120 miles. Anybody waiting landfall to start doing something proactive about their own survival has waited too long. I have often wondered about the tourists who wound up 'trapped' here, because they obviously had enough warning to leave.



Let's rewind time a few hours and begin again at 10:00 AM on August 27, 2005. I made the decision to leave at 9:00 AM, and the NWS Advisory at 10:00 AM only served to support that decision. My wife, Andrea, was *really* unhappy about having to leave, and so was I. We both recognized, however, that we were standing on the tracks and it was time to move.



I have already told you that we did not Have Our Shit Together. At one time, we very definitely did, but life circumstances had been rocky for a few years. We moved into this house in 2004. The year before that we were putting a lot of work into the old house in order to sell it. After we moved here, Andrea had a miscarriage and then after a few months was pregnant again with Madeline. Madeline was born in May of 2005, just 3 months before hurricane Katrina. The time needs of young children, coupled with the sleep deprivation they cause, had caused us to become lazy.

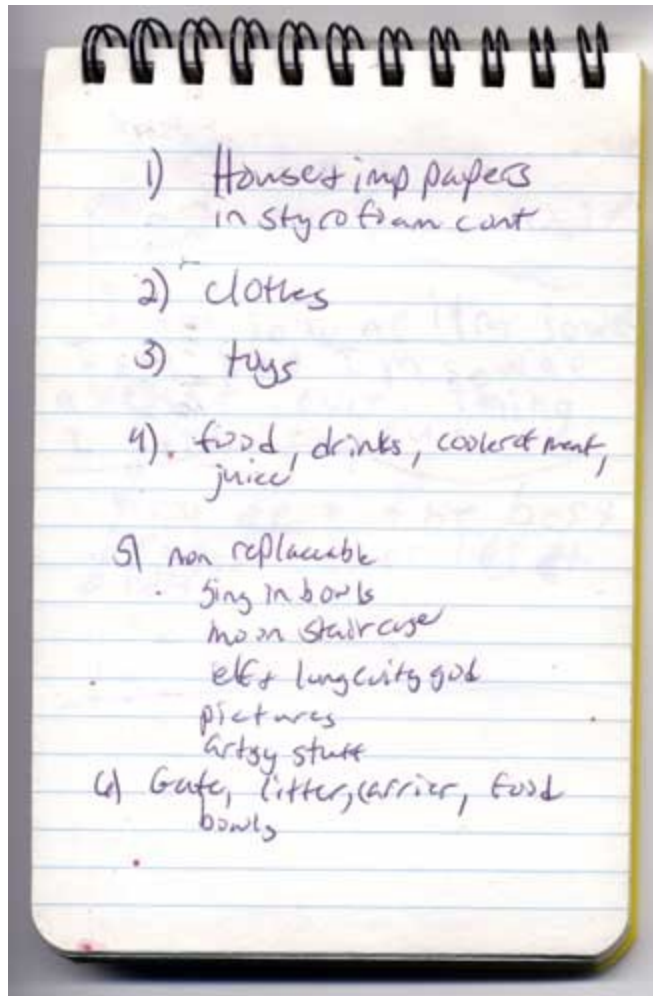
"Yes, yes, we'll get organized again soon..." We had actually started taking some steps in 2005 to sort out some of our preps and to get at least SOME of our shit together. I had all the house documents and the tax returns in one place. I had no idea where things like my birth certificate or Social Security card were. I was going to quickly learn that even things that I thought I had were actually not where I thought they were. Continuously shoving things into the message cubbies at the end of the kitchen counter had spilled over onto the counter...into a drawer...and a couple of boxes. I'm sure I could have lied to you and told you that I had a unique filing system and that I was actually well organized, but the truth is that I was using the Prayer filing method. "God, I hope I can find this if I need it..."

Ya'll don't open those top cabinets, OK? Could be dangerous...



Wouldn't it have been nice to have had all of that crap organized neatly into a little file box that I could have just put in the car? No such luck...

I took the task of setting up the cars. I was very adamant about only taking one vehicle. To me, this made the most sense. It would take twice as much gas to take both cars, and money was tight enough as it was. If we took one car, we could share the driving. I knew that I could drive a lot longer than Andrea, and that she got sleepy when on the road too long. I had a concern that she would be in trouble if we were on the road for many hours. Andrea, on the other hand, was very adamant that we take both vehicles.



I can now tell you beyond any doubt that Andrea was entirely right. We carried more wealth out of the disaster area, but having both cars in Houston was a necessity. I had failed to consider the vehicles as a resource of many colors - but I'm getting ahead of myself. While I began preparing the vehicles, Andrea was furiously trying to find and assemble our documents. Andrea likes to organize her thoughts in lists, and in the middle of trying to collect the documents jotted down her game plan in my notebook. This is her list. Yes, boys and girls, #1 actually says that the house and important papers are in a Styrofoam container. One of those cheap Styrofoam ice chests that you buy at the dime store. Even now, I am abjectly horrified...

The rest of the list reveals a woman's mind on the subject of what is considered critical to take under such circumstances. Without Andrea and I having a clear and careful dialog on this subject, I would never have appreciated some of these things. As it is, we had a quick and calm discussion about what we were going to take, and came to an easy agreement.

OK, OK.... That's total bullshit. At some point, I was standing in the middle of the kitchen screaming, "I'M TRYING TO SAVE OUR LIVES!", and she screamed back,

"I'M TRYING TO SAVE OUR MEMORIES!" Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that emergencies are hard on marriages. Figuring this shit out in advance can keep you out of divorce court.

Andrea and I certainly agreed on #1; critical documents. She's got clothes as #2, but I could care less about clothes. I can buy clothing anywhere, and the #1 most donated item after a disaster is clothing. We are a nation awash in clothing. We must have powerful shame issues or something... #3 on her list is toys. Likewise, I could care less about toys. #4 is food, etc. Again, I'm assuming that I'm going somewhere that has food, or why should I bother? Of course, you have to appreciate a woman who has 'cooler of meat' on the priority list.

My wife finally shows some logical sense with #5; non-replaceable items. She lists a few specifics. Singing bowls, the moon staircase her grandfather made, some little figurines we have, pictures, and our 'artsy' stuff, which all fits in a box. #6 was for Sapphire, our 23 year old Siamese cat.

Well, I'm not going to continue to embarrass myself, but Andrea was mostly right on these items as well. The 12 Hour Plan is a mixture of the male and female ideas of disaster packing. Before I actually get to that, though, I want to talk about the timeline. I would like to tell you that once the decision was made to leave that I sucked it up and got down to workin' hard. The truth is that I was a whiny biatch for a few hours. That and the fact that I did not Have My Shit Together cost me time. How much time? Well, let's talk generally about the timeline. The timeline is valuable because it teaches us a few things about Having Your Shit Together.

We've already noted that hurricanes are a very unique kind of disaster in that they are the one of the few kinds of disasters that you can see coming a long way off. If you *know* that a nuclear bomb is going to detonate in your city in 72 hours, that's a tremendous advantage. Most disasters happen any time of day or night, suddenly, with little or no warning. Katrina, though, was kind. The warning started on Friday night, and the writing was on the wall early on Saturday morning.



So, it's 10:00 AM, and it's obvious that the timer on the bomb reads 48 hours and counting. If you HYST, you can easily run your one hour plan and take the family on a

little visit to some family, some safe distance away. (Like my friend Billy.) You could even just go on a little vacation out of the path of danger. See some sights. Catch an amusement park. Go camping. It's the weekend, after all, and we Have Our Shit Together. Put the kids in the car and go. We can even take extra time and we don't have to rush. We can stretch our one hour plan to a two or three hour plan. A good number of people did just that. They got out early, and they had easy traffic, short lines at the gas pumps, and could travel at their leisure among other people who also Had Their Shit Together. The police, firemen, paramedics, doctors, nurses, and other 'critical' personnel who either cannot or chose not to leave for storms have prepared their families to leave, and leave they will. People who do not Have Their Shit Together are running around like idiots trying to find their birth certificate, Social Security card, and the GPS unit that was supposed to be somewhere that it isn't...



If you weren't convinced at 10:00 AM, you should definitely have a clue at 4:00 PM. It's still not too late to have decent traffic and travel with people who have a sense of urgency. If you HYST, it just takes you an hour to pack the car.

The people who do not Have Their Shit Together are tired. Mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually exhausted from trying to manage the kids, find crap that they should have ready to go in the first place, and snipe at their spouse.

The people who never think about this stuff in the first place are all at the supermarket trying to buy bottled water that hasn't been in stock for the last few hours. They have to content themselves with whatever is left on the shelves at this point, which isn't likely to be much.



The timer on the bomb reads 36 hours and counting. By now, everyone who Has Their Shit Together is gone. People who did not HTST and who have managed to put it together are leaving in larger and larger numbers.

But... It's getting late. Putting yourself on the road after a long, exhausting day is a recipe for disaster. Still, some people do it. We decided to get a few hours of sleep (HA!) and leave in the morning.

There are some people who follow the old school method at this point and pack a small bag. Three days worth of clothes and a few things which they throw in the car and drive away, leaving everything of value in their home. Expecting, evidently, to return in a few days to find everything like it was. If you are going to assume that it's going to be bad enough that you need to leave, why would you assume that you're going to come home to find everything where you left it?



When you can feel the heat of the train's headlight on the back of your neck, it's time to GET OFF THE TRACKS! We left right after 6:00 AM on Sunday - along with everyone else who decided to leave at the last minute.

At this point there are a number of people who are only now starting to get a CLUE, but it's a little late to do anything much about it. I call these people the Hopeful. Some of

these people ended up spending a few days camped on their rooftops...others ended up dead.



My lack of readiness cost me 18 hours. If I had Had My Shit Together, I would have just packed up the car in an hour and had an easy drive. As it is, my failure to properly prepare cost me a lot more than just those 18 hours, because I put my family on the road late, with many other desperate, unprepared people just 12 hours before Katrina would start the show in earnest. The nightmare of that drive is another story in and of itself.

Behind us, though, there were three kinds of people that remained. The Hopeful kept hoping. Those who hadn't been paying enough attention to have a CLUE were suddenly faced with the option to stay home or move to the government camp in the superdome. The police, firemen, paramedics, hospital staff, and other people who out of choice or duty stood ready on the front line did not sleep that night. The lights went out, the dawn did not come, and Katrina swallowed them all in the darkness.

Shane

PLAN - 12 Hour Plan

Yes, boys and girls, it's time to talk about the Twelve Hour Plan. At this point, you should have:

1. Laptop Bag (or box of important documents)
2. BOB (Bug Out Bag)
3. Complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera
4. 60 Second Escape Plan
5. Collection of people to communicate with
6. Dependable escape pod.
7. One Hour Escape Plan



Let's rewind time a few hours and begin again at 10:00 AM on Saturday morning, August 27, 2005. (This is the last time I'm going to do that, I promise...) I made the decision to leave at 9:00 AM, and I was finished with all my preps by 9:00 PM on Saturday evening, August 27, 2005.

What did I do for those twelve hours? I was trying to Get My Shit Together...



Yes, I had decided to pull the EJECT lever, but then I discovered that I had a problem. The parachute was on fire... I spent a lot of time running around in my underwear screaming, "WHERE THE F*** IS MY XYZ!? I CAN'T FIND THE G** D*** XYZ! WE NEED THE !@#\$\$% XYZ!" When I tell you that it's a GOOD IDEA to Have Your Shit Together, I'm not just speaking from a theoretical standpoint.

What *should* I have been doing for those twelve hours? Well, that's what we're here to talk about.

Let's wrap our minds around the purpose of the Twelve Hour Plan. First off, there is very rarely any call for this kind of escape plan outside the context of hurricanes. There are few other emergencies and disasters that can be seen from that kind of distance in time. There are, however, other reasons for the Twelve Hour Plan. I like to call the Twelve Hour Plan the 'Just In Case' Plan. Twelve hours isn't the only timeline either, although I set it up that way. It may be a 24 Hour Plan or a 6 Hour Plan depending on the circumstances. Don't get too hung up on time. We have already seen that getting out sooner is better than later.

The 'Just In Case' part comes in where you look at a particular situation and you say, "OK, let's pack the car, Just In Case." It doesn't mean that you are necessarily going to leave at all, but it doesn't cost you anything to pack the car and be *ready* to leave quickly. The neighbors may think you're out of your mind, but if you're like me, they already think that.

Look at that tracking map above. That map is both an actual fact in the context of Hurricane Katrina, and a metaphor for talking about all other disasters. Landfall (the bomb detonation) is predicted at about 8:00 AM on Monday morning. 46 hours from now, things could get dicey around here... That means that *if* the prediction is true, *then* we need to bug out. At this point, we don't know where the storm is going (bomb is planted). We only know that if we live anywhere in that white prediction zone, that we need to be ready to leave, and we ought to be packing the car at this point. We need to start our 12 Hour Plan, and we need to move it along. If the storm dissipates (bomb is defused) or goes somewhere else, we can always unpack the car.

What can we do, though, that the One Hour Plan doesn't cover? For the most part, we'll be checking our Bug In (stay at home) preps, collecting last minute supplies, and hardening the house. Let's begin.

We see some remote danger that may or may not affect us. Alternatively, there is a chance that the boss will give us Monday off, but we won't find out until Saturday morning. Either way, let's pack the car Friday night so that if we get that long weekend, we can make the most of our time on Saturday rather than wasting the morning packing the car. Just In Case...

Execute the 60 Second plan - but with some modifications. You don't have to rush. Make sure that you do it properly.

Execute the One Hour Plan

Again, with modifications. There is no desperate need to rush. You have time to wash clothes and pack them. You may not want to actually pack your comfort items until the last minute. You may have time to go out and fill your gas tank, saving that 5 gallon spare you have for later. Maybe you have time to make it to the bank and take out some extra cash. Depending on your location and your neighbors, other people may have the same idea. Don't waste time in traffic or crowds. If you buy something, buy it on credit. Don't waste your cash.

Additionally secure your home

Take an inventory of your supplies. How many days of food and water do you have in the house? What kind of disaster supplies do you have? We haven't talked about this yet, but you should already have an inventory of these things. We'll be talking about that and doing some work in our workbooks on later pages. Also make a list of things that you

are low on, may need, or would like to have on your return. Check the toilet paper supply! What this list may look like will become clearer in the next few pages.

Harden the house. Depending on your location, this will mean different things to different people. The thing to do for hurricanes and zombie attacks is to board the windows. If you have prepared beforehand for this, you will have plywood pre-cut and anchors already secured around the windows so that you just slap the boards up and spin the nuts onto the anchors. If you have shutters, you can close them. There are all kinds of things for this. You may, however, live in an area where there is no call to board your windows. Does it make any sense to do it in hurricane areas? Yes and no. I did not have the opportunity to board my windows before Katrina, and none of them broke. Even so, would I have *liked* to have boarded my windows? Yes. Why? Because boarded windows and doors are a deterrent to the casual looter. It's also a deterrent to the casual rescue worker looking for survivors. Is it really of any value against the storm? Yes. We'll be examining some photographs later that will prove this to you.

Clear the yard. This is something we do for hurricanes because anything in the yard could become an airborne, wind-blown missile. That's actually some kind of bullshit, though, because if a storm is bad enough to pick up your potted plants, then your house just isn't going to be there when you come home. Still, it's a good idea to secure everything to keep it from being blown all over creation or otherwise stolen by someone looking for a new garden hose.

Perform secondary tasks

Things like wash clothes, move things that you aren't going to take with you to the second floor or attic in case the water rises, and cover things with tarps in case the roof comes off...

The assumption here is that you are going to be leaving. When you come back, your home may not have essential services like electricity, water, sewer, or gas. You should do things with these services that you cannot do without them. Washing clothes is a big one. Wash everything that's dirty, and then start on things that are not quite dirty. Like bed linens, for instance. Strip the beds and wash the sheets, blankets, and everything else. Once they are dry, slip them into a trash bag and tie it off. Fresh sheets when you come home are nice...

Cleaning may also be something to do. Scrub out the tub. Wash the shower stall. Brush out the toilets. These tasks are things that you can have older children and teenagers do. That keeps them busy, keeps them out of your hair, and if you have to be rescued out of your home later, the rescuers won't know that you normally live like a slob.

If you expect rising water, move things to higher places - like the second floor or attic. Many people saved things this way when Katrina came knocking. Everything on the first floor was lost, but the second floor was high and dry. Estimate the threat to your home, and arrange things so that they are protected as much as possible.

Do the Doomsday Dance

Do these things only if you are actually leaving.



Empty your refrigerator and freezer. If the power goes out for more than a few hours, everything will spoil, and *that*, my friends, is very high on the Nasty-Nasty scale. It's like one step below 100 decapitated rats in your bed. Really. There are four methods for handling this task, and only three of them work.

The first method is to do nothing. Bad idea. Trust me. I cleaned out a *lot* of refrigerators and freezers, and I never want to do that again... If the smell doesn't get you, the maggots will. The second method is to take everything out of there and go bury it in the back yard. That works nicely if you have time to dig a BIG hole in the yard. I don't like this method.

The best method is either three or four. Three being to have some extra garbage cans ready, dump everything into the cans, tape them shut, and secure them somewhere where they won't blow or float around. The fourth, and likely best method is one that nobody figured out until after Katrina - and it's what we all *wish* we had done.

For this task you will need to have (and therefore keep) on hand a box of Ziploc freezer bags and a dozen contractor garbage bags or trash compactor bags. The thick, heavy ones. Regular trash bags will do in a pinch, but the heavy ones are better. The first thing to do is to dump everything overly perishable. Clean out your freezer and refrigerator. Dump out the milk, toss the yogurt, cheese, and petrified cold-cuts that you found in the back of the vegetable drawer and anything else that has a spoilage date that is fast approaching. Take out the ice-trays and dump out any ice in the ice maker and turn it off. You will want to save a bowl full of ice cubes for later. Don't let them melt.

Take everything out of the refrigerator and put it into the Ziploc bags. Everything. If the refrigerator melts down, you want to be able to just take the bags out and toss them. Likewise with the freezer. Take everything out and put it into the ZipLoc bags and then put a few items into each contractor bag and fold them closed neatly. Slip that back into the freezer. The last thing to do is put a bowl of ice cubes on top of one of the bags in the freezer. If you have more than one freezer, you will do this for each freezer.

When you come home, if you still have ice cubes, then your stuff is still good. If you have a bowl of water, or a bowl of flat ice, then throw everything out. It has melted or melted then re-froze when the power came back on.

Rather than face the horror, many people simply disposed of their refrigerators and freezers. That's a huge loss of wealth in terms of food and the appliance itself. I managed to save my refrigerator, and I'll tell you how on a later page. If I'd have prepared properly, I wouldn't have had to go through that nightmare...

If you do not have any other way to secure your property - like boarding the windows and doors - nail the doors shut. Well, all but the strongest door, which you'll want to nail from the outside so that you can get back into the house at some point. My garage doors actually blew open, and I could have lost the garage if the wind was blowing in the wrong way. I have significantly strengthened the doors and added a massive iron bolt, so I don't expect that to happen again...

The last thing to do, as in the One Hour Plan is to make a sign. Make it out of something durable, seal a piece of paper in a ZipLoc bag, or spray paint it on your door. The sign says, "EVERYONE EVACUATED. NOBODY HOME HERE." If you don't do that, rescue workers *will* do whatever it takes to get into your house and 'check for survivors'. We'll be talking about this in later pages. **MAKE THE SIGN!**

The Twelve Hour Plan is still an escape plan. The expectation is that you will be leaving. Exactly how you prepare your home for whatever event it is that you are escaping from will depend on many factors that I cannot completely cover. Exercise good judgment and think for yourself. If your largest threat is wildfires, what can you do to prepare your home from that? Maybe nothing. Volcanic eruption? Same thing... If your major threat is tornado, then a 12 hour plan isn't really of that much value - but thinking about it will make sure that you have protected the right things by moving them

into your basement or tornado shelter ahead of time. Same way with earthquakes, I suppose.

The 12 Hour Plan serves two additional purposes aside from the obvious purpose of getting you ready to leave while giving you the option to stay. The first is that it forces us to think about a looming disaster in a rational way and encourages us to GHOST (Get and Have Our Shit Together.) The second thing it does is serve as a bridge from the Bug-Out Plan to the Bug-In Plan, because it makes us start thinking about our home in new ways - ways that we will cover in future pages.

For now, though, we are leaving. The sky looks strange. The clouds are moving in an odd way. My Escape is packed, my wife's Honda Element is packed, we haven't had any real sleep for the last 48 hours, and now, at 6:15 AM on Sunday, August 28, we are going to put this show on the road. Our objective is 364 miles away – seven minutes shy of six hours on a sunny day with good traffic. Sugar Land, Texas, here we come!

Shane

PLAN - Special Needs

There is no workbook page for this entry, but if you have Special Needs, you will want to create your own documentation as discussed here.

OK, I'm sitting in my BOV about to drive away from what will be a disaster area in 24 hours. What I haven't yet talked about with you is Special Needs. You'll want to put some pages into your workbook and make some adjustments to your individual plans that revolve around Special Needs that you may have.



The most common form of Special Needs revolves around medical necessities. You may take certain prescription medications, for instance. You will want to continue to follow your recommended doses, especially during an emergency. Your body, mind, and spirit are under a lot of stress, and now is *not* the time to miss your blood pressure medicine. If you can afford to do so - and even if you can't - it's a good idea to have an extra 30 day supply of your prescription medications on hand. Be sure to rotate it regularly. Speak to your doctor about your desire to fill an extra prescription. As long as it isn't for narcotics, you shouldn't have a problem.

If you are on any kind of narcotic therapy - like long term pain management - and you need to travel, be sure to keep your prescription bottles with you. These have your name on them and will prove to law enforcement and medical personnel that you aren't a street junkie.

Another very common Special Need is glasses and contact lenses. If you wear glasses, you should always have a spare pair. Likewise with the contacts. You should have a nice hard case for the glasses, and small amounts of any care products that you need to clean the contacts. Your 60 second plan should involve putting on your glasses. You should always keep your glasses in the same place next to your bed while sleeping so that you will always know where they are in case of emergency. Having another spare pair in the car at all times isn't a bad idea if you can afford it.

We next get to Special Needs that are not so common. One of Virginia's friends is in a wheelchair, and she has special needs that have to be addressed during bug-out. I don't know what those are, so if you are in that situation you need to write down *exactly* what you need and what you need to do.

My mother is on hemodialysis, and requires special care. When she left the area for Katrina, she needed to be near a facility that could provide the services that she needs, so that was a consideration when making a decision on where to go. She has a list of facilities in various areas that can handle her condition, and if you have similar needs it would be very prudent for you to know where the places are that can sustain your life if you leave your home city.

If you are undergoing any out-patient therapy, especially therapies that involve advanced medical facilities (like cancer treatments), you will want to have a list of facilities that can continue your treatment if you leave your home city. You should keep up to date documentation on your on-going therapy so that you can inform anyone who needs to manage your continuing care.

Whatever Special Needs you have, you should prepare for them carefully. Running out of medication or not receiving critical care is on the bad end of the whole good-bad scale...but you knew that already.

Another kind of Special Needs are the Special Needs of others. If your parents or grandparents are in a nursing facility you should speak to the facility director and find out what the protocols are for evacuating the people who live in them. If your parents or grandparents do not live in such a facility and either live on their own or live with you or another family member, you should coordinate with your entire family for their needs. Older people should be treated just like children in some ways and in some cases. While there are plenty of 80 and 90 year olds that are quite capable of handling their own affairs, there are many who cannot. They may not have the physical strength, mental acuity, or even common sense to evacuate themselves or to make other preparations for even their basic needs. During Katrina, many elderly people ended up dead or trapped in

deplorable conditions because the family left them behind assuming that they were either being cared for or were caring for themselves.

The same thing is true for anyone who cannot physically or mentally manage their own needs, whether or not they live in a care facility of some kind. You should coordinate with other family members to insure that grandma is taken care of. Grandma is either gonna go to Memphis with your sister or to Houston with you. Weird cousin Ernie goes with Aunt Martha to Uncle Frank's house (locked in the trunk if necessary). Sometimes this is not possible, especially if you have other responsibilities or special needs yourself. It's a bad idea to mix people with mental problems with children. If you have to leave someone behind for whatever reason, that can be tragic on many levels. Trying to manage your own family, however, may be as much as you can handle. You need to think clearly about this and make good choices - whatever those choices may be.

Caring for people with Special Needs is a daunting task even in the best of times. Caring for them when SHTF is an especially difficult nightmare even if you have prepared properly. I have no doubt, for instance, the course my mother - and indeed all people who require hemodialysis - would take if they could not secure critical care. You must think about this clearly and get a CLUE.

If you have a person in your family who does not travel well, has some kind of phobia about riding in a car, or who would otherwise completely freak out during SHTF, then you should talk to your doctor about having a small supply of sedatives on hand for such emergencies. Having someone freaking out in the car while you're trying to escape from zombies is *not* going to be helpful.

Just to be clear, YES, I DID JUST TELL YOU TO DRUG YOUR SPOUSE OR YOUR CHILDREN if they need it. Don't bullshit yourself. Talk to the doctor and get some knock-out pills or something. It'll keep you from killing them or wrecking the car. Benadryl works in a pinch. Nyquil works too, but it has alcohol in it so I wouldn't recommend that.



The other side of Special Needs doesn't involve humans, it involves pets. I'm going to have some additional things to say about pets later, but for now let's talk about them in this context. If you are going to take your pets with you, that requires some forethought and planning. You will need a proper travel kennel and provide for their needs on the road. Where you can go is limited to places that will take pets, and if you have large pets or a large number of pets, that can be difficult. If you choose to leave the pet home and leave them extra food and water, that can work out poorly as well. People who own large numbers of pets may not be able to evacuate all of them. This is something to think about BEFORE you buy that second Great Dane... My personal philosophy is to not own pets at all. I understand that other people feel that their pets are part of their family and would not live without dogs, cats, birds, or other critters in their lives. That is a decision that everyone has to make on their own. Just know, however, that if you make the decision to own pets then it is your responsibility to care for them. I'm going to have some pretty shitty things to say about *some* pet owners later on, and I am going to tell you some real pet horror stories, and generally get really righteously pissed off in the context of the subject of people who didn't properly take care of their animals.

The third kind of Special Needs involves wealth, and I am specifically speaking to collectors here or persons who have in their possession one or several items of important historical significance. Owners of collections will know that collections of things can be very valuable, and they can also be difficult (or impossible) and expensive to insure. If you own something special, you should make prior preparations to secure it properly and move it if you have to (if you even can.) The one anecdote I will tell you here is about a man I know who had a very large collection of firearms in New Orleans. He had over 250 guns in a vault room in his home...on the first floor. Bad planning, that. The room itself was impervious to fire, protected from all but the most skilled thieves, and even climate controlled; but it wasn't water proof. Ouch.

No matter what your special needs are, you should have an advanced strategy that includes:

1. When possible, start your evacuation preparations early and evacuate especially early.
2. Wear a Medic Alert bracelet, or some other identifier indicating your condition and needs.
3. Have coordinated plans with the facilities in the places to which you may evacuate. Call them in advance and find out what their protocols are, and what you will need when you arrive.
4. If you are going to be staying with friends or family, make sure that they can accommodate your Special Needs. If they cannot, then you need to make other plans. If you show up at my house with a Great Dane, that's not going to work for me. I'll take you and your twelve kids, but I don't want a monster in my house that poops bigger than I do.

You should make workbook pages for each of your Special Needs and prioritize them appropriately. You should invest the time, energy, and money to insure that you can care for your Special Needs. You should get a CLUE about Special Needs.

Otherwise it'll be *your* momma they fish out of the canal, and you won't sleep right for the rest of your life.

Shane

***** ADDENDUM *****

This next piece was not written by me, but was written by an Emergency Room doctor who dealt with Katrina evacuees coming to his city. It is *the* best information I have read from this perspective. It was specifically written by the good doctor for inclusion here, and it is used here with permission. (Thanks, TheGrayMan!)

Medical needs:

One of the biggest logistic problems in any large-scale disaster is the medical piece, both injuries from the storm, and the medical needs of thousands of displaced persons. The latter virtually always overwhelm local/nearby facilities, particularly when there is storm damage to medical infrastructure. In the case of Katrina, consider that Charity Hospital and University Hospital collectively accounted for a large chunk of the inpatient beds in New Orleans... and both hospitals were effectively knocked out. 75% of the bed capacity of that city has not been restored post-Katrina, and they also lost 70+% of their physicians.

As for the "government vacation plan," the New Orleans airport became the primary med-evac location for "medical needs" evacuees during Katrina (several ad-hoc triage/treatment locations were established on freeway overpasses close to the city center). The medical staff at the airport included five DMAT teams (Disaster Medical Assistance Team), which typically include 25-50 PAs, nurses, EMTs, physicians, etc per team. They were **completely overwhelmed**, as they ended up treating **several thousand** high-acuity patients in a span of several days (that's almost a year's worth of high-acuity patients for a mid-size hospital ER). Incidentally, those DMAT teams and other FEMA assets were pre-positioned **before** the storm, putting the lie to the common politically-motivated assertion that the feds "did nothing."

Hundreds of critically ill patients were evacuated from area hospitals and nursing homes, taken to the airport, and forward-moved from there (there were many fatalities, as nursing facilities, hospitals, and long-term care facilities ran out of power, and their ventilators quit working... you can only "bag" a patient for so long until your hands get tired...). The "walking wounded" who weren't obviously dying or critically-injured were either given minimalist treatment at a triage point, or were greatly delayed in reaching definitive care, or other medical help.

Needless to say, this is **not** the situation where you want to run out of your blood pressure medications.

So what to do?

In the interest of not putting a further burden on already-overwhelmed EMS and NDMS personnel (as well as your own self-interest and preservation), you should have the following things ready to go **before** the disaster.

Records:

Current med list and allergies

Medical "problem list"

"Discharge summaries" from significant hospitalizations

Copy of a recent EKG

Copy of any cath reports and echocardiograms (if a heart patient)

List of your physicians, including office numbers

Insurance info

Medical gear: (if used)

Medication supply (including empty bottles, if out)

Oxygen, including concentrator or bottles

Monitoring equipment

CPAP/BiPAP machine

Nebulizer and meds

Portable power supply or inverter for using any of the above in a vehicle

With regards to records... access to good records is absolutely key for continuity of care. You can land in the care of the **best** physician in the world, and if he has **no** idea of what has been done to/for you, he'll end up reinventing the wheel, at significant cost and risk to you. Medication lists with dosages and dosing intervals are pure gold to any physician you encounter, and they definitely need to know your allergies. A medical problem list is equally useful (though they can often figure out 90% of your medical problems with a quick glance at your med list).

Records are particularly important if you're a cardiac patient. Old EKGs, old cath reports, and old echos are specific things physicians want to see when they're working you up for presumed heart disease. Note: it doesn't have to be "chest pain" that brings you to the ER or doctor's office... the "cardiac disease" possibility can be raised by any complaint of generalized weakness, shortness of breath, "passing out," dizziness, etc. Any of those will make your doctor want at least an EKG... and then he'll want an old one to compare it to, and so forth.

Medical records are sometimes needed in a time-critical fashion, and with HIPAA regulations (yeah... thanks, Congress 🤬), **everyone** wants a faxed records release, then the records person (if the sending hospital even **has** one at night or on the weekends) has to find the records, copy them, fax them... then somebody at the

receiving hospital has to notice those records sitting on the fax machine (the fax ring is usually turned off so it doesn't add to the cacophony of beeps/buzzers in the ER). Hand-carrying those records with you can **greatly** expedite your care... **I can't stress that enough.** Even if it's an encyclopedia-sized file of records, shrink it down and put in on a USB thumb drive.

A couple of paragraphs are warranted here for chronic pain patients.

If you're one of those unfortunate individuals living with chronic pain, you know all about living with agony that would drive other people off the deep end... you hurt every day. For the record, I don't envy you, as you have a dependency on narcotics that can get you into extra trouble in a disaster situation. Unfortunately, while narcotics are used to make life livable for all kinds of people with all kinds of nasty chronic pain conditions, prescription drug abuse is a huge problem in the United States, and much of the street supply of prescription narcotics is diverted from legitimate medical use by theft, deception, fraud, doctor-shopping, etc.

To avoid problems, I must **heavily** emphasize good record-keeping, as well as following your pain contract, and using a particular chain pharmacy as a regular patient (chain of your choice). As an ER doc, I can't prescribe narcotics in the type/quantity you're typically accustomed to, primarily because that type of thing isn't within the scope of my practice, and I don't want to run afoul of the DEA, LE, or state medical board. That's not to say I can't help you, but that help is generally limited to a short-term script to stave off withdrawal until you can get in to another pain specialist... but that can take weeks, and that pain specialist **will want records.** Having a letter/records from your pain-management doctor can bolster your credibility, and using the same chain pharmacy will likewise generate a paper trail that will help convince any provider you encounter that you're on the level, and not simply doctor-shopping for the weekend's party supplies. National chain pharmacies have centralized computer systems, and they track prescriptions. The doctor can call the pharmacy and verify that your Rheumatoid Arthritis actually DOES require you to get 120 percocet per month, every month.

Narcotic withdrawal sucks... but isn't usually life-threatening; you'll just **wish** you were dead while you're going through it. This isn't conducive to good mental/physical health while you're simultaneously attempting to recover from whatever disaster has displaced you... so plan ahead. **Have records,** and if you're able, consider hoarding a small supply of your regular meds by halving dosages, etc. Then rotate out this "emergency stash" so it doesn't go out of date.

Also, **be discrete about your med stash...** anyone with nefarious purposes who spots it (like in a shelter or evacuation point) may recognize that it's worth hundreds or thousands of dollars on the street... and it'll disappear the moment you turn your back (or they'll mug you for it). Imagine evacuating to the Superdome, and having some sharp-eyed addict start spreading the word that

you've got a ton of "vices and 3's" (Vicodin and Tylenol #3) that you ain't sharin... 'nuff said.

One additional note.

Some of this may seem like overkill... but believe me, you'd rather have more than not enough. Having records will also help differentiate you from the con artists who seem to crawl out of the woodwork during disasters. After Katrina, we had many people who had medical needs... yet we also had plenty of people who begged/pleaded/demanded med refills (often for narcotics or benzos), methadone, etc. We helped everyone we could, but we were scammed multiple times. People altered scripts, overdosed on the meds they were given, eloped from the ER after getting their narcotics, and so forth. Some people use disasters to selfishly feed their own addictions and agendas, and by so doing, burden an already-overwhelmed system. In fact, they're hoping you're too busy and harried to check up on them, and that you'll simply give them a script to be rid of them. These grifters create a skepticism towards disaster refugees that most refugees don't deserve. It's wrong... but it's human nature. Liars, thieves, and addicts who take advantage of disasters deserve nothing but scorn, arrest, and jail time.

If you evacuate, you should take all of your medications with you, particularly if they're controlled substances (like narcotics). Take any empty bottles (these help verify your prescriptions). You might also consider asking your physician for a prescription for a 30-day emergency supply of your regular medicine. Beware: some insurances only authorize refills at certain intervals, and they don't have any sort of provision for "emergency supplies." Be prepared to pay for your 30-day evacuation supply out of your own pocket.

In addition to meds, take any sort of "durable medical equipment" that you regularly use. This includes CPAP or BiPAP machines, Oxygen concentrators, Oxygen tanks, or other monitoring equipment, etc. Whatever area you evacuate to may not have access to similar equipment, or have already exhausted their supply by providing them to people who didn't prepare. If your 5-hour drive turns into 20 hours, do you have enough oxygen to make the trip? If you shelter-in-place, do you have backup power to run your concentrator? Also ensure you take your cigarette-lighter adapter for your durable medical equipment, or an inverter if it only runs on 120v.

A little foresight directed towards your medical needs can not only make you more comfortable, it can quite literally save your life.

Plan like your life depends on it... because it just might.

PHILOSOPHY - Flowchart of Survival Strategy

Aw, crap. Not more philosophy! Yeah, I know some people tire of this, but it's important. *Really* important. At least I'll make it entertaining for you. Let me first amaze you with my graphic design skills and show you something that I have carefully crafted to look like I did it at the kitchen table with Virginia's box of crayons. I call it the **Flowchart of Survival Strategy**.



Do you like it? It isn't terribly difficult to follow, and we'll be coming back to this flowchart over and over again.

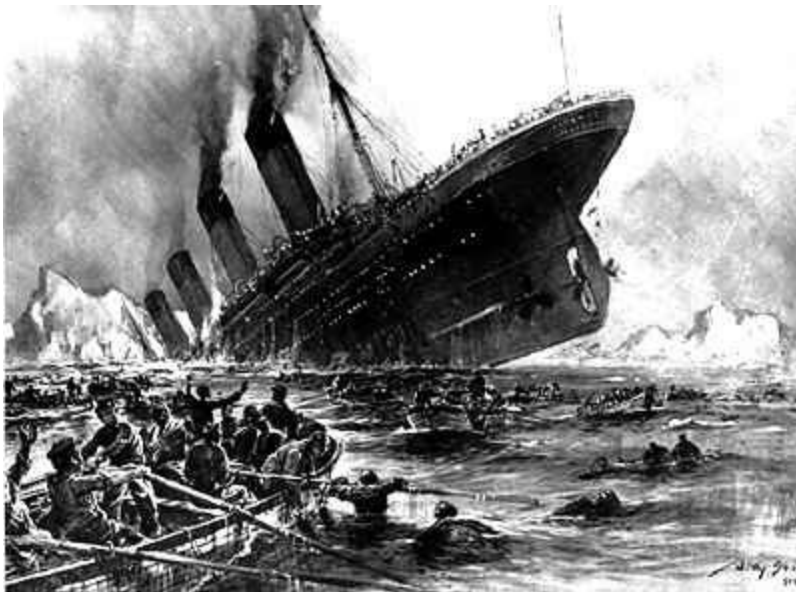
If you have been following along, we were home, SHTF, and now we've decided to exercise the LEAVE option. In order to do that, we executed various escape plans. Well, actually, we developed various escape plans. The escape plan I actually executed was more of a HOLY SHIT! plan.

We aren't entirely done with escape plans, and we are going to continue to refine them as time goes on. You are going to specifically need to refine your own escape plans as we go along and you think about more and more things in new ways. (Yes, I know that's very ambitious of me...)

Right now, in our timeline, I am sitting in my driveway in my Ford Escape, about to drive away. What do I have, though? What have I done? What is it that I have assembled - almost instinctively - without actually realizing it?

By now you have realized that the 60 Second, One Hour, and Twelve Hour Plans are not actually three separate plans. They are just different aspects of the same plan, and it's a plan that helps us put together something unique - a survival kit that none of the books, magazines, or doomsday websites *ever* teach you how to make.

Hopefully, when I said, "kit", you hollered, "SURVIVAL IS NOT A KIT!", which is true. For many years before Katrina, there was always something in the back of my mind whenever I read survivalist literature. I was never able to articulate it. I had drank the survivalist Kool-Aid, and my mind was poisoned by it in some ways. I didn't actually come to fully appreciate exactly what that something was, or understand how to articulate it for many weeks after Katrina. The thing itself is embodied in the Flowchart of Survival Strategy, and the thing itself is just that - STRATEGY. In order to articulate it, we're going to use a metaphor that will help us clearly think about our survival strategy - both long term and short term.



Yeah. The Titanic. Bet you didn't see that coming...

In order to think about Tactics and Strategy in the context of the Survival Game, a shipwreck is the simplest of examples and the Titanic is the simplest of shipwrecks. You know the whole story already, so we're on common ground.

The best tactic for surviving a shipwreck is to board a lifeboat and row away from the sinking vessel. (Duh!) The various books, magazines, and doomsday websites are excellent resources for the tactics. They tell you all about lifeboats. They will tell you how to purchase or make the finest lifeboat, equip your lifeboat with the all the best things, fanciest gadgets, and large quantities of high quality provisions.

That's good. It's good to have a nice lifeboat.

Past that point, though, we have to ask the simple question, "What is the strategy of a lifeboat? What is its purpose?" If you got into a lifeboat with a bunch of people who told you, "Don't worry! We are professionals! We have been preparing for shipwrecks all our lives! We know exactly what to do!", what would you want to know?

The first thing I would want to know is, "So...what's the plan?"

Sit with me a moment in this lifeboat. There are a number of people here. Smart people. People with skills. People with forethought. Men and women of a Serious Nature. We ask our simple question, "So...what's the plan?", and they respond without skipping a beat. "We're going to SURVIVE! We've got lots of SUPPLIES, and we can FISH and HUNT, and we know all the right things to do to LIVE in this LIFEBOAT! We KNOW how to distill SEA WATER, and we can DRINK our own URINE until the still is up and RUNNING!"

"Uh... So the plan is to stay in the lifeboat?"

"Yes! We have everything we need! We can live in the lifeboat indefinitely! We are self-sufficient! We can live in the lifeboat for years! We don't need anything or anyone else. We have everything we need right here."

"What about either trying to get rescued or making our way to dry land?"

All you get in response to that, though, is...the 🤪 look...

I want you to think about that. I want you to seriously appreciate the sheer madness of that. That is, though, what a lot of the books preach. Some kind of idyllic self-sufficiency. We seriously need to rethink that strategy...

While I enjoy a nice warm glass of urine as much as the next guy, I *really* want to be in a different lifeboat. I don't know about you, but I want to be in a lifeboat that is seaworthy, yes, but light and fast. I want to get back to dry land, cold beer, juicy steak, warm blankets, and hot pie as soon as possible. Drifting the open ocean with a bunch of people - no matter how skilled or prepared they are - is not my idea of life.

I don't want to be a sustenance farmer. I don't want to live in a cave. I want my MTV! Why don't any of the books, magazines, or doomsday websites ever cover that all important goal? Why hasn't anyone written a book about what you need to do in order to

create a society, to organize a town, and to build a city after TEOTWAWKI? Because it isn't sexy. It doesn't feed our American Fantasy of Apocalypse. Guns, ammo, food storage, and wilderness survival skills are real things that people can cling to to assuage their fears. Is that stuff important? Yes. I've got all that stuff too. Is it the most important thing? Not by a longshot.

I used to be one of those people who would go to sleep at night petting my 80 pound backpack whispering, "My Precious... My Precious..." If Katrina taught me nothing else, she has taught me that you not only have to Have Your Shit Together physically, you also have to Have Your Shit Together mentally. You have to have your mind right. If your mind isn't right, your stuff won't be right either. You have to keep your eyes on the prize. The books, magazines, and doomsday websites are selling us something. They're selling us fear. That's FEAR - False Expectations Appearing Real. The solution set they sell us includes a heavy bug-out bag full of expensive shit that is just about worthless for building a society. They've got the right mindset, but they have the wrong tool kit. (That isn't to say that you should get rid of your backpack yet. We're going to work on improving it in two dozen pages or so, take a few things out of it, and replace them with things like leadership skills, group dynamic psychology, and how to build a community.)

Is SHTF a scary idea? Yep. You know what's scarier than SHTF? Never going home again.

Is being able to sustain yourself in the lifeboat important? Hell yes! Is it the most important thing? Hell no! The most important thing is to use that clever lifeboat to get us back to civilization. To get us HOME!

Let's get off this lifeboat for a moment, and talk about Home. Home with a capital 'H'. The Flowchart of Survival Strategy starts with Home. Home is not just bricks and mortar. Home is an idea. No, I'm not going to recite any "Home is where the heart is." or "There's no place like home.", kind of poetry. Home is both more and less than that. I want you to engage me in this: If I ask you to show me your Home, what are you going to show me? Are you going to show me the walls of your house? Your wife? Your furniture? Your kids? Your guns? Your carpets? Your ammo fort? What? What is Home to you?

Home is not just where you live, the stuff you have, or the people you surround yourself with. Home is the place where you are comfortable to be. It's the place where you feel (and are) both safe and secure. (Safety and security are NOT the same thing!) It is a place for which you have, and from which you draw, affection. If you do not have such a place, even though you may live in the most palatial mansion on Earth, then you are as homeless as a naked street junkie. The idea of Home is the place from which all your 'survival missions' start, and it is also the end goal of those 'missions'.

HOME IS NOT A KIT!

My desire is that you will appreciate that when you leave home, you're also going home. (Which I will admit seems enigmatic at first.) The route you navigate may get complicated in the middle. It may be difficult. You may face many storms, long days, sleepless nights, government bureaucracy, and a definite lack of hot pie. No matter what, the primary strategy is KEEP MOVING FORWARD!

I'd like to tell you that as I started up my car and put it in drive that I knew that - but I would be lying. I had no idea. I was scared. All I knew at that point was that I was leaving home, and while I had all the skills I needed to drift in the ocean, I didn't have the skills I needed to get Home. I would have to invent that as I went along. I would need the help of people who may not be smarter than I am, but they are certainly wiser. I didn't appreciate what I was doing because in all my many years of thinking and dreaming about this day, nobody had ever told me that my ultimate goal was to go Home.

That's prosaic, but the truth can be somewhat less heartening. I am not going to tell you that it's all gonna be OK in the end because it isn't. You don't just go home. It sucks in the middle. You have to fight for Home, and sometimes fight hard. You are not guaranteed any victory, and if you are not diligent you can end up living in a place that will never be Home. If you are exceptionally unlucky, you may never find Home again. I'm going to show you people like that before much longer - and frankly, it's one of the saddest things you ever want to see.

KEEP MOVING FORWARD is the strategy. From the second you leave Home, Home is the goal. The tactics you employ are going to vary depending on the situation. You will fight many battles. You will experience victories and setbacks. In a very real way your lifeboat and everything in it are weapons of war. They are the weapons you will use to fight - and fight hard - for Home.

I mean that both metaphorically and literally. Everyone knows the traditional weapons of war - guns, ammo, food, and water. These things are important, have no doubt, but they aren't the only weapons you will need in your fight for home. Guns won't get you a job. Ammo won't find you shelter. Food won't turn the lights back on. Water won't help you file insurance claims, deal with government agencies, or find a contractor to fix your roof. In all of your preparations, know very clearly that the primary focus of all your bug out plans is to go Home - in every sense of the word. Every step of the way, when packing your lifeboat, ask yourself the primary question; "Do I have what I need to quickly and efficiently start a new life in another place or to re-establish my life when I come back here?" Do I have what I need to provide not just for my short term survival, but also to provide for my return to civilization? Do I have what I need to do my part to actually help rebuild civilization?

If you have followed The Plan up to this point, your answer to all of those questions will be, "Yes!"

If you have followed the Traditional Lore of Survivalism, then your answer will be, "No.", despite the fact that you are sitting in the woods with guns, ammo, water, and 5000 cases of MREs - and won't you feel like a dumb-ass?

For now, though, we have delayed too long. I have pulled to the end of the driveway, and now it is time to launch this lifeboat into the Ocean of the Unknown and *row*. My tires ease onto the river of pavement and I begin navigating with tens of thousands of other people who are trying to get off this sinking ship.

If I had known then what I know now, when Virginia asked me at the end of our street, "Daddy, where are we going?", I could have told her the truth. I could have told her, "We're going home."

As it is, I was not so fortunate, and I sputtered a bit, mumbled, "I don't know.", and proceeded to drool on myself or something.

For the sake of history, though, let's agree to lie about it and say that I said in a cheery voice, "Don't worry, Virginia. We're going Home!"

Shane

EVENT - Row! Row! Row!

When you finally manage to put your lifeboat in the water, ROW!

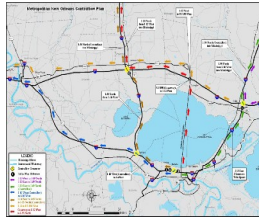
We have all seen the scary monster movies and other Hollywood depictions of widespread disasters that trigger spontaneous evacuations, and so we all know what that's like. There are accidents everywhere, people driving like maniacs, people shooting at one another, bridges collapse, there are explosions, fires, and tornados, flying cows and ominous signs in the heavens. The military is moving here and there and causing traffic jams. Space aliens block the interstate with their space ships, and it's generally a total horror.

Well, that sells movies, but it doesn't happen that way. At least it didn't happen for the Katrina or Rita evacuations. What did happen is so boring as to make you fall asleep at the wheel. I'd like to write a story of the desperate struggle we endured to make it to Houston, fighting off zombies and giant arachnids, but the truth is that I didn't see a single giant radioactive lizard the whole time. Barring that, then, let's talk about it, look at some scenery, and discuss some general strategy.

In order to understand the evacuation of south-east Louisiana, we have to cover a little history and understand the government's plan of action. Since the subject has a direct impact on my plans, I spent many hours sitting on the throne reading things like "Traffic Impacts and Dispersal Patterns on Secondary and Low Volume Roadways During Regional Evacuations," and "Louisiana Highway Evacuation Plan for Hurricane Katrina:

Proactive Management of Regional Evacuations." You wanna talk about BO-RING! If you have insomnia, these will knock you out faster than a cyanide drip.

The bottom line is that the plan known as Contraflow - a process in which all Interstate lanes are made one-way leading out of the threatened area - works. "There is little argument that hundreds of thousands of people were able to move to safety in the short period before the storm arrived (and) a major portion of the exodus took place during the 12 hours before the storm arrived."



Contraflow was developed by a task force comprising the Louisiana State Police and the Department of Transportation and Development. In a thumbnail history, one of the studies notes that contraflow first emerged as a planning scheme after Hurricane Floyd in 1997 and then gained deeper traction after Hurricane Georges in 1998. For Hurricane Ivan in September 2004, contraflow created more headaches than speedy escapes because the coordination was off. By the time Katrina came knocking in 2005, all the snags had been ironed out.

The traffic data collected by various studies shows that in a two-day stretch more than 500,000 vehicles carrying more than 1 million people fled New Orleans and the surrounding area. The "Temporospatial Analysis of Hurricane Katrina Regional Evacuation Traffic Patterns" study indicates that it took 38 hours, starting Saturday at 8 a.m., to get roughly one million people out of harm's way, or "approximately half the time previously estimated by the United State Army Corps of Engineers." I highly recommend that you read it if you want to give yourself seizures.

No matter what we say later about government during a disaster, the Louisiana State Police and the DOTD in Louisiana are two organizations that definitely Have Their Shit Together. The plan works. No matter what you think about people who live in Louisiana - we collectively did something that has never been done before. We evacuated an entire city (and surrounding region!) in less than 48 hours. One problem with the plan, however, is that the normal flow of traffic is completely replaced with the contraflow plan. If you are not familiar or aware of the contraflow patterns, you may waste a lot of time or end up routed to the wrong place.

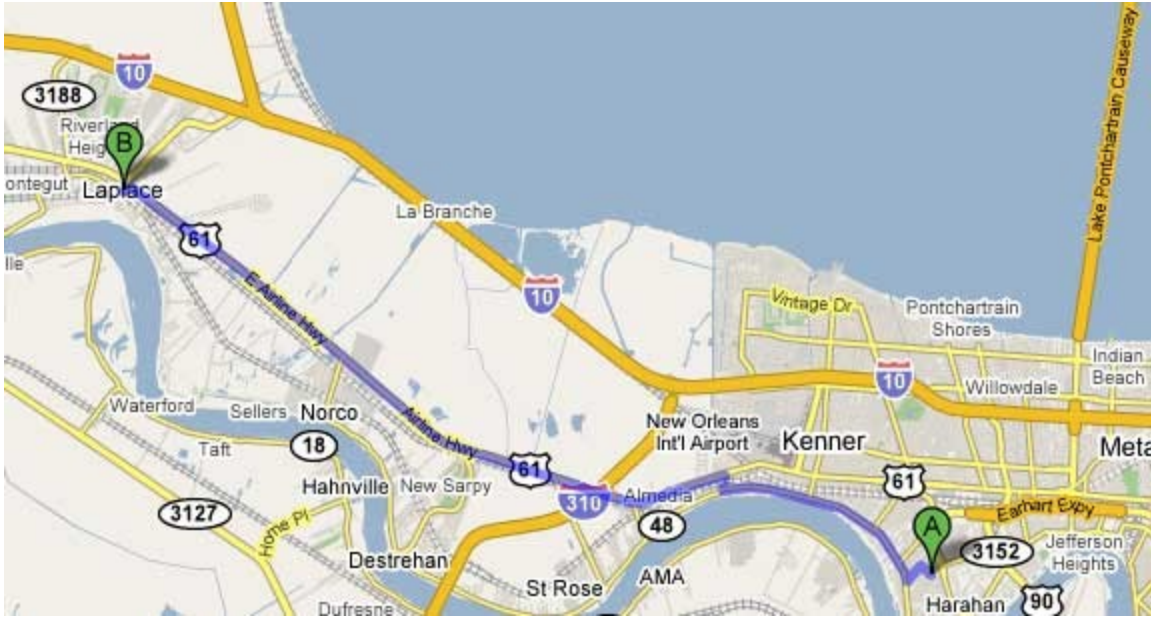
Since this page is so boring, let me spice it up with something I first heard from Jeff Hall during his excellent lecture Finish the Fight, which I have now heard twice. The metaphor is, "If your plane runs out of gas, you have a problem. If you don't fly the plane and find a place to land, then God will find a place to park you." The rules during such an event are **Aviate, Navigate, and Communicate**. In our context it's Drive, Navigate, and Communicate. We'll cover Driving in a moment, but the first order of business is to

Navigate - to find a place to land. We have to know where we are going. If we don't know where we're going, then God will find a place to park us.

As it is, my smart and clever wife handled this critical item while I was busy running around in my underwear looking for the XYZ. We had a map to Uncle Ken and Aunt Aggie's house. I knew that I had to get onto I-10 West to Houston. In order to do that, I had to know the proper contraflow entrances to that part of the interstate that would put me on that path. The Communicate part came when Andrea called them and they said that we could land there. Almost everything else in the middle comes under Driving - so let's drive.



We are leaving at the last minute - the *very* last minute. The roads are already crowded. On the way out we had to stop at Andrea's office to secure a few items, but that didn't take us more than ten minutes and the office was on the way. We took the Airline Highway route because that was less crowded than trying to make it to the interstate right away. We entered the interstate contraflow pattern on I-10 in LaPlace.



All along the way, we were tuned to WWL 870 AM, which is the official emergency station of New Orleans - and actually the entire Gulf Coast region. 870 has a 50,000 watt transmission station, and at night you can hear it coast to coast.

Remember that communication works both ways. Gathering information in real time from the radio is very important to your navigation. Have the radio pre-set in your car to the emergency channels. Pay attention to them. They will tell you about traffic flow in real time and help you make decisions. Your escape paths will depend on your local area. New Orleans is fairly unique in that it is actually an island. You cannot leave New Orleans without crossing at least one bridge - and usually you have to cross many. We are bordered on all sides by water, and that limits the routes we can take. Always know *all* of the escape routes out of your area and be flexible enough to select the best one for your escape.



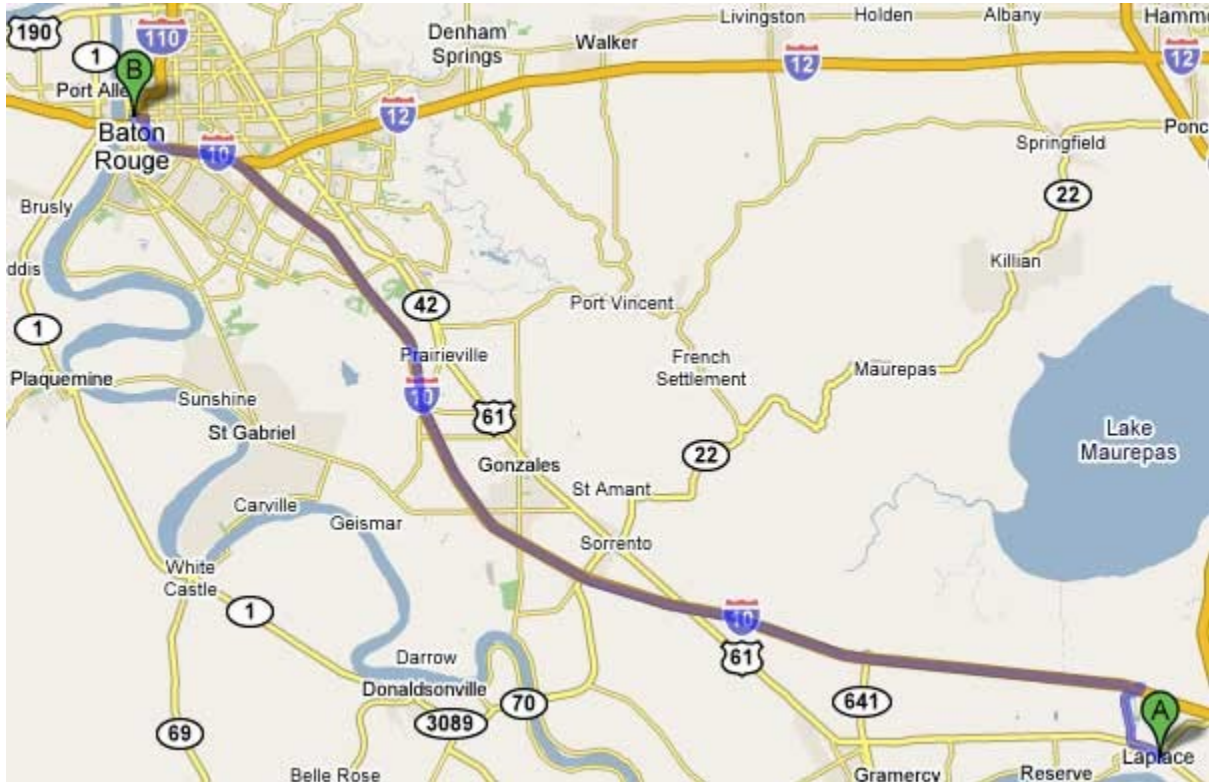
The first thing I noticed when we made it onto the interstate was that traffic was very orderly. We were moving slowly, but we were moving. Traffic sped up and slowed down periodically and I kept my eyes far ahead in traffic so that I would be ready for these surges and slow-downs. We were running an average of about 35-40 MPH, with bursts up to 55 and slow spots down to 15 or 20.

Nobody was having any road rage. Nobody was trying to weave in and out of traffic. Nobody was shooting anybody else. We were people who all had the same goal and the same purpose - to get the hell out of here - and we all cooperated instinctively, courteously, and with a kind of grim determination.

The second thing I noticed was that people were carrying all kinds of the craziest crap. People had the things that I would expect - like campers, trailers, and cars packed to the roof with clothes and things - but they also had things that they shouldn't have. Things like furniture, appliances, television sets, office chairs, barbeque grills, and other things that they should have left behind - at least in my opinion. More than a few people had obviously over-loaded their vehicles, and while I don't know how far over the limit they were, they were risking tire or suspension failure - which would mean that their lifeboat would sink. Not good.

I was also surprised to see many other vehicles with nothing but people in them. We'll be meeting some of those in just a little bit.

Stop and go traffic can be hard on automobiles, and especially automobiles that aren't well maintained. There were several break downs off to the side of the road, but other people would stop and help those who needed help. The Roadside Assistance people were out in force, all of the State Police were on duty, and ordinary citizens stepped up in places to change tires, look under hoods, and otherwise render assistance to people. Once we were out of the immediate evacuation zone - which was just before Baton Rouge, I suppose, I noticed that there were several local tow services and local mechanics who were augmenting the Roadside Assistance folks. I later found out that these were indeed volunteers who were helping people for free (in most cases) or at cost (in some cases.)



As we made it into Baton Rouge about three hours later - a drive that normally takes an hour - we heard on the radio that traffic in Kenner area (just west of New Orleans) had ground to a halt. Traffic was moving only very slowly if at all as more and more people were taking their last chance to get out.

We were still moving fairly well, but I was very concerned about how the traffic would be in Baton Rouge. Regionally, there are very few ways out of south-east Louisiana. One of those routes - the one we were taking - is through Baton Rouge. There aren't that many places to cross the Mississippi River, and the I-10 can bottle-neck there even under normal conditions.

As it turns out, we made it through there in less than an hour, and made our first stop on the other side to take bathroom breaks. We didn't stop long. I knew we needed to keep moving. We stopped in a McDonalds to use the restroom there and met a family of

four. Three older ladies with a young man (the grandson of one of the ladies) driving. They were asking us if we knew where there might be any hotels in the area because they were nearly out of gas and didn't have much money. They had absolutely nothing with them. They had an expectation that they would be returning home the next day and just wanted some place to spend the night. I explained that we were not locals, but were evacuating too, and we exchanged polite conversation while I was waiting for Andrea to come back from the bathroom with Virginia.

Part of that conversation was very telling later when I asked them where they lived. "Lower Ninth Ward.", was the reply. Ouch.

I took the opportunity to change Madeline's diaper and feed her a bottle. At only three months old, she wasn't capable of holding her own bottle. We pulled back on the road, and I noted that the whole stop was 16 minutes - longer than I had wanted.

My idea was to stop for some kind of lunch when we made it to Lafayette - the next major town past Baton Rouge. We would be technically 'safe' from Katrina at that point, and we could take a break. That's a drive that would only take about 50 minutes on a sunny day when a million people on the road weren't trying to evacuate. It took us a little over two hours. As we were in the middle of Lafayette and I was starting to think about the rumble in my tumbly, the information coming from the radio indicated that the interstate had become a parking lot in Baton Rouge, and between New Orleans and Baton Rouge things were coming to a complete stop.

We were riding a wave that was freezing behind us. If we stopped moving, we would be caught in the freeze. As it was, we were only averaging about 30 MPH, and I didn't want to get stuck. For the first time during this event, I got my mind right. My situation came into sharp focus. I had been communicating with other people on the road, both ahead of me and behind me, and I had a very good picture between that and what I was hearing on the radio. With a sucking sound and a huge *POP*, I finally managed to pull my head out of my ass.

From all the various communications coming in to me, I knew that traffic on highway 190 was a little better than on I-10, but I wasn't sure that the time I would lose taking the detour north would cost me more time than it would save. I made the decision to stick with I-10 because I knew that I would have more opportunities for food, fuel, and bathroom stops than on 190. With little kids, bathroom stops might become frequent at some point... We stopped at a McDonald's again and while Virginia was gnawing on a McNugget, I fueled both vehicles. On credit. I needed to save what little cash I had - a subject we'll come back to shortly.

With the clear knowledge that I did not want to end up frozen in traffic, I knew that this drive was to become a marathon. We *had* to KEEP MOVING FORWARD, and I applied a strategy I had long ago created and added a few tactics that I had been picking up along the way.

1. KEEP MOVING - Every minute you stop is a minute that something bad can catch up with you.
2. STOP BEFORE YOU NEED TO - Take advantage of rest areas or other comfort opportunities if they appear un-crowded and available. If you stop when you NEED to, then you might end up stuck in a crowded place, which will cost you time.
3. FUEL OFTEN - You never know when your next opportunity for fuel will occur. If you see a gas station with open pumps, pull in and fuel. You can let the rest of the family take a potty break while the vehicles are drinking gas.
4. DRIVE LIKE A HUMAN BEING - Remember that you are in a life boat. If you wreck the car (sink the boat), your situation worsens by many orders of magnitude. This is NOT a race. RELAX! Being angry, frustrated, or overly temperamental about other people's driving habits DOES NOT HELP!
5. OK, OK, THIS *IS* A RACE, but it's of the 'slow and steady wins' type. KEEP MOVING.
6. RUN HUNGRY. Don't stuff yourself with sugary treats or carbs. You'll get sleepy. Likewise, stay hydrated without doing something stupid like drinking a 32 ounce Big Gulp full of iced tea every hour because it will make your potty breaks more frequent.
7. COMMUNICATE - Let your family or travelling group know exactly what you expect at every stop. Encourage them to urgency. Minutes lost are minutes wasted. This is not the time to shop for souvenirs.
8. COMMUNICATE - Talk to other people who are also travelling. Find out what they have been experiencing. They may have knowledge of something that you do not.
9. COMMUNICATE - Whatever information you can gather from the radio or from cell phone conversations with other people will add to your decision making ability.
10. NAVIGATE - Keep your eyes on the prize. Only take a 'shortcut' if you are 100% certain you can navigate it.
11. COOPERATE with your fellow travelers. They are all doing the same thing you are doing, and you share the same goal.

There are some other things I learned along the way. If you are running with a trailer, for instance, be especially careful. I saw a number of those U-Haul trailers over-turned because some idiot tried to maneuver like he was a NASCAR driver. When you are carrying a load or pulling a trailer, give yourself additional room to stop. More people should learn to use their turn signals. (Refer to your owners manual.) Do not attempt to use the shoulder as a driving lane. Keep that clear for emergency vehicles, break downs, and other people who need to stop suddenly for whatever reason.

We met a number of people along the way who helped us or whom we helped when we could do so expediently. Their stories ranged from "We're going to Disney Land because we have our shit together and a large stash of cash.", to, "We're out of gas, out of money, have nothing but the clothes on our backs, buddy can you spare a dime?" The stress and anxiety level among people who Have Their Shit Together is notably lower than those people who have nothing together. I was somewhere in the middle, having just kluged my shit together in the last 24 hours.

There are some rules of thumb that will clue you in on the state of your fellow travelers. One of them is litter, oddly enough. The more panic people feel, the less they care about the niceties of society. Litter is a direct correlation with the morale of the people. The roadside, rest stops, and refueling stations were quickly full of litter. Not a good sign. The other thing I started to notice was that those items that I didn't think were appropriate for people to try to carry were starting to be discarded. We saw sofas, appliances, television sets, and other items discarded on the side of the road and in rest areas. Sometimes entire trailers worth of stuff were just abandoned.

People actively freaking out was not commonly seen, but weeping women and screaming children were common enough. Some men had that shell-shocked look. Most of us, though, had the grim determination thing going on. Everyone was polite, and everyone cooperated - but some people were obviously not having a good day.

Cell phone channels were clogged. It usually took three or four tries before a phone call would go through.

As the sun went down, the driving slowed even further. We were on the road for 15 1/2 hours, and averaged 23 1/2 MPH (which includes stops). If you are planning to bug out when other people are bugging out, I think it's reasonable to plan for the fact that you will probably not do much better than 20 MPH on interstate highways. Houston and the surrounding area could not pull off an evacuation at all when threatened by Hurricane Rita just a few weeks later. We're going to talk about some strategies for that when we talk about Rita and the Houston Lessons...

The continuing drive on to Houston was a slow, monotonous, urgent drive that I will not further bore you with. Some places ran out of fuel, but there was no extreme shortage on my route. I never let my tank fall below half. On some routes there was a shortage, especially in areas where traffic was moving slowly. There are some strategies for dealing with that which we will cover in the Hurricane Rita section.

There were several things that proved very useful. Having snacks and some bottles of water in the car was good for entertaining Virginia. Having extra towels was handy for when Madeline started projectile vomiting. (Towels are NOT optional!) Baby wipes, likewise. Having a towel to roll up and put behind my lower back was a blessing too. Having one of those portable DVD players for Virginia to watch was also very useful for general sanity.



There were several things that I would have liked to have had. I would liked to have found my GPS unit (which has mapping capabilities) but I could not find the thing despite wasting an hour running around looking for it everywhere. I would also have liked to have had a CB radio, although I am unsure how useful it would have been because I never managed to find that either. I would have liked to have had a small trailer, but I would have especially liked to have had a hitch mounted cargo carrier like the folding one pictured. That would have allowed me to easily carry additional fuel - although I didn't actually need to. A carrier like this would allow you to carry additional wealth - but remember not to exceed your vehicle's load limit. These can be had for under \$200, and I keep telling myself to get one...

My Ford Escape actually has a killer roof rack system, which was very handy, but hoisting gas cans over my head is not really my idea of fun. If you decide to carry extra fuel in whatever way, do not leave the cans exposed. Cover them with a tarp or something. You don't want to broadcast to people, "Hey! Look! I have spare gasoline!"

I will share with you a secret desire of my heart. I have always wanted to have a tricked-out BOV. I have always wanted a BOV with on-board air, dual batteries, train horns (sonic weapon!), extra nuclear-burn-out-your-retinas roof lights, brush guards, battering ram, machine guns, grenade launchers, and the ability to drop caltrops out the back end with a push of a button. Truth be told, though, I didn't need any of that stuff weighing me down. Every gadget is space and weight that displaces some other kind of wealth that I could be carrying. I like having backup batteries, and having a secondary fuel tank is high on my list of desires. I do want those train horns one day, but then I'd need a compressor, and if I've got a compressor, I may as well do the on-board air...aw crap...there I go again...

Just know that you don't need to be in BOV Magazine to effectively make your escape. Make common sense decisions. If you've got the cash and you want dual fuel tanks, it can't hurt anything. The best BOV is your daily driver, well maintained, with a full tank of gas.

For now, if you have to bug out, know that it sucks. Your ass will be sore. You will be tired, hungry, and miserable at the end. How tired, hungry, and miserable you are will

depend on how well you HYST and how you approach the problems you face. Think about it now and you won't have to worry about it later. Leave early if you can. Don't waste time. Being locked in frozen traffic and having to camp out with other people likewise stranded as you are all overtaken by whatever danger is not my idea of a good vacation. KEEP MOVING FORWARD!

Row! Row! Row!

Shane

HYST - Land Ho!

When you finally manage to pull your lifeboat up onto the beach, it's important to have picked your beach carefully. I have already told you that at 10:15 PM on Sunday, August 28, 2005, after being on the road for 15 1/2 hours, we crash landed in Houston, Texas. This was both a disastrous failure of planning, and the best thing we could have done. Given the opportunity to do it all over again, I'd have gone to the same place - so the Gods of Luck were smiling on us that day.

Many other people were not so lucky. Some were finding friends and family to stay with, some were finding what few hotel rooms were available, and a lot of others were ending up in public shelters run by the Red Cross, FEMA and other government organizations, and a large number of churches and church organizations that responded to the crisis. More than a few people slept in their cars on the first night.



Remember on the last page I talked about what to do when your plane runs out of gas? Aviate, Navigate, and Communicate - or else what? God will find a place to park you.

That's true in the lifeboat metaphor too. You can't just drift in the ocean forever, so you're going to have to pick a beach. I recommend a beach with white sand, calm seas, some shade, and if you can manage it make sure you land near a place that serves drinks with the little umbrellas in them.

Remember that the end goal of your evacuation is to go Home. The beach you land your lifeboat on is important to that goal. If you do not chose wisely, you could find yourself in a war zone...



Landing into the middle of family feuds, ending up in a government camp, or being stranded in a single hotel room with 15 or 20 other family members is *not* a good place from which to launch your return home. Spending the night with thousands of other strangers isn't something you should choose to do, although a lot of people ended up there.

This page is about how to pick your beach.

The first thing to do is to appreciate where we are now. We have to assess our resources. If you have followed the plan so far, we should have a significant portion of our wealth in the lifeboat with us. I am going to leave off actually detailing that, because it's going to vary from person to person. The key to choosing your Bug Out Location is going to vary on several factors as well - and which factors take priority are going to depend on your needs, both immediate and long term.

You may also end up at some 'halfway' point where you stop for the night or otherwise take time to gather something, make a rendezvous, or simply have a rest.

You may already have ownership of your own BOL. That may be a little cabin out in the woods, a trailer on a stretch of farmland, some rental property on the other side of town, or that whole castle with a moat and laser guided sharks thing. If so, then you are *way*

ahead of the curve, and the rest of this won't be of much use to you - unless your BOL is affected by the disaster too. I will address your situation in future pages. For now, let me simply congratulate you on having such a place. I'm jealous. As soon as I can afford the down payment on a little hunk of property somewhere, I'm there, dude. Unfortunately, most working-class people never achieve the 'second home in the middle of nowhere' dream, and so the rest of this page covers that.

Rather than drag you through a long discussion of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, let's just list some basic purposes that a Bug Out Location serves, and detail some of the needs that such a location should meet.

The first thing to consider is the nature of the emergency or disaster itself. If your house burns down in the middle of the night, your best course of action might simply be to check into a hotel for the night, and make some other more permanent arrangement (like renting an apartment) in the morning. It's not necessary (or at all desirable) to drive 300 miles to get away from a simple house fire. If you manage to get out of town before a nuclear bomb goes off and you are never going home again, the same considerations apply.

The BOL (Bug Out Location) should be outside the immediate area affected by the disaster.

If your house burns to the ground, but your detached two car garage is still standing, then maybe all you have to do is inflate some air mattresses and there you are. If a tornado takes out your neighborhood, then you are going to end up outside that zone. If a hurricane threatens, you want to be 75 or 100 miles away from wherever it is that the eye makes landfall.

The BOL must not be too far away from your house.

I drove back and forth between here and Houston a number of times - 360 miles each way. That distance is not optimal. It's too far for easy driving. 100 miles is a nice round figure, but I didn't have good options in that range. It would be optimal to have a BOL that would accommodate the role of an operational base from which to conduct your rebuilding effort (if needed.)

The BOL must be able to accommodate your special needs.

If you have medical needs, then you need to be in an area that can provide for them. If you have pets, you need to go to a place that will accept them. Likewise with kids.

The BOL must be safe and secure.

That may mean that you have to provide the security, but you don't want to end up in some inner-city neighborhood where you can't be safe at night. Remember that your lifeboat represents a significant portion of your mobile wealth, and it needs to be safe.

You may need to leave your kids at the BOL with your spouse while you conduct rebuilding efforts at your house, so you want them to be safe while you are away.

The BOL must be able to support you.

'Support' means many things. You shouldn't expect to throw yourself on the mercy of family, friends, or strangers and have them joyfully feed you for the rest of your life. You need to be able to support yourself to some degree. That's only responsible. The BOL, though, has to be able to support you in other ways. If you escape to a place with your spouse and 17 kids and there is only one bathroom, then you are overloading the BOL.

The BOL must be emotionally supportive or emotionally neutral.

If your mother-in-law hates you with a purple passion, then bugging-out to your mother-in-law's place is not a good idea. Ever. Dealing with negative family issues while you are trying to put your life back together is a recipe for murder-suicide.

That's the basics of the basics. The bottom line is that your BOL must be optimized among three elements: Location, Security, Support. Using that as a ruler, we can 'measure' each BOL and place a value on it. These values are, of course, relative. A place with excellent Location and Support is desirable only so long as the Security is not uncommonly low. This will be so obvious to you that I won't spend any time on it.

We can, however, examine the various arrangements that occurred during hurricane Katrina, and make the assumption that the same or similar arrangements would occur during any wide-spread disaster.

Government Camps

This covers places like the Superdome and Convention Center. These were places where people were given shelter (and I use that term loosely) during the storm, and where people were deposited after being rescued off rooftops and out of their attics. These are short term solutions to emergency situations. They are usually populated by the least prepared and/or least fortunate people. We already know that you do not want to go to a Government Camp

FEMA & Red Cross Shelters

These are the big shelters like the one at the Astrodome. We are going to be talking about these in some depth on another page, but for now let's just list these at the 'bottom' of the shelter options. Not because they were particularly bad - because they weren't. They just aren't optimal if you have somewhere else to go.

While some crime occurred in these places, for the most part that was limited to petty theft, despite all the hysterical stories told. When you go to one of these shelters, you

have to live by their rules. Your firearms will be confiscated, for one - which is reason enough for me to never go there.

Church Shelters & Other Small Shelters

Many churches and other charity organizations set up small shelters all over the place. These are better than the 'mass' shelters in some ways. They vary widely in services offered, but the people who run them try very hard to accommodate disaster victims. If you don't find a place to spend the night at one of these shelters, it is possible to get a meal and find other relief support in these shelters.

Hotels and Motels

Many people found shelter by checking into a hotel or motel. FEMA picked up the bill in many cases, and so this was OK for many people. I don't think that this is ideal for a number of reasons, but it can work well on a short term basis. Problems arose in that there really weren't enough hotel rooms to accommodate everyone, and families ended up sharing rooms. It was not uncommon to hear about 15 family members and all their pets sleeping in a single motel room. That is *not* an optimal situation. This can also be an expensive option.

Renting an Apartment

This is an option if you have a large family, but it can be counter-productive to sink money into an apartment lease away from your home town. Remember that your strategy is to go Home. If your house is truly destroyed and you are going to find a job in your city of refuge, then this is probably the best option because you can just go ahead and start building Home right away right where you are.

A middle-of-the-road idea is to find a 'corporate' apartment, which is a small furnished apartment usually rented to corporations who need temporary housing for project workers. They can be less costly than a hotel room, but more expensive than an unfurnished apartment for obvious reasons.

Family & Friends

If someone has a spare room and can put you up, this can either be an ideal situation or a total nightmare. That will depend on several factors such as personalities and past history among others. I will discuss this across several pages later in this blog.

Company Housing

Many people were quickly supported by their companies. This was especially true of larger corporations who needed to re-open large facilities in the area, and so they provided housing to evacuees, and then worked to provide local housing while people recovered. If you work for a large corporation, you should find out if the company has a

disaster management plan and what you need to do in order to work within the plan. Again, we'll discuss that in detail on another page.

Church Support

Rather than organize shelters as such, some churches (by way of their individual members) extended invitations to others of the same faith (and even others not of their faith) to come and stay in their individual homes. There can be, of course, certain limits set by the homeowner. "We can accommodate a single family with one child.", for instance.

Clubs and Social Organizations

If you belong to a club, social organization, or secret society, there may be some support for you available through those resources. We were contacted through the AANR and offered a condo to stay in, but it was 12 hours drive, which was rather far away for us so I declined. You might be surprised at what is available through some of the various clubs and groups, so don't be afraid to call and ask.

Head for the Hills!

You always have the option to go live somewhere in the wilderness. Turning your bug-out into a camp-out can work in the short term, but campgrounds fill fast and wilderness areas aren't good bases of operation for your return Home.

There are some other options, but not too many. As we get further along down the timeline, I'll be covering each of these in turn. The larger and more widespread the disaster is, the more complicated the equations become.

My purpose in presenting them here in this way is to start you thinking about where you will go, where you will stay, and what your living conditions will be like if you have to evacuate your home. It's time to do some work in your workbook.

The first thing to do is add contact information into your address book for the state and national headquarters of churches, clubs, and social organizations that you belong to. They really can be a good resource, and you will want to have the contact information handy if you need it.

The second thing to do is print out a few copies of the workbook page for this. You will want to put in the address and contact information for the potential Bug-Out Location, the distance from your home in miles, and any notes about the location and the people there. It's also helpful if you organize the locations according to direction. That is, have a sheet for each direction - North, South, East, West. In my case, I cannot go South, because that would put me in the Gulf of Mexico... If a storm is coming to the east of me, I am going to go west. If a storm is coming to the west, I'm going to go east. It's handy to have the possible beachheads organized in that way. You may organize them

any way you like. In the NOTES area, rank the BOL according to how it rates on Location, Security, and Support. Try to have at least one BOL in each compass direction (roughly), and at least one in each of four ranges.

Range 1 is close to home. The neighbor's mailbox as the meeting place for a house fire, for instance. Range 2 is between a long walk and a short drive. This might be a particular hotel, a friend, or a relative just across town. Range 3 is a good drive - between 25 and 50 miles. This is 'out of town'. Range 4 is any distance beyond 50 miles. This is your hurricane escape zone.

It's not necessary to do much more than organize them at this point and start thinking about the places you have available (or potentially available) to you should you need to escape or evacuate. We will do further work with these in the next few pages.

Remember: LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!

Shane

HYST - Elephants are Coming!

A certain large town received reports that a vast rampaging heard of elephants was headed toward the town. The people in this town and the surrounding area had never heard of elephants before, since no elephants lived in that part of the world, and television hadn't been invented yet. The people went to the rulers, who, because they had been educated, knew what elephants were.

The rulers held a meeting and said, "It is not good to panic the people.", and they showed the people a picture of the tail of an elephant. Upon seeing this, the people felt relieved and said, "What harm can such a small worm-like creature cause? They can easily be crushed underfoot!", and went about their everyday lives with little thought of the coming elephants.

When an outlying village heard about this, they went to warn their brothers because they had seen elephants and knew what they were capable of. They called a large meeting in the street and declared that preparations needed to be made and precautions taken against the coming of the great elephants. On hearing this, the people all laughed derisively and said, 'FOOLS! Why do you speak to us of elephants!?'

I should probably put this page in a 'psychology' section, because we're going to get into some psychology. The first bit of psychology is that you are going to find that if you tell your friends and family that you are preparing for SHTF, they are likely to react in a negative, unsupportive way.

Most 'survivalists' find this out early. If you tell people that you are preparing for disaster, you will be given all the respect of a circus freak. While in the middle of

making fun of your sanity, most people will also make the statement, "Yeah, well if SHTF, I'll just come to your house!"

This very common statement really means, "I'm too damn lazy to prep myself, so I'll just come eat your food and you can protect me and keep me safe and warm."

Since it is a common statement, I have two common replies. If I don't like the person so much, I say, "If you do, I'll shoot you in the face like any other looter." If I do like the person, I'll say, "I'll be happy to feed your kids, but if you're too lazy to make sure that they have something to eat I'm not going to feed *you*."

These kinds of conversations quickly teach 'survivalists' to keep their preps in the closet and never tell a soul. Your best friend could be prepared for disaster, but you'd never know because he or she slinks around in the dark trying to keep people from finding out that he or she is one of 'those kooks' that are preparing for 'the end of the world'...oh my...

No matter what your friends or family thinks about being prepared for a disaster or emergency, you *must* have your spouse 'on board' with your preparations or you will be seriously thwarted. For some reason spouses actively work against you when they think you're insane. *We* already know that *you* are the smart one in the relationship. You show them over and over again all the data that points to the end of the world, but all they want to do is sit on the sofa and watch Oprah.

"FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, MAN! YOU'VE WATCHED THAT OPRAH RE-RUN 7 TIMES! GET UP OFF YOUR BUTT AND START PREPARING FOR ARMAGGEDON!"

Yeah. That works real well... This page is designed to help you open a dialog with your spouse. If both you and your spouse are already survival freaks, then you're all set. Most of us, though, need to do a little work to bring other people into the Ark. This is something that is very critical, and I want to stress it. You *must* have your spouse on board with your preps and plans. If you do not, then what happens is that one day a semi full of some toxic chemical spills in your neighborhood and you immediately decide to pull the trigger on the 60 second plan - but your spouse says, "You're just a nut job. I ain't leavin', and you ain't takin' the kids." - and then you all die in a cloud of gas. That actually **happened** in Katrina. I have heard quite a number of people say, "I wanted to leave, but my wife/husband wouldn't." This had tragic results in several cases.

To take small steps, what we want to do is create - in our own homes for now - a Culture of Preparedness. We want everyone living with us to be on board the preparation bandwagon. It's very educational to observe Mormons in this regard. That is, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS.) (Hi, Ralph!) LDS members already have a Culture of Preparedness that is 'built in' to their faith. The LDS Church provided huge amounts of humanitarian aid to Katrina victims, and it is safe to say that as a people they really Have Their Stuff Together. We are going to examine some of the

man-made miracles of organization and relief that they have performed in disasters and use some of their ideas as a model for some of our own.

For the most part, if you don't live in Mormon Country, your neighbors are not likely to live in a Culture of Preparedness, and so they will just ridicule you for your 'silly' preparations. Sort of like everybody made fun of Noah before it started raining...

The first thing we need to do is identify why people respond badly to the idea of disaster preparations. There are a number of reasons for this.

1. They prefer to practice the fine Chinese art of Lay-Zee. In English, that's LAZY to you and me. We already know that LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER! If they make fun of you for your preparation, then that makes them feel better about their own laziness.
2. They are afraid. They do not want to think about the possibility that their house may burn down, so they don't install smoke alarms because they just don't want to think about it.
3. They are ignorant. They simply do not appreciate the possibilities, despite all your charts, graphs, and doomsday prophecies.
4. They do not believe that it can (or will) happen to them. I have always found it telling that 95% of the people who show up to my martial arts classes have recently been the victim of a violent crime - which is closing the barn door after the critters have escaped... De-nial is not just a river in Egypt...

The second thing to do is identify those qualities in people who *do* prepare for hard times. Why are *you* interested in this stuff? As you might expect, people who prepare for the future are usually industrious, level-headed, educated, and realistic. On the far end of that spectrum, there are also people who are simply paranoid. Paranoid is good, as long as it drives you to a good purpose...

Everyone who lives in a hurricane area knows that the common advice is to have three days of food and water available at all times. Even the laziest, terrified ignoramus knows this - and for the most part they do it. It's *reasonable*, and that's going to be one of the first tools in our box. We need to be *reasonable* when we talk to people so that you do not breach their comfort level.

When talking about spouses, it's necessary to approach them in a non-alarmist way. You must work slowly sometimes. People aren't going to come to face reality overnight. There are several strategies for doing this, and there are others, but let's cover some successful ones here. What do we do if we want our spouse to get a CLUE? Here are some possibilities:



1. Do nothing and experience a widespread disaster one day. *That* will certainly get everyone on the same page, but the problem is that you're going to lose a lot of time and a lot of wealth with this method - not to mention that you might get pulled off your roof by an alligator when the water gets high.

2. Point them to this blog. Email them the link and say, "I was reading this today and it's really fascinating. It's so well written that I just couldn't stop. We should start thinking about these things." I've had a couple of people tell me that they've done this already and the wives and girlfriends are at least open to the discussion.



3. Sneak around. Start working on your workbook, assembling documents, and scanning your photographs. Try to hide it. Make it a secret. If your spouse is anything like mine, she'll figure out that you're trying to hide something in about 15 minutes and then demand to know WTF you are doing. You can then say, "I'm working on this Preparedness Workbook, and I didn't think you'd be interested."

"And WHY wouldn't you think *I* would be interested!?"

That's a sure way to have them give you all the input you need... 🤔

4. Just come out and ask. "Dear, I am trying to work on this Preparedness Workbook, and I'd really appreciate your input." If you get them involved slowly, before you know it they'll be trying to buy machine guns at the next gun show...

No matter what you do, start slowly and *reasonably* with your spouse. That means working on your work book, and maybe pointing them to this blog. As soon as you breach their comfort level, they're going to ask you, "Why are you doing all this stuff? Do you expect aliens to invade the earth or something?" That's a sure clue that they're getting lazy, afraid, or slipping into denial. If you don't have the right answer at the right time, then you are going to become the family kook and probably end up living in your mother's basement after the divorce.

What is the right answer? That depends on the level of your preparations to date.

"Why are you doing that?"



"I was reading this website and it was talking about how there are over 400,000 residential fires that claim the lives of over 3,100 people. I want us to have a good fire escape plan and be able to save our important papers and photographs if it happens to us."

NEVER HAVE A CONFRONTATION! HAVE A CONVERSATION!

After you give them the 'fire safety' answer, do not let them respond. Immediately follow your explanation with an invitation to conversation. Like this:

"If we had a fire tonight and you could only save one thing, what would you save?"

You can then carry on the conversation from there. Actually get up off the sofa and start walking around, engaging your spouse in the things most precious to you. Make it about your relationship and you'll be good to go. Either that, or you'll need a divorce lawyer tomorrow...

Spend money where you need to, but be reasonable. Get some smoke alarms or upgrade the ones you have. Buy at least two fire extinguishers. One for the kitchen and one for the bedroom. This will demonstrate to your spouse that you are serious about fire safety, and that you are being a good and responsible partner. If you have kids, then you're being a good parent - and yes, you should make the, "It's for the children!" argument if you have to.

Nobody can really argue with you if you say, "I don't want my babies to burn."

Don't expect your spouse to have your enthusiasm at first. What you are really looking for is an acknowledgement that what you are doing is reasonable. You aren't going to get that moat full of laser guided robot sharks in the next few weeks...

What you say is just as important as how you say it. The words that come out of your mouth should be monitored carefully.

"We need to stockpile some food so that when the global economy collapses we won't starve.", is not nearly advantageous as, "With the price of food going up all the time, do

you think it would be a good idea to start picking up a little extra every time we go to the grocery store so that if the prices skyrocket we've already got some kind of food bank?"

Avoid things like, "We need to do XYZ.", and try having conversations. "Do you think we should XYZ?", and then talk about it.

For now, if you stick with the workbook, it's all very non-threatening and it all makes reasonable sense. Use specific high-risk threats that are applicable to your area. "Honey, if the volcano erupts, what do you think we should do?"

Try to avoid words like 'disaster planning', or 'alien invasion' and use words like 'emergency preparedness'. Make it seem non-threatening.

If you cannot get your spouse on-board for whatever reason, then work towards tolerance. If he or she will at least tolerate what you're doing and not give away all your emergency supplies to charity, then that's a half-step towards full cooperation.

If your spouse just will not consider anything you are doing, then you may have to just do it on your own. That's not, however, a good situation. Work on it. Your spouse already knows that you are a freak. Go for broke.

LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!

Shane

HYST - WTF Just Happened!?.



You have just escaped your house, your neighborhood, and perhaps your city. No matter how prepared you are, when you stop running, the first thing you do is sit down and consider what has just happened. You haven't really had much time to consider it, and the reality sort of settles on you. The adrenalin dump is over.

There you are, standing around with that shocked expression on your face. The voice of your mother comes to you and you can definitely tell her that you do *not* have clean underwear. Now you've just discovered why I had you pack TWO sets of clean underwear in the BOB...

This is a perfect time to take a REST.

No, it's no time to take a nap. It's time to Re-Evaluate your Strategies and Tactics.

Everything you have with you right now is everything you're probably going to have for a while, so let's review where we are before we start that uphill battle for Home. If you have been following along with this blog, you should now be in a position to stop following and start leading. That's the #1 thing I want you to take out of this work - the mental desire and ability to be the master of your own destiny.

Now doesn't that sound flowery? Really, though, you must take personal responsibility for your own well being. If you do not, then you make the active choice to turn that responsibility over to others - and as we will see, others aren't always going to make the best choices for you.

The #2 thing I want you to take out of this is that you should never - *never, ever* - follow someone else's plan, mirror someone else's methods, or buy a kit from anybody. You really do NOT need to go out and buy a bunch of special or expensive stuff to be effectively prepared. Survival is not a kit, and survival is not a plan. Survival is about thinking clearly for yourself. Being truly prepared means just that, and making good decisions for yourself and your family.

Let's review this section and see where we are and what we have learned.

1. Survival is not a kit.
2. Bugging-out sucks, but sometimes you have no other option.
3. Do not plan to survive. Plan to prosper.
4. All of your plans should have a common goal of safeguarding your Health and your Wealth.
5. Wealth includes: Life, Health, Money, Major Assets, Material Possession, as well as your Identity, Education, Skill Set, and Future Earning Potential.
6. The best way to safeguard all of these things is to HYST.
7. HYST means being proactive about collecting, organizing, and protecting your Important Documents.
8. HYST means laying out some simple, primary items in a way to support your escape. This includes your Bug-Out Bag.
9. HYST means having an integrated, multi-level plan that provides a logical, reasonable diagram for your escape in the face of any threat in any time frame.
10. HYST means having the physical means to escape a disaster of any scope. This is your vehicle (life boat.)
11. HYST means having the mental preparation (in addition to the physical preparation) to be able to make good choices. Know when to pull it! Get off the tracks! Listen to your gut! Make decisions today!
12. HYST means providing for special needs.
13. HYST means that you will be able to easily Escape when you need to.
14. When it's time to Escape, put your lifeboat in the water and ROW!
15. HYST means having a beach already picked out upon which to land your lifeboat. Know where you are going.

16. HYST means having your spouse (and children) on-board with your plans.
17. Remember that your Primary Strategy in all of this is to KEEP MOVING FORWARD.
18. Keep your eyes on the prize - Home.

HYST means Having Your Shit Together, and knowing what to do with it.

In order to support that strategy, I have invited you to prepare the following:

1. Laptop Bag (or box of important documents)
2. BOB (Bug Out Bag)
3. Complete documentation of your entire life using a digital camera
4. 60 Second Escape Plan
5. Collection of people to communicate with
6. Dependable escape pod
7. One Hour Escape Plan
8. Twelve Hour Escape Plan
9. Landing Plan (Have some place to go)
10. The support of your family, and especially your spouse, in the context of emergency planning.

These things are very generic to emergency preparedness for any kind of emergency or disaster. This is, however, only a framework, and you should adjust anything you need to to suit your own needs and purposes. I have tried to make this blog about the strategy rather than about specific tactics. Any list that I - or anyone else - can create will *not* ideally suit your needs. You will have to make your own lists and your own preparations. That's the only way you will know that your strategy and your tactics are right for you and your family.

In bringing this section of the blog to a close, I realize that there are several things that we have not entirely covered in the bug-out preparations and plans. It is up to you to fill in the gaps as you see fit. I do want to talk about one kind of wealth that we have not covered, and that is cash. Hard currency. Foldin' money.

In the next section of this blog, we are going to talk about disaster economics quite a lot. The first thing you find out when SHTF is that your credit cards and ATM cards don't work anywhere because the communications are down. Nobody wants to take your check either, because nobody is sure when the banks might open again. The only means of exchange short term is cash. Long term, the barter system may or may not come into play, but when SHTF, people want cash. You can have millions of dollars in the bank, but you won't be able to get to it right away. You may not have time to stop at the bank while you're making your escape - and even if you can, everyone else will be trying to get cash too. The only safe thing to do is to have some amount of money on hand at all times. This is a always a good idea, even when no emergency is looming.

How much you keep and where you keep it will be up to you. At the time of this writing, a few hundred dollars is a minimum. You should have at least enough cash to get you from your home to the furthest bug-out location you have selected. You will also want to support yourself financially when you get there. What's an optimum amount? I can't really say. If you're running away from home, how much money do you want in your pocket? \$5,000? \$10,000? I don't know about you, but saving a couple of hundred bucks takes me awhile. Think about it clearly and make your own decision.

LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER! Neither do people who fail to save for hard times. I'd quote all the Biblical verses about storing up treasures and such, but you've already heard them. Instead, I'll start a train of terms that will grow over time.

In our timeline, it is Sunday, August 28th, 2005. The clock rolls over to midnight, but I keep watching the news on television trying to make sense of what's going on. It's not just 'WTF just happened!?', but also, 'WTF is happening!?!'. Eventually I manage an hour or three of something resembling passing out on the floor.

The morning will come early, and then we'll go from 'WTF just happened!?' to 'WTF do I do *now*!?!'.

Shane

EVENT - WTF Do I Do Now!?



You have just escaped your house, your neighborhood, and perhaps your city. No matter how prepared you are, when you stop running, the first thing you do is sit down and consider what has just happened. You haven't really had much time to consider it, and the reality sort of settles on you.

There you are, standing around with that shocked expression on your face. The voice of your mother comes to you and you can definitely tell her that you do *not* have clean underwear. Now you've just discovered why I had you pack TWO sets of clean underwear in the BOB...

In the first section of this blog, we were dealing with the Apocalypse, and now we're in the post-Apocalyptic time zone. Of course, the levees haven't failed yet, so there is some more Apocalypse yet to come. Don't touch that dial, boys and girls! Death, destruction, and mayhem are coming up soon!

For right now, though, we are safe and sound in a young man's bedroom. He volunteered to lend us his living space and bunk with his brother. I do not think that even today I have thanked him properly or expressed what that meant to us.

It is 4:00 AM, Monday, August 29, 2005. Madeline is in her Port-A-Crib, Andrea is sleeping on the single bed. I am 'sleeping' next to Virginia on the Aero-bed on the floor. I am so wired that I can hear the ticking of the digital clock. (Yes, I know that digital clocks do not tick...)

I feel like I ought to jump out of bed and fight some kind of desperate battle against impossible odds, but instead I sneak out of bed and take a shower. I get dressed and sneak downstairs to pour a little formula in Madeline's bottle. I sneak back upstairs and put it on the dresser next to her crib. The fact that I am camped in another man's home is on my mind, which is why I'm being so sneaky...



I sneak back downstairs and turn the television on. The remote control is strange to me and I have to work a little bit to get the right channel. It's 5:00 AM, and reports are coming in steadily. I'm looking at images like this. I actually feel pretty good about that image. My house is on the west side of New Orleans - 8 miles as the crow flies from the French Quarter.

As fate would have it, the western eyewall of Katrina missed my house by little more than 20 miles. I am not going to spend much time on the actual meteorological event that was Katrina. If you would like to have an in-depth view of the science of the weather of Katrina, you can find enough information to last you for many weeks by looking up the NOAA data on the NOAA website and typing 'Katrina' into the search box.

Weather events that turn into disasters are unique in the disaster game. We can watch them unfold slowly as billions of dollars of monitoring equipment feed us real time data

and high resolution imagery. Even after the weather event that was Katrina, the carnage continued to accelerate due to other factors, including the collapse of levees, logistical issues, and others. While we can plot the storm very precisely, the timeline of the disaster that unfolded on the ground is more difficult to follow. In order to examine it properly, we will have to take snapshots of time. I am going to tell you the story, not only from my perspective but also from the perspective of others. We are going to jump back and forth in time, though, because there are some things that I did not learn about until later. For the next week in our timeline, you will sit over my shoulder and learn about things as I learned about them. One day at a time...

Katrina made landfall at 6:10 a.m. CDT on August 29, 2005. I am watching TV, glued to the train wreck like so many other displaced people. I ought to have something to say about that, but unless you've actually witnessed Godzilla stomping through your city, there really aren't any metaphors that will explain the depth and breadth of the miserable shock you go through. It's sort of like a man watching those nut-shot videos over and over again. You stop cringing on the outside after awhile, but you're cringing on the inside.

Madeline will be awake in a little while, and I'll be running around in circles for a few hours, so find a comfortable spot to sit on my shoulder. Here's some tape to keep you in place Ready? OK. Here we go...

Shane

EVENT - First Day of Thoth



Today is August 29. It is the Egyptian New Year - the first day of Thoth. Thoth is the Ibis-headed god of knowledge. In deference to Thoth, on this date in history:

- 1350** - King Edward III laid major ownership on the Castilian fleet in the battle of Winchelsea.
- 1521** - The Ottoman Turks sacked Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade).
- 1526** - The Turks lay the whack on the last Jagiellonian king of Hungary and Bohemia.
- 1533** - The Spanish garrote the Inca emperor Atahualpa.
- 1655** - Warsaw falls without resistance to - of all people - Charles X Gustav of Sweden during The Deluge.
- 1756** - Frederick the Great attacks Saxony, starting the Seven Years' War.
- 1786** - A group of armed, ticked-off Massachusetts farmers (who were tired of high debt

and tax burdens) begin Shay's Rebellion. (My, but how times have changed in Massachusetts...🔴...)

1861 - Evil Federalists capture the Freedom-loving Confederate fort at Hatteras Inlet in NC.

1862 - Second Battle of Bull Run - in which the heroic Generals Lee, Jackson, and Longstreet delivered a glorious butt-whuppin' to the Federalist terrorist general John Pope in the largest simultaneous mass assault of the War of Northern Aggression.

1995 - NATO launches Operation Deliberate Force against Bosnian Serb forces.

1997 - The GIA throws a little massacre, known as the Rais massacre, in Algeria.

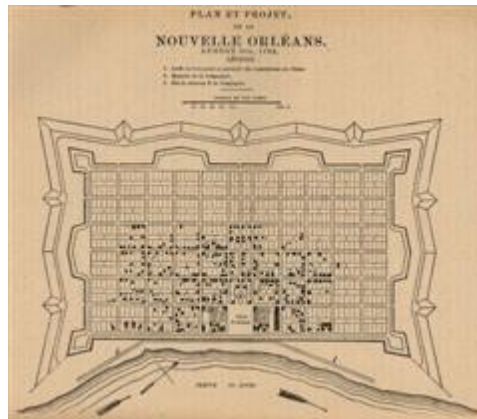
2005 - The forces of air, fire, and water joined to form the Army of Katrina which marched unopposed through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in the opposite direction as Sherman's 'march to the sea' but with rather similar results.

In further deference to the Egyptian god of Knowledge, we should understand the setting for our unfolding drama. Katrina created a disaster that is so wide-spread that getting any kind of a snapshot is all but impossible. How is it to be done? State by state? County by county? Parish by parish? Rather than try to get too involved in it, I am going to ignore most of Alabama and Mississippi and focus most on things that occurred in my direct experience to people and places that I know. That means that I am going to focus on the parishes (counties) most affected in Louisiana. I am also going to focus on the Mississippi coastal area, although there isn't much to say about that except that it was completely erased in many places.

In order to understand what happened in New Orleans and the surrounding area, it is necessary to understand the history and topography of the region. I have always found it amusing that Bienville founded New Orleans as the capital of Louisiana because he said it was 'hurricane proof'. At the time, there was a three foot levee at the river. HA!

I often hear people say, "Why would you live below sea level anyway? That's just crazy!", and other things in that way that are much less politically correct. People who ask those questions do not have any great understanding of history, because if they did they wouldn't ask dumb questions. It isn't as though we all were on a bus coming down from Canada and suddenly said, "Hey! Look at all this sunken swamp land! Let's build us a city right here!"

So, let us open our minds in respect to Thoth and educate ourselves, shall we? How does a city like New Orleans come into existence?



While many major US cities were still wilderness or small outposts in the middle of nowhere, New Orleans was awash in hookers and booze. It was the place to be. It was, is, and always will be a party town. New Orleans is one of the oldest cities on the continent. It has been shaped over time by its particularly unique geographical, geological, political, social, economic, and religious conditions. The French referred to New Orleans as the "Isle d'Orleans." because - physically and culturally - it is. Decried a city at its founding by Bienville in 1718, New Orleans was laid out by the French engineer Adrien de Pauger, in a classic eighteenth-century symmetrical gridiron pattern. Bienville only managed to build a few huts, a wooden house for himself, and a makeshift storehouse. No brick building was built until almost 1730. The 'Cathedral' was just a simple wooden church. What is now Jackson Square was a muddy area overgrown with weeds. There was a wooden palisade on the east, north, and west sides, and a three foot levee held back the river. Even so, the French *needed* New Orleans because Baton Rouge - the first actual 'dry land' upriver - was too far upstream to be strategically and economically viable.

If we hit the fast-forward button, we can watch as hurricanes, floods, and fires erase these structures over and over again. The fire of 1788, for instance, destroyed most of the 'city'. The Spanish had hardly rebuilt it when three hurricanes and another fire - all in 1794 - destroyed all of the reconstruction and the few buildings that hadn't burned in 1788. The existing structures in New Orleans all date from 1795 or later.

There was no drainage, and the miniature levees around houses, streets, and sidewalks kept sewerage and garbage trapped inside them. Labor shortages, high infant (and adult!) mortality rates, disease, mosquitoes, bad sanitation, close living quarters, dampness, heat, hurricanes, fires, and various other plagues kept New Orleans from truly thriving until the 1800's. If you watch too many movies, then you can add vampires and voodoo to the mix. The Spanish slowly improved drainage and built better levees - but without pumps, these were a liability as much as a benefit. There were also innovations in politics. The Spanish governor appointed a City Council, which established a small police force and installed street lights. Night life in New Orleans was born.

New Orleans continued to be an important sea port, but because of that advantage also began to thrive in the hotel, restaurant, and tourism 'industries'. In other words, booze,

hookers, and gambling. Still using that fast-forward button, we can observe that a colorful parade of pirates, boatmen, soldiers, an ethnically and culturally diverse citizenry, tourists, and religious figures passes through New Orleans on a regular basis.

Both Spain and France proved unable to hold New Orleans as part of an empire against the Americans flooding into the Mississippi Valley after 1800. Napoleon tried to reestablish the French Empire in Louisiana, taking control of New Orleans back from Spain in 1802; but financial troubles and the difficulty of holding French conquests in Europe and the Caribbean would force him to consider his options.



America was up and coming. The European hold on New Orleans was fading. New Orleans was not just a wealth of culture and a den of thieves, it was also the key to strategic control of a large portion of the continent. It was the key not just to North America, but to other parts of the world as well. It was a city placed in such a way that its control could determine the political future of North America. These facts were obvious not just to early French explorers, but also to Thomas Jefferson, who said, "There is one spot on the globe, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans." Without any shots being fired, European rule ended in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase.

Napoleon got something out of the deal besides money. Upon completion of the agreement he said, "This accession of territory affirms forever the power of the United States, and I have given England a maritime rival who sooner or later will humble her pride."

1860 Census of Population

Persons	Number	Percent
Total Population	168,675	100 %
African-American	24,074	14 %

Slaves	13,385	8 %
Free Persons of Color	10,689	6 %
European-American	144,601	86 %
Native Born	78,333	46 %
Immigrants	66,268	39 %
Irish	24,398	14 %
German	19,675	12 %
French	10,564	6 %
British	3,849	2 %
Spanish	1,390	1 %
Italian	1,019	1 %
Other Immigrants	3,373	2 %

From 1803 until 1861, New Orleans' population increased from 8,000 to nearly 170,000. In 1810, New Orleans was the United States' fifth largest city, after New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. From 1810 until 1840, New Orleans grew faster than any other American city and by 1830 New Orleans was America's third largest city, behind New York and Baltimore. In 1860 it was still the nation's fifth largest city. New Orleans would remain among the twelve largest U.S. cities until 1910.

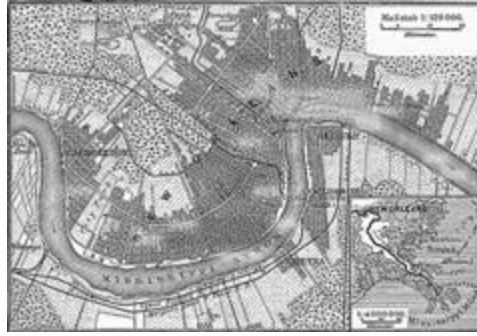
Experiments in government created political nightmares for the city, but the primary concern was the constant fight against water - seeping from below, falling from the sky, and flooding in from the river and the lake. As time went on, more and more money was spent on this problem. The merchant class, which controlled City Hall, considered maintenance of the levee system and dock facilities to be the highest priorities.

In 1869 the Board of Engineers for New Orleans hired Simmons & Company to evaluate the drainage in the city. That report concluded, "It would be difficult to find a location where the natural drainage is worse than that of New Orleans, owing to a want of declivity in the land, and the tenacious nature of the soil; yet, the problem is easy of solution and presents few difficulties, when we come to apply artificial means, aided by the science and practical knowledge of modern times." No good solution would be implemented, however, for another 44 years.



As you can see in this image from 1862, the city is still centered on the river. The area between the river and the lake is occupied by the city itself, some marsh land cut by various canals, some more marsh, and then Lake Pontchartrain.

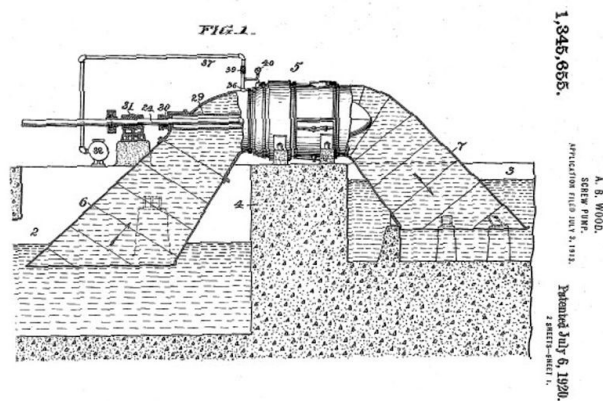
An 1888 map tells the same story:



The city is spreading out along the river, but the swamp remains a no-man's-land of muck.

New Orleans continued to grow rapidly, and just 30 years later was one of the most modern cities on the continent - but it still suffered from problems of drainage and sanitation.

The man who would finally solve these problems was a man that few people - even locally - have ever heard of. His name was Albert Baldwin Wood (December 1, 1879 - May 10, 1956). Al was an inventor and engineer born and raised here. He graduated from Tulane University with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1899 and at the young age of 19 was hired by the Sewerage & Water Board.



The man was a mad genius. He proceeded to invent 'flapgates' and various hydraulic devices. He also oversaw installation of centrifugal pumps to pump water from the city. By the end of 1913, seventeen large Pumps, generated by eight pumping stations, managed 4,140 cubic feet of water per second. The following year the pumps exhibited the continual improvements with an increased combined capacity of 4,600 cubic feet of water per second. Total capacity was 2,500,000,000 gallons of water every twenty-four hours.

Al wasn't satisfied with these pumps, however, and his major breakthrough came in 1913 with his patent of the Wood Screw Pump. In 1915, he improved the design and patented the Wood Trash Pump. Through tests, it was proven that just one of Al's pumps would

have a total capacity of 5,112,000,000 gallons every 24 hours - more than double the entire capacity of all the pumps in the city.

Al was in high demand, and over time designed and developed drainage, pumping, and sewerage systems for Chicago, Milwaukee, Baltimore, and San Francisco as well as for cities in Canada, Egypt, China, and India. He was one of the men primarily responsible for the Zuiderzee Works, which protected large areas of land from the Zuider Zee in the Netherlands.

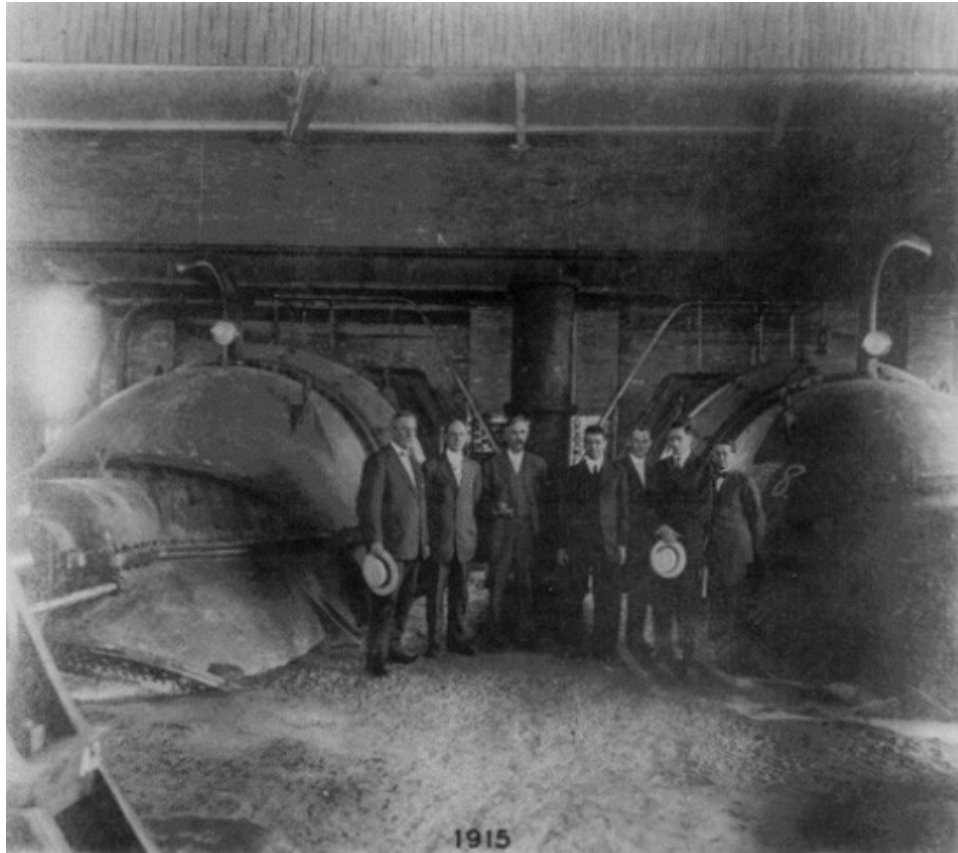
In 1914, before the Convention of League of American Municipalities, New Orleans Mayor Martin Behrman presented a paper in which he said, "*These great public utilities stand as enduring monuments to the courage, determination and infinite resourcefulness of a people who cheerfully and with much self-denial made them possible of accomplishment, and no less are they tributes to the ability, zeal and splendid engineering skill of those who devised and brought them to a successful consummation, in spite of most disheartening conditions.*

Supplementary to these we have many other improvements of the first importance, representing a most gratifying development in many directions — our wharves and docks, our Belt Railroad systems, our many miles of newly paved streets, our modern public schools and other institutions of learning, our libraries, our parks and playgrounds, Police and Fire Departments, our growing home and foreign commerce, etc. — all contributing in no small degree to the fulfillment of that destiny which in the not remote future is to make New Orleans one of the greatest of cities. It is our impression that conditions in New Orleans are subject to influences as favorable to its health and progress as are to be found in any other city on this continent, and that families going there to reside will be certain to find themselves in as good, if not in a better, place than that from which they came."

And people came. And life was good.

But the people cannot have wells, and so they take rain-water. Neither can they conveniently have cellars or graves, the town being built upon "made ground"; so they do without both, and few of the living complain, and none of the others. -- Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi

It has been said that a Scotchman has not seen the world until he has seen Edinburgh; and I think that I may say that an American has not seen the United States until he has seen Mardi-Gras in New Orleans. -- Mark Twain, Letter to Pamela Moffett, March 1859

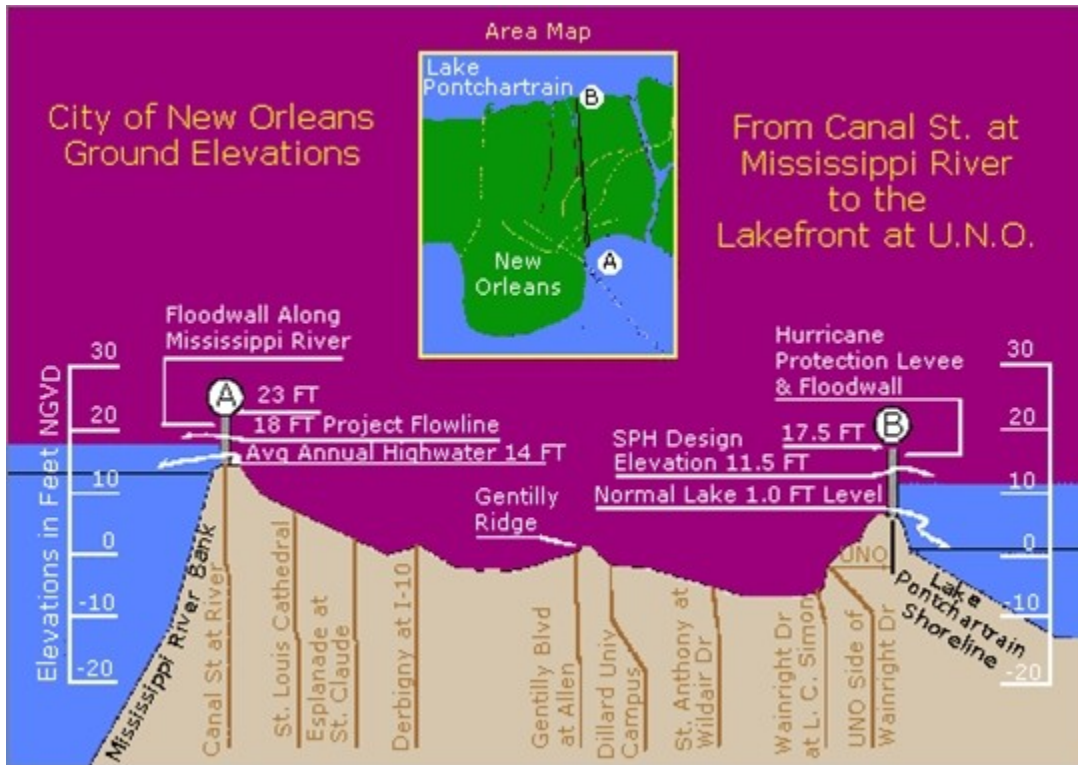


Al's work was truly revolutionary. Some of Wood's pumps have been in almost continuous use for over 80 years without need of repairs. New pumps are still built from his designs. Al began some very ambitious projects - and this is where the 'mad' part of genius comes in... In 1927 a project was begun to fill in the shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain and create levees along the lake side of the city. By the end of 1937, Al's pumps had created 50,000 acres of dry land that was once permanent swampland.

Al did far more than improve drainage. He created dry land where once there was open water. Protected by these new machines, people began building houses on reclaimed swampland. In time, not only would the city of New Orleans be 'created' this way, but entire parishes (counties) would be created nearly wholesale with this new technology.

Al's pumps and the levees proved adequate to protect the city from many dangers and improved the health and safety of the citizenry. Until 1927, the levees were strictly municipal projects paid for and maintained by the city. Other outlying towns had also begun creating their own levee systems. In the aftermath of the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, however, the United States Congress federalized the levees and gave the United States Army Corps of Engineers supervision and control of design and construction of all the flood control systems throughout the Mississippi River Valley. The local levee boards were allowed to remain in charge of day to day inspection and maintenance of the levee systems in their areas but they were never provided Federal funds for that task.

Then on the Public Service Commission, future Governor Huey Long exclaimed, "Screw this! They're lying! The President's lying! The rich fat cats that are drowning you will do it again and again and again. They lead you into imperialist wars for profit, they take away your schools and your hope and when you complain, they blame Blacks and Jews and immigrants. Then they push your kids under. I say, Kick'm in the ass and take your rightful share!" Gotta love Uncle Huey. Unfortunately, nobody listened to that particular bit of wisdom - and 78 years later, his words would still be true - but I'm getting ahead of myself.



This image shows the elevation levels of a line running from the river (A) to the lake (B) from Canal Street at the river to the University of New Orleans.

The blue water levels show are maximum projected heights - well within the ability of the levees.

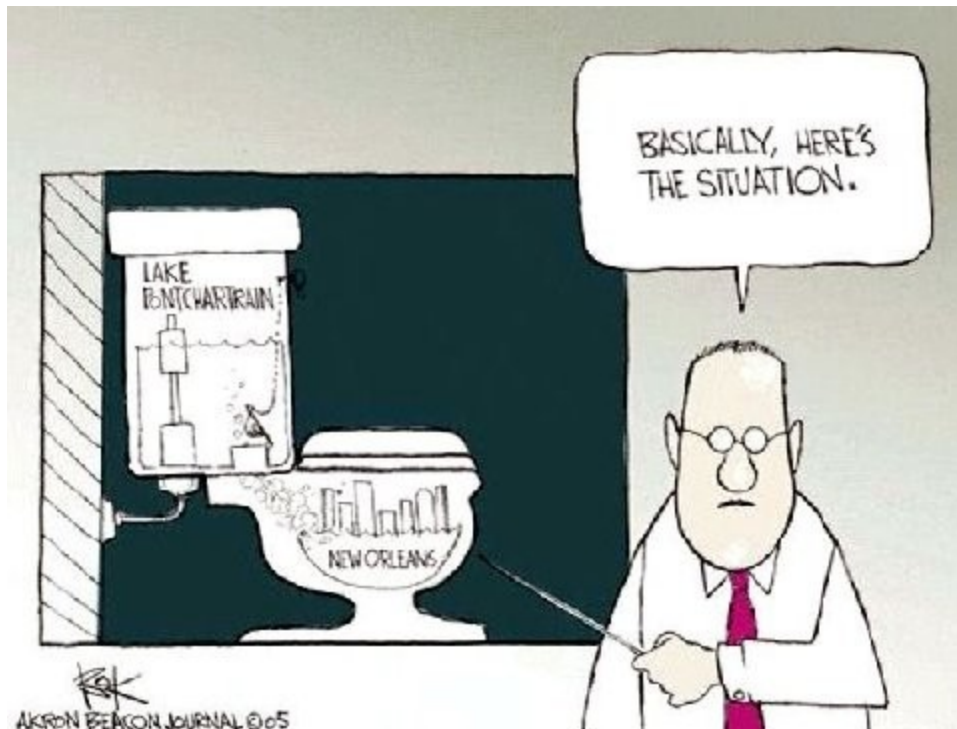
All was well until a hurricane came along. Levees for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet along Florida Avenue in the Lower Ninth Ward and on both sides of the Industrial Canal failed. The flood water reached the eaves of houses in some places and over some one story roofs in the Lower Ninth Ward. Some residents drowned in their attics trying to escape the rising waters. Gentilly, the Upper Ninth Ward, and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans as well as Arabi and Chalmette in neighboring St. Bernard Parish were all flooded. Over 164,000 homes were inundated. It was ten days or more before the water level in New Orleans went down enough for people to return to their homes. Those who did not have family or friends with dry homes had to sleep in the shelters at night and

forage for supplies during the day, while waiting for the federal government to provide emergency relief in the form of trailers. No, this isn't Hurricane Katrina. It's Hurricane Betsy in 1965.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Hurricane Protection Program came into existence as a result of Betsy. The Corps built new levees for New Orleans that were both taller and made of stronger material, designed specifically to resist a Category 3 hurricane like Betsy.

Hurricane Camille, which took a similar track to Katrina, destroyed nearly all of the Mississippi gulf coast again in 1969 and caused damage in New Orleans. I was four months old at the time. My daddy managed to put a few boards up on the front window, and we all rode it out in our little house in Metairie. There were no evacuation orders, but the levees mostly held. Power was out for two and a half weeks.

We all know that several of these levees failed during Katrina. Why they failed is not difficult to comprehend, although spending many hours reading reports can confuse you. Let me spell it out plainly for those uneducated on the topic. The levees failed because they were improperly designed by the Corps of Engineers, improperly built by those hired to do so, and improperly inspected and maintained by the levee boards - who receive very little by way of state funds for that purpose.



While we will examine the failure of the levee system in some detail, it isn't necessary to go into *why* at this point. (With my apologies to Thoth...) We do, however, want to appreciate exactly *where* they failed, *when* they failed, and in some cases *how* they failed. Appreciating that will help us set a timeline of the disaster and examine individual

stories from which we can learn many lessons. It's important to appreciate that in many areas, Katrina came and went with some noise, rain, and wind - but not a whole lot of flooding. The water didn't rise in many places until the next day.

Through our history we have come to understand that New Orleans as a city has been destroyed to some degree and rebuilt several times. More than once in modern memory, in fact. Are these New Orleanians stupid, or are they stubborn? What about people on the Mississippi Gulf Coast? Again and again the cities and towns all along the coast are washed away, only to be rebuilt again. What's going on here? Are all these people smoking crack or something?

Some of them are, no doubt...

The answer is easy to articulate in some ways, and difficult in others. One answer has to do with Home. Another answer has to do with the strategic and economic importance of the region. We have examined the history of New Orleans itself, but the history of New Orleans is also the history of the Gulf Coast from Pensacola, Florida to Galveston, Texas. New Orleans is an island in some ways, but it has an influence over the entire region in many other ways. Vast amounts of the nation's oil come from and through Louisiana. New Orleans is the economic engine of Louisiana and in a lesser way of the Gulf South. I'll admit that our Mississippi brothers have been kicking our economic keisters for the last few years. We'll see how that plays out in the end...

To ask the question, "Why rebuild a city built below sea level?", is a question of cowards and other choice words I cannot use in public. It is no different to ask, "Why rebuild anything where the Twin Towers stood?" If we lose New Orleans, we lose more than the city. We lose a part of America. I have been quite shocked to hear some Americans say that they would prefer to see an American city die than thrive - but I'm getting ahead of myself again.

I suppose I'm winding up to get righteous on a few people. More than a few, really. Greg Palast remarked, "There is no such thing as a 'natural' disaster. Hurricanes happen, but death comes from official neglect, from tax cuts for the rich that cut the heart out of public protection. The corpses in the street are victims of a class war in which only one side has a general. Where is our Huey Long?" Well, we're going to summon Uncle Huey's ghost. I'm sure the first thing Huey will want to do is kick Greg Palast square in the testicles.

It is now 7:00 AM on Monday, August 29. I do not know it yet, but the levees are already failing. The first failure was as early as 4:30 AM on the north side of the Industrial Canal in New Orleans East. Due to a train derailment, the metal floodgates were not working at the CSX Railroad crossing. Sandbags had been placed to seal the levee walls. Eventually the storm surge reaches nine feet above sea level, and the sandbags give way. We see, then, that the *why* of the first levee failure is nothing more than bad luck. It's just the first murmur of the heart attack to come.



In our work to examine the failures of men, and the failures of nature, we will need several August Personages. We will need Uncle Huey for sure. We'll need Al Wood, Sam Clemens, Bienville, old Marty Behrman, and more besides.

Arise now you specters! Come out of your tombs and walk along with us in the daylight! Come along, you old ghosts! Come and see what they have done to us! Come and see what Katrina has done to us! Come and see what we have done to ourselves!

I would call others - our fathers and our grandfathers - but they cannot come. They cannot hear us. The salty waters of the Gulf of Mexico are washing through their graves.

Shane

EVENT - Here I am. Where U?

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 7:00 AM CDT

Uncle Ken came through, talked for a moment, and then was off to work. Aggie also went off to work. The teenagers went off to school. We were alone in the house, and in an effort to tear myself away from the television set, I decided that I should do what I knew I should do. Namely, take an inventory. I needed to be clear on exactly what we had managed to save. As it turns out, we did pretty well. Andrea managed to collect many of the documents we would need in the next few days, even if in the process she managed to collect a lot of unneeded paper. Better safe than sorry, I suppose.

I just couldn't tear myself away from the television set for too long, though, even if the reports were more of the same. I finally realized that I could probably do better on the internet (that's interwebs for you Arfcom folks), and so I pulled my laptop out of the bag, fired it up, and tied into Ken's wireless router.

If you aren't aware of it already, I make my living with computers. I'm not just capable of surviving in the natural wilderness, I'm also capable in the wilderness of technology.

If I wasn't good at what I do, my kids wouldn't eat. Rather than trying to suck information out of the television set with a soda straw, I can now drink it freely out of the fire hose of the internet. I'm not sure why this didn't occur to me when I first got up, but I had been distracted.

Most people think of computers as the device itself. They use word processors and print reports. They keep track of accounts and make invoices. Most people who use computers do not understand their greatest potential. Communications.

No matter where I go in the real world, my address in the virtual world never changes. I built ThePlaceWithNoName.com when Virginia was born for the express purpose of sharing photographs with family. That investment was about to come back to me many times. No matter where I was in the world, people would be able to find me in the virtual world in seconds. When I told you in the first section of this blog that my laptop computer was my primary survival tool, I wasn't kidding.

Within a few minutes, I was a spider crawling the vast unwoven web. I linked into real time data streaming from billions of dollars of ground based and space based technological assets to monitor Katrina's assault. I went to my virtual house (this website) and plastered a sign on the front door (home page) that let everyone know our location and condition. I sent out an email beacon to everyone in my address book reporting our location and condition, and requesting a reply. I tied into other online assets I have control over and began coordinating communications with people displaced by the storm. I created a message board that would serve as a communications hub for everyone I needed to keep track of, and finally I visited online communities that I am a part of (and some of which I helped create.)

As the hour wore on, I paid less and less attention to Katrina. There was nothing to be done about what was happening. I began to have a rough idea in my head of the condition Jefferson Parish would be in after the storm passed. I was somewhat wrong in my estimates because of the failure of the levees, but I began to pitch my virtual campsite - which would soon grow beyond my expectation.

In just a few short hours, the response to this was enormous. I am still overwhelmed in many ways that an army of people disconnected by many miles all across the world came together behind me and universally said, "What do you need?" My friend (in both the real and virtual world) Jack coordinated a donation drive that I was reluctant to accept at first. As those displaced by the storm started to come into contact with me, the question was frequently, "What should we do now?", and I was going to have to come up with a good answer for that one. At this early hour, the answer is in no way clear to me yet.

In the matter of an hour I had transformed my BOL from a crash landing site to a control center that would become an important engine that drove not only my own return Home, but many other people besides. I would not have a clear appreciation of this until later. As it was, I was distracted by events near and far. The giant oak trees in my yard were giving up their limbs to Katrina's onslaught. Levees were failing. People were dying.

Madeline was waking up, and Virginia was demanding breakfast. Not having any other over-riding purpose at that point, breakfast was had by all.

It would still take Andrea and I a few hours to get faced in the right direction to KEEP MOVING FORWARD. It would take a number of days to properly orient ourselves for the road Home. For a time all we could really do was wait while Katrina threw her fit all over the Gulf Coast. So, while some people were dying in their homes, we enjoyed toasted muffins and scrambled eggs. The difference between those eventualities is thin indeed.

Shane

EVENT - The Band Played On

This page is a little tedious, but I felt it necessary. If you do not, then skip to the analysis on the next page.

This page is full of sarcasm. If your sarcasm meter is broken, then skip this page.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 6:00 AM CDT

Setting: South East Louisiana, a stage upon which a marvelous drama is about to unfold.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to tonight's show! We've got an exciting line up for you this evening, so everyone order a drink get ready to relax and enjoy yourselves. As you know, we've been preparing for this show for a long time. While you're waiting for your drinks, let me tell you a little about what we've done here to set up tonight's entertainment - because nobody has *ever* seen a show like this one, and it took a lot of work to make sure it could happen!

I don't have time to tell you everything folks, so let me just start with the last ten years. Going back to...oh...May of 1995. That was when Congress authorized SELA, the US Army Corps of Engineers' Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control project. After nearly 500 million dollars of federal and state money is poured into storm and hurricane mitigation, nobody bothers to appropriate the last \$250 million for critical projects needed to complete it.

On October 13, 2001 federal officials decided to postpone SELA projects because, "federal budget constraints and the cost of the war on terrorism may create a financial pinch for the program."

Al Naomi pipes up in February of 2004. After we managed to cut his budget, Al (the project manager for the Corps of Engineers) told CityBusiness magazine, "The longer we wait without funding, the more we sink. I've got at least six levee construction contracts that need to be done to raise the levee protection back to where it should be. Right now I owe my contractors about \$5 million. And we're going to have to pay them interest."

In April of 2004, we received the happy report that, "less money is available to the Army Corps of Engineers to build levees and water projects in the Mississippi River valley this year and next year." We even pulled one engineer off Louisiana wetlands restoration - an important hurricane protection project - to oversee a \$100 million study of wetland restoration in the Tigris-Euphrates valley in Iraq.

In June of that year, Walter Maestri - the Emergency Management Chief for Jefferson Parish - noted, "It appears that the money has been moved in the president's budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq, and I suppose that's the price we pay. Nobody locally is happy that the levees can't be finished, and we are doing everything we can to make the case that this is a security issue for us."

Not to be out-done by Mr. Maestri, the next day FEMA announced a new contract with Innovative Emergency Management, Inc. "a Baton Rouge-based emergency management and homeland security consultant," to "lead the development of a catastrophic hurricane disaster plan for Southeast Louisiana and the City of New Orleans." (As if there wasn't one already!) While this sounds like a serious impediment to our show, IEM, Inc. is a key GOP campaign donor and can be expected to help us out. (Nudge, nudge. Wink, wink.) The first phase of the project is "to complete a functional exercise on a catastrophic hurricane strike in Southeast Louisiana and use results to develop a response and recovery plan." (As if we didn't already know what was going to happen!)

Barely a month later, the "Hurricane Pam," disaster simulation provided a near spoiler of our show tonight. It reads very much like the program sitting your your tables:

- A mandatory evacuation would leave 100,000 in the city. Most of those left behind would be society's most vulnerable people.
- 61,000 could die.
- Levees would be overtopped by surge (nothing about them failing altogether).
- 1000 fully supported shelters would be required, most for 100 days. State and local resources could handle the shelters for 3-5 days at most. Hospital patients and the elderly would die if not given special assistance.
- 30 million cubic yards of debris and toxic waste would need to be removed.
- 13-15 thousand teachers and administrators would be required to restore schools.

Working groups came up with a comprehensive set of plans, and the data goes all the way to FEMA, which quickly begins work on a national plan taking the magnitude of the potential catastrophe into account. Many meetings are held. Follow-up activity is scheduled for late 2004 or early 2005, to formalize the final hurricane plan and send it to the state for adoption. Praise the Lord that this is abruptly cancelled due to lack of funding!

Not only were we blessed by that happy fortune, but just 23 days ago CityBusiness magazine reported that the New Orleans district of the US Army Corps of Engineers will have a \$71.2 million budget reduction for fiscal year 2006. This is the largest single year

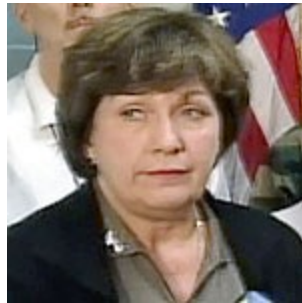
reduction ever! We are happy to tell you that the district has declared a hiring freeze for the first time in 10 years.

Despite all the dangers, ladies and gentlemen, our show will go on tonight as planned! Even all the plans to try to prevent it wouldn't have been in place until 2015 anyway - even with proper funding and oversight - so as you see, there really was never any danger at all.

Even so, we still want to thank President Bush and his administration, which just seven days ago defunded all the studies for the design and budgeting for finally raising the levees and ordered the Army Corps of Engineers not to begin any work. A little late, but they did come through!

Mister Go, aka MRGO, aka the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, first made his debut in Washington DC when he was proposed as a 76 mile channel to provides a shorter route between the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans's port. Resisted by many people as a bad idea, politics and money made sure that Mister Go's show was funded by Congress in the River and Harbor Act of 1956. Mister Go opened his new show in 1965. Mister Go is also a cunning plan to allow as much water from the storm surge of a major hurricane to enter St. Bernard Parish as possible. Let's hear it for Mister Go!

After that, boys and girls, we'll hear from the world famous Albert Baldwin Wood and his the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board players! Unfortunately Mr. Wood could not attend this evening due to a slight case of death, but we're sure that the S&WB players won't disappoint you!



We also have with us this evening, Governor Kathleen Blanco. She declared a State of Emergency in Louisiana on Friday. It is commonly known that Mrs. Blanco is just the public face of the real Governor - her husband. Even so, she will be one of the stars of this show, continually encouraging all of us to pray. All through the show she's gonna dance for you folks. She's gonna issue orders, suspend laws, and perform all the most outrageous acts for your amusement and edification!



No second place to Mrs. Blanco is our next star - a man you will see again and again as our little show goes off. Clarence Ray Nagin, Jr. is a man of so many talents that is impossible to know where to begin. A conservative businessman, he did an expedient political flip-flop to become the Mayor. He came out strong against corruption, and after one or two encouraging campaigns was obviously bought off by somebody because we never heard another peep about corruption after a point. As Hurricane Ivan threatened in 2004, C. Ray told us all to be ready for the storm, preferably to evacuate with some "Benjamins" (\$100 bills) handy, and told those of us staying to stock up on food and water and have "an axe in the attic." He issued a voluntary evacuation order, and 600,000 people left. Ivan missed us, but the show was entertaining - but not as entertaining as this one is going to be!

For our show, C. Ray calls for a *mandatory* evacuation - and that's where the hilarity begins. Not only does he issue a *mandatory* evacuation, he also fails or refuses to use *any* available transportation options to move sick, elderly, or poor people out of danger. Instead, he provides the Superdome as a 'shelter of last resort' and sets us up for an entire act of our tragedy.



Our next entertainer was very hard to find, ladies and gentlemen. The man who helped give us the Patriot Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the man voted most resembling Skeletor, a man whose name means 'devil' in Russian...I give you...Michael Chertoff! He won't bother to do his job and declare an "incident of national significance," because he knows that the national significance status kicks in as soon as the president declared the emergency. Unfortunately, he seems to be the only one who

knows this! As you see in this photo, he is adept at various kinds of hand magic, and will entertain us periodically through the show.

Of course, the show wouldn't be complete without Skeletor's... ah...Mike's boss - a man who needs no intro - The President of the United States! Unfortunately he doesn't do much and isn't that entertaining, but we'll have to forgive him for that. He's got war on his mind, and war is a heavy thing ladies and gentlemen.

He does, in fact, declare an emergency in Louisiana for the parishes shown in red in the image below.



Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050827-1.html>

The list does NOT include Orleans, St. Bernard, Jefferson, or any other parishes in South Louisiana - which is where the show takes place. There is NO federal state of emergency in the southern parishes.

I have to be fair, though, folks that the next day Mrs. Blanco asked Mr. President to fix that.

"The affected areas are all the southeastern parishes including the New Orleans Metropolitan area and the mid state Interstate I-49 corridor and northern parishes along the I-20 corridor that are accepting the thousands of citizens evacuating from the areas expecting to be flooded as a result of Hurricane Katrina."

She even sent a message to the White House through FEMA:

"Pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.35, I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster. I am specifically requesting emergency protective measures, direct Federal Assistance, Individual and Household Program (IHP) assistance, Special Needs Program assistance, and debris removal."

The pissing contest that follows is part of the show, so I won't spoil it just now. It's one of the few things that Mrs. Blanco actually got right. Let's just say that after this, Mr. President issued statements on Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, but not Louisiana.

Let's go ahead and introduce Mr. Max Mayfield, Director of the National Hurricane Center. He started calling everywhere a few days ago talking crazy talk about how, "This was it! This is the big one!" Well, Max couldn't join us tonight - but he was right - This IS it! His buddy Ivor van Heerden, deputy director of the LSU Hurricane Center and the same genius that ran the Hurricane Pam predictions started making the rounds too. He said all kinds of crazy stuff too...but you know what folks? He's right too! In the middle, Max took time out of his busy schedule to have a video conference with Mr. President, who was on vacation in Crawford, Texas.

There are a few more people we would like to recognize tonight. Mr. Marty Bahamonde, for one. Marty is the FEMA regional director for New England. Through some wild misfortune, Marty got stuck in New Orleans - making him the sole FEMA representative in the city. A little more than 13 hours ago, we intercepted his email to David Passey, Region 6 FEMA Director. His email says, in part, "Issues developing at the Superdome. 2000 already in and more standing in line. ... The medical staff at the dome says they will run out of oxygen in about 2 hours and are looking for alternative oxygen." Eleven hours ago, he sent out a group email, and we've got that one too! It says, "The current population at the Superdome in New Orleans is 25,000. That's a large crowd during a normal event. Among the shelter population are 400 special needs evacuees and 45-50 sick individuals who require hospitalization. The on-hand oxygen supply will likely run out in the next few hours. According to the ... [health and medical services] folks, the local health officials have struggled to put meaningful resource requests together." Marty is a real trooper folks, and we'll be hearing from him again. Let's show him some support!

Less than ten hours ago, Dave sent an email back to Marty that said, "Our intel is that neither the ... [Oklahoma DMAT medical team] nor the public health officers staged in Memphis will make it to the Superdome tonight. Oxygen supply issue has not been solved yet either."

Four hours ago The Department of Homeland Security sent a report to the White House Situation Room with a warning that flooding "could leave the New Orleans metro area

submerged for weeks or months," and also that damage would run into the tens of billions.

Two Hours ago Jefferson Parish emergency manager Walter Maestri reports from the operations center that he has no reports of wind damage or tidal surge problems, though he also notes that the pumping of water from New Orleans is raising the levels of drainage canals to dangerous stages.

One hour ago Kenner Police Department pulled its officers off the street. (Kenner is a few miles west of New Orleans)

It is now 6:00 AM on Monday, August 29th, ladies and gentlemen. Our show will begin in ten minutes. There will be no intermission. Please take your seats and enjoy the show! Do hold on to your hats. It may be windy in the theatre.

Shane

ANALYSIS - Dancing with the Girl with the Strawberry Curl

On the previous page I had a little fun, but I want to settle down now and speak with you frankly about The Dance.

On the previous page I had a go at some of the principal players, and they all have some share of 'blame' for some things. I'm not going to ride that rail too far, though. It's not so very important to figure out what everyone is to blame for. What is much more important is to understand that with very rare exception, no other persons in similar positions would have done too much better. We have to extract the lessons without getting too hung up on the personalities. In order to do that, we have to have some small understanding of American Politics in the modern age.

1. All American politicians are popularists.

I mean this in a sense stronger than Don Luigi Sturzo's political doctrine, but 99 out of 100 people won't know who that is anyway. All I really mean by it is that politicians achieve office by means of a highly organized popularity contest known as an election. Politicians are always looking to please most of the people most of the time because eventually they will face an election cycle and they want to keep their positions of power and prestige. A politician needs to be popular to be elected, and he or she needs to stay popular in order to be re-elected.

Now I want you to think back to your high school days and remember the most popular boys and girls in your school. Now ask yourself...would any of these popular people be useful leaders in an emergency or disaster situation? You probably just said, "Hell no!" Just because a person is popular doesn't necessarily make them a good leader, nor is it an indication of advanced problem solving skills. All it really means is that they aren't too ugly and people like them.

Who in your high school *would* be useful in an emergency or disaster situation? If your high school was like mine, you want to have two kinds of people in an emergency. The first kind is geeks and nerds, who have the intelligence to look at something, say, "Now that's some really messed up stuff there.", and then come up with a workable solution set. Of course, if your geeks and nerds start spouting about how they need to find some alien technology to make their plans work, then you probably need to guide them constructively. You might also have to remind them to zip their fly.

The second kind of person you might want are the dark, brooding, anti-social types, because those people might have skills. Unfortunately, the people who are generally good with emergencies and disasters aren't the kinds of people who hold public office.

2. People in charge of government agencies are all friends or family of populist politicians.

The people who become the heads of government agencies are appointed by politicians. Generally these are 'second tier' popular people in high school. They follow the popular people around like a fan club. They frequently achieve their positions by a process known as 'brown nosing'.

Let's take for example Mr. Skeletor...er...Mr. Chertoff. Mike Chertoff graduated from Harvard Law School, was a Supreme Court clerk, and worked his way up to become a judge on the US Court of Appeals, a federal prosecutor, and an assistant U.S. Attorney General. Then, in January of 2005, he was nominated by Mr. President to become the Secretary of Homeland Security. He was confirmed by the Senate in February by a unanimous vote. Ass-kissing pays off. I'm not saying that Mr. Chertoff isn't a good person, or that he isn't a brilliant lawyer. I am obviously not a brilliant lawyer, and wouldn't last three days at Harvard Law School.

The question arises, however, if a lawyer - no matter how brilliant - is the least bit qualified to direct Homeland Security. That makes about as much sense to me as putting a military tactician in charge of Harvard Law School.

The bottom line is that the people who are in charge of most Federal and State agencies are good people. They just have no idea what they are doing because they have no particular background in what they are directing. They become a part of the populism, but accomplish little. When SHTF, they really have no idea what to do.

3. People who work for government agencies are usually pretty good at it.

The people in middle management actually do have qualifications to perform their jobs - for the most part. The people with their boots on the ground likewise have specific skills. The problem is that these people have bosses that are populists and brown nosers - which causes no end of grief.

4. Popular projects are funded first. Visible projects are funded second. Infrastructure is funded if there is money left over.

When there is an obvious need, politicians will spend money on popular projects. After Hurricane Betsy, for instance, everyone was very active in making sure that levees were fixed and upgraded because the public eye was on these projects. Forty years later, nobody was really watching anymore, so flood control projects were slowly de-funded in order to pay for other more visible and popular projects.

There really is no evil plot in any of this. There is only so much money to go around, and so politicians all play the 'Rob Peter to pay Paul' game. President Bush got a lot of attention for de-funding the flood control projects, but he was only following in the footsteps of President Clinton. Yes, Congress and the Bush administration agreed to a \$286.4 billion pork-laden highway bill that included more than 6,000 pet projects for lawmakers, as well as allocations for dust control on Arkansas roads, a warehouse on the Erie Canal and a \$231 million bridge to a small, uninhabited Alaskan island - but they didn't invent that kind of popularism.

Ten years before Katrina, the Clinton administration cut 98 flood control projects, including one in New Orleans, saying such projects should be local, not national. This is despite the fact that all such projects had been federalized, and no local or state authority could - by law - approve or construct such projects. The \$120 million hurricane project, approved and financed annually since 1965 was killed by the Clinton administration.

In 1996, Congress approved more for flood-control projects than was recommended by the Clinton administration. In 1999, Congress and the Clinton administration agreed to spend only \$47 million on New Orleans area hurricane flood control projects – half of what local and ACOE officials had requested.

Again, in 2000, Congress approved a \$23.6 billion measure for water and energy programs, with sizable increases for several New Orleans area flood-control projects. Clinton, however, promised to veto the annual appropriation for the Energy Department and Army Corps of Engineers because it did not include a plan to alter the levels of the Missouri River to protect endangered fish and birds.

None of this is really the fault of the politicians themselves. We reward their popularism, and so they only do what we have trained them to do - which is to buy votes by making us collectively happy.

5. In an emergency or disaster, all Federal and most State officials will often be worse than useless.

Federal and State officials will eat regular meals, sleep in warm, dry beds, and have regular showers. They will have no understanding or appreciation for the situation on the ground, and they will make popular speeches and perform popular actions. They will not

be of any real use to you, and their edicts and decrees can actually be harmful to you. You can be 100% certain that they will all lie to you in some way, shape, or fashion.

6. Look locally for logical leadership.

That's the '4L' rule. Local officials are your neighbors. They live in your community, and whatever disaster occurs to you also occurs to them. They will fully appreciate and understand the conditions on the ground. If you are unlucky, they will do stupid popularity things like throw fund-raising dinners. If you are lucky, then you will get strong, solid leadership.

Here in Harahan, Mayor Paul Johnson is one of my personal heroes. He was completely together after the storm and directed Harahan better than any other official anywhere. We will make a case study of him in time.

What, exactly, is the role of government in both the emergency management and disaster response roles? That proves to be a very difficult question to answer, and it's something that we will have to examine in some depth at a later time. There are some constraints on government, and government is frequently not the thing that most people imagine. There are not, for instance, truckloads of supplies waiting to roll all over the country. Some of this was pre-staged for Katrina, but much of it had to be assembled after the fact. A key to understanding the government's response on all levels is understanding what government can and cannot do - and why. Will will cover that as time goes on.

For now, though, fasten your seatbelts.

Shane

EVENT - The Battle of New Orleans

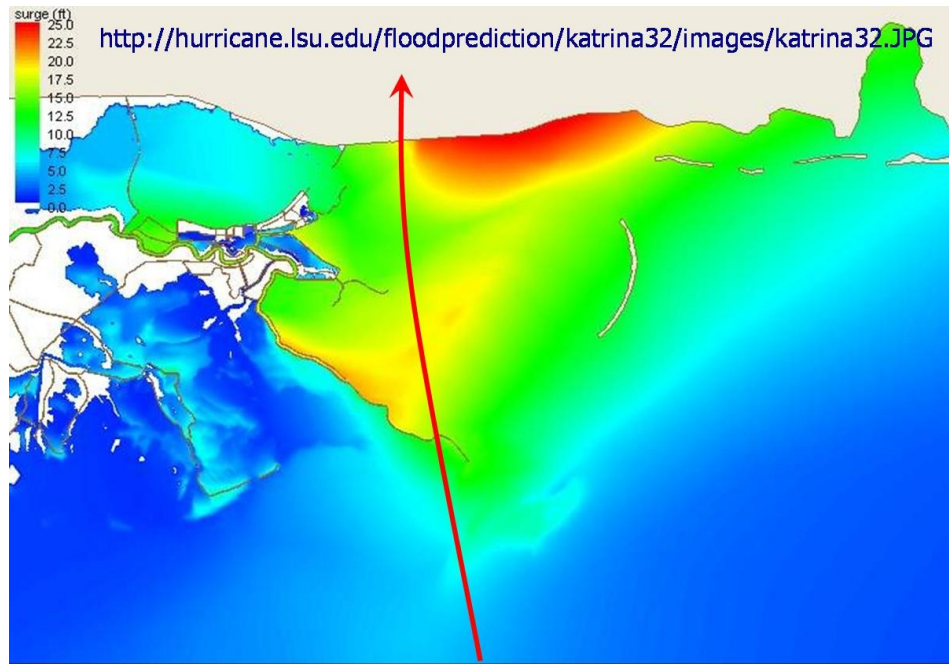
Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 5:00 AM CDT

Location: Mister Go, aka MRGO, aka Mississippi River Gulf Outlet



I was terribly tempted to detail very meticulously each event of the storm. This has been done in so many places, though, that I thought it redundant and not of value in our context. Let's hit some highlights and leave it at that. If you want more detail, it is available many places on the internet. For us it is enough to say that Hurricane Katrina developed a storm surge as high as 25 feet or more and detail only those events that are broadly relevant. This is the last page upon which I will use this format. I want to get

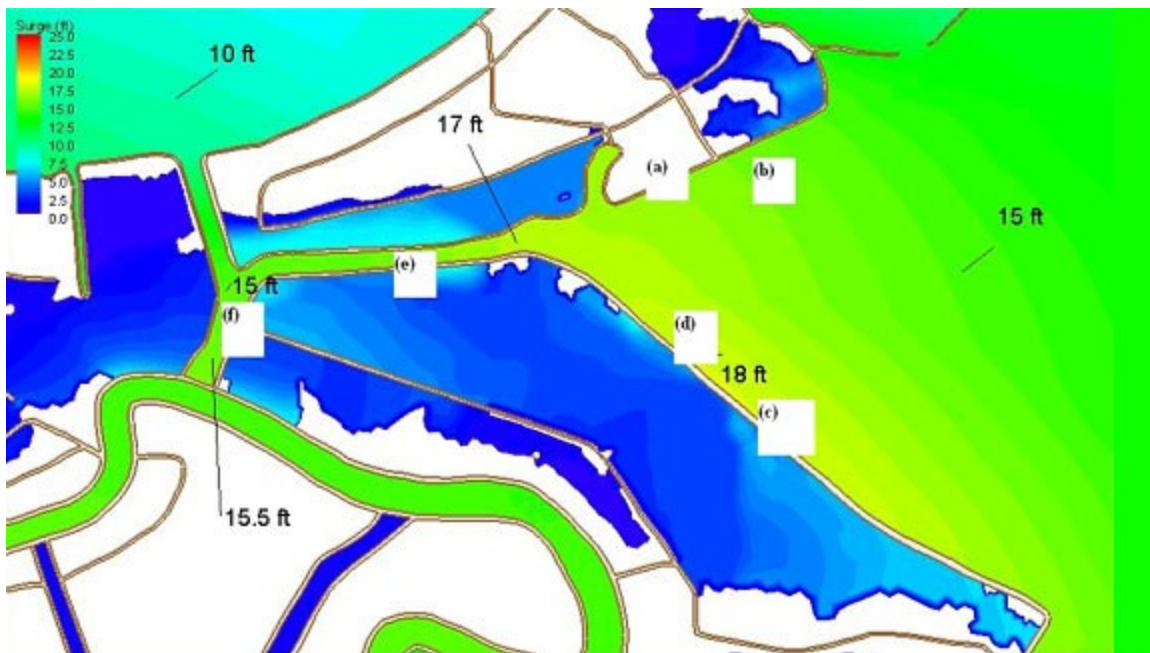
into the analysis without wasting too much time on things people already know. I am going to make this as easy as possible.



As Katrina rolled in, the entirety of the extreme southeastern tip of Louisiana was inundated with water. Water rushed inland along the entire Gulf Coast, and in particular Mississippi and Alabama.

As we have discussed, New Orleans' particular topography made it very vulnerable, and the insufficiencies of the levees proved especially fatal.

It should be noted that for every foot of levee that failed in New Orleans, there are miles of levee that did not. Failures, however, are the engine of disaster. The Titanic sank from a few holes, not because the entire side of the ship came away. Rather than spend too much time detailing the breaches, let's just go through them briefly so that we can understand the situation as it develops - and will continue to develop over the next few days.



It is important to understand that the primary method of Katrina's destruction is storm surge and not wind and rain. While wind and rain are contributing factors - insult to injury, if you will - the surge itself is what destroys the levees and causes most of the flooding.

Mississippi and Alabama are nailed by the wind and rain, and Mississippi experiences some of the highest storm surge on record. Only New Orleans, however, has a topography ripe for disaster.

In Louisiana, the storm surge comes through Lake Borgne and also (as predicted for so many years) blasts through the MRGO, blowing out the levee for over ninety percent of its length. St. Bernard parish - the *entire* parish - will soon be under several feet of water - and that level will continue to rise. Some eyewitness accounts document a wall of water 14 feet high (some say higher) that flowed down Paris Road, a main thoroughfare. The east bank of Plaquemines parish, and large portions of the west bank are also shortly to be inundated with water. In many areas this flooding has already begun.

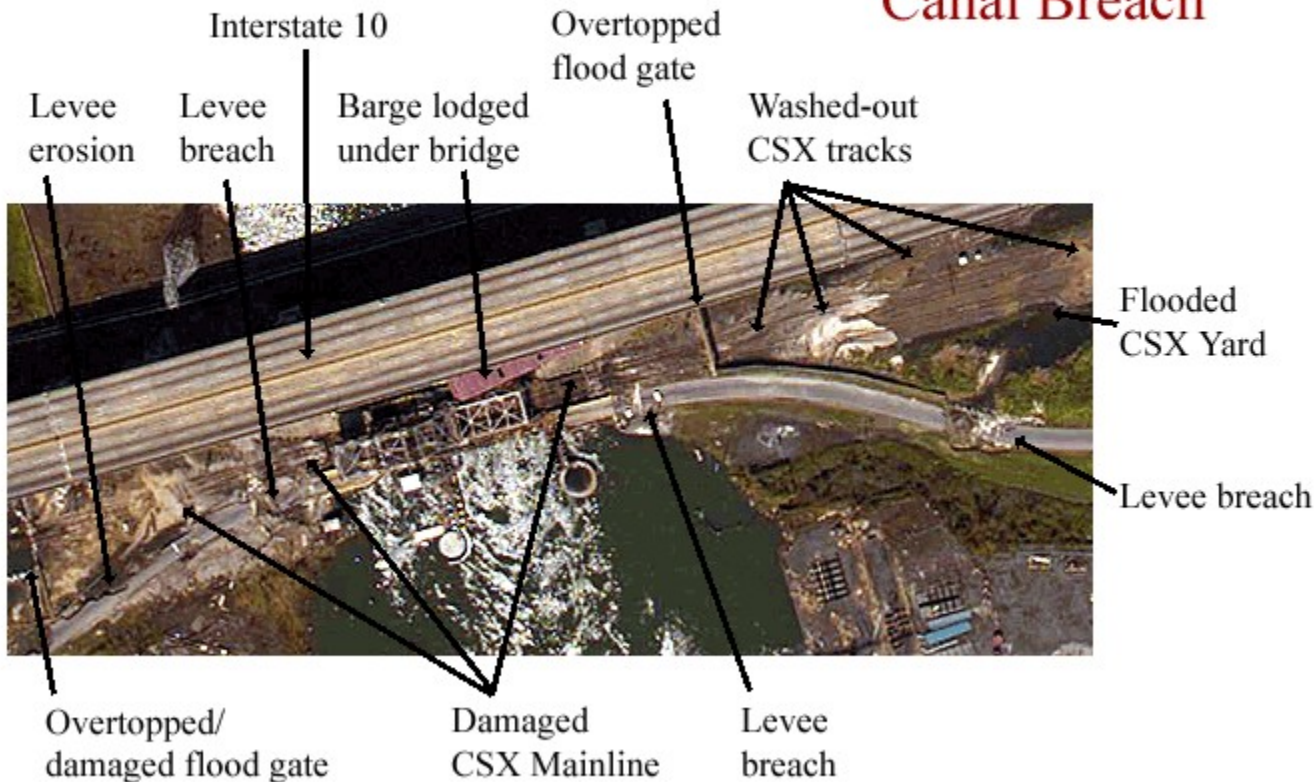
The timeline for St. Bernard Parish and Plaquemines Parish is difficult to state accurately. The people who survived are fighting for their lives, and being in mortal terror doesn't put one in the mood to take good notes. The initial surge over-tops or blows through three of the four major levee systems protecting St. Bernard Parish in multiple locations. The fourth fails at some later point. The occupants of St. Rita's nursing home in Chalmette, which was not evacuated, hear a rumbling sound just before the building is rocked by the wave. The exterior quickly floods to the roof line. Water pouring in through the vents rapidly fills the building. Twenty-five of sixty patients are initially saved. Five of these die soon after. In Meraux, storage tanks at the Murphy Oil refinery rupture, spilling 1.1 million gallons of oil.

The surge is concentrated by a natural funnel which connects several waterways from both lakes that intersect the 5.5-mile Industrial Canal (the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal) which links Lake Pontchartrain with the Mississippi River. The surge builds in the Industrial Canal, smashes into the closed gates of the lock, rises in the canal, and over-tops the levee.

Flooding begins on both sides of the canal. Several pumps fail as the power goes out and water intrudes into unprotected equipment. The requested improvements that would have supplied generator power and protection from water intrusion were never funded. Even if the pumps had remained at full capacity, it is doubtful that they would have been able to keep up once the levees failed in earnest.

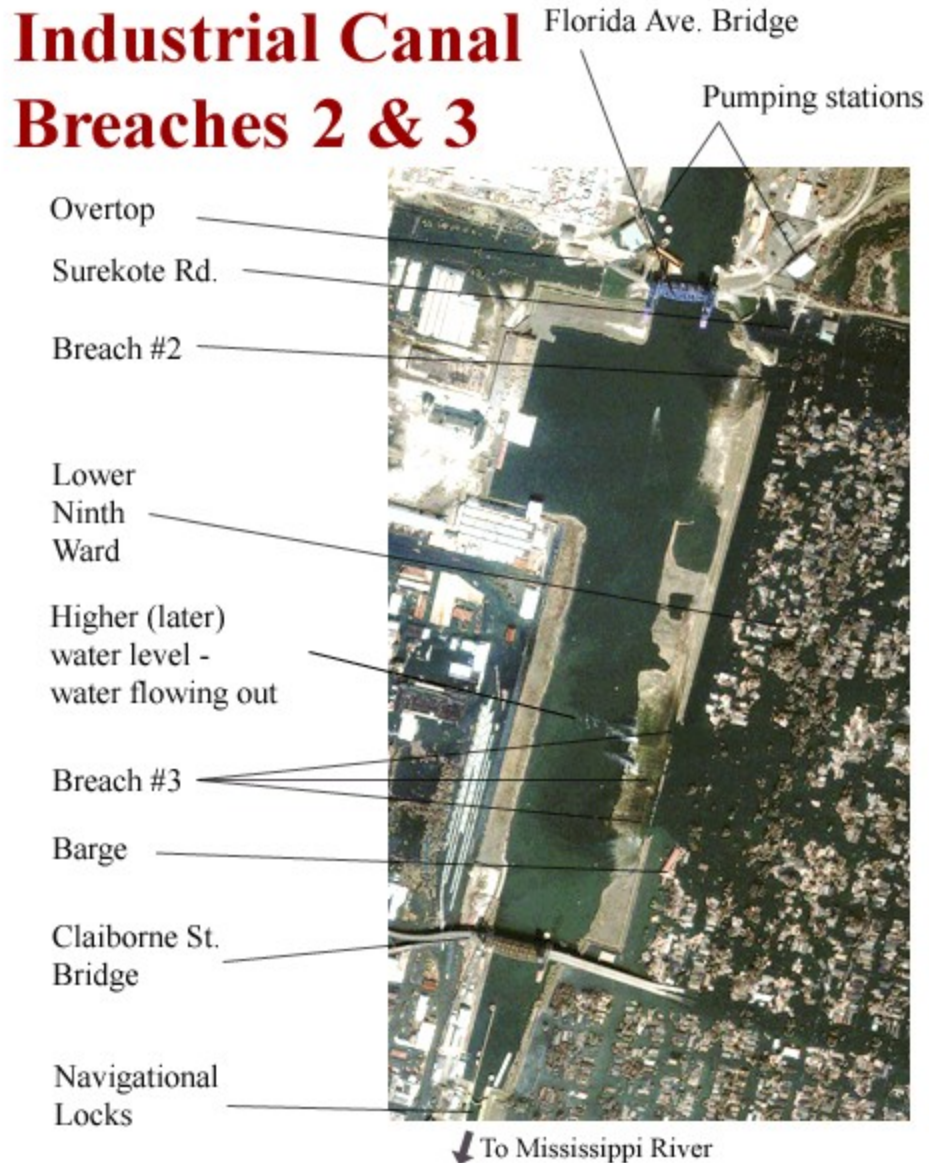
At the north end of the canal, a power station floods, I-10 begins to take water, and at least one barge comes loose from its moorings. The lights have started to go out.

First Industrial Canal Breach

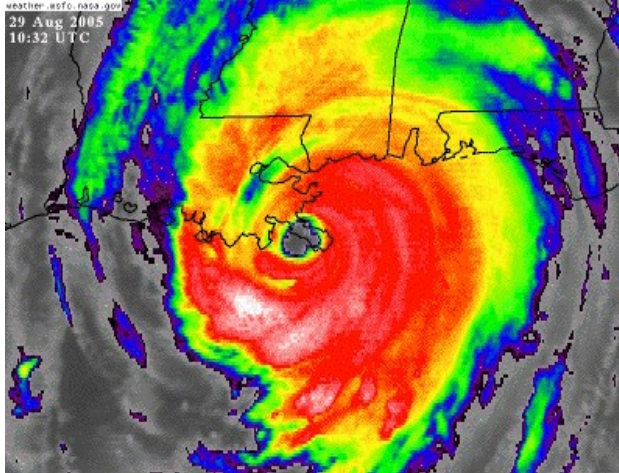


Just south of I-10 the CSX railroad floodgates, damaged by a derailment, are not functional. The sandbags used to close the gap quickly fail and the first breach into Orleans Parish occurs close to 5:00 AM. Water flows into Gentilly and East New

Orleans, worsening the existing flooding. Farther south, another flood wall fails in several places.



When 155 feet of the eastern flood wall fails just below the Florida Avenue bridge, water begins pouring into the Lower Ninth Ward. On the other side of the canal, the Florida Avenue Pumping Station loses the battle against the water overtopping the levee and fails.



As Katrina's fury increases, WWL-TV continues to broadcast. The station began 24-hour coverage on Saturday, and evacuated its New Orleans Studio to the LSU Journalism School in Baton Rouge. Transmitters in Gretna and in Baton Rouge continue the broadcast. MacGyver-like technicians kluge together a satellite link to stream the program. The staff maintains nearly continuous broadcasting for nine days.

WWL 870 AM radio's staff also performs a heroic public service as it has done many times in the past. The station manages to continuously broadcast and provide internet streams. These are not government employees. These are people who continued to do their job even though they did not have to, and at great personal risk. They are true heroes, and their service meant a *lot* to those displaced by the storm and to those marooned in their own homes as the storm raged and water rose. For many days, these stations were *the* source for information.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~7:00 AM CDT

Mayor Nagin calls in to WWL radio and reports breaches in the Industrial Canal floodwall into the Ninth Ward, and that some flooding has occurred to the east as well. He reports that the Florida Avenue pumping station has failed, and that he has reports of people trapped on roofs. 911 is inoperative. Charity Hospital is losing windows and is on emergency power. His voice is edgy. He sounds a little lost.

The Superdome goes dark just after 7:00 AM.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~7:45 AM CDT

A catastrophic failure of another 800 foot section section of the Industrial Canal sends a wave of water into the Lower Ninth Ward. Many houses are pushed and floated off their foundations and some are moved hundreds of yards. A 195 foot oil barge, loose from its moorings, floats into the Lower Ninth Ward.

The flooding of New Orleans is now well under way. Thousands are trapped. Hundreds are dying.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~8:30 AM CDT

Jackson Barracks, the Louisiana National Guard headquarters, begins to take water. In spite of the fact that this area is known to flood - being at the southeast end of the Lower Ninth Ward - guard troops have been staged here for post-storm response. As the buildings fill up with water, the troops are forced to save themselves. Trucks are lost and communications equipment is destroyed. This causes at least a 24 hour response delay after the storm passed. Some of these Guard troops go to the Superdome, which helps to increase the government presence there.



Water has been flowing backwards through the pumping stations on Lake Pontchartrain into Jefferson Parish. The pump operators have been evacuated and the pumps abandoned. The valves were either left open or failed to close automatically depending on which story you believe. Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard later claims that, "There is no evidence that the pumps being off caused any flooding."

This image, taken Monday morning provides that proof as it documents water flowing backwards through the open gates.

The floodwall atop the 17th Street Canal levee begins to fail on the north side. Many people have seen the resulting images, but this image has not been made public until

now. It is an image taken just a few hours after the breach, when Katrina's winds subside enough to venture out. You can see that the initial breach is very small, but it will grow much larger in the coming hours.



If you examine the image closely, you can see that the flood wall is literally pushed straight back, causing the separation. At no time were these flood walls over-topped. The high water mark is 25 inches from the top of the wall. (As I measured it later.)

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~9:00 AM CDT

Near the breach in the 17th street canal, water reaches high enough on a wall to stop a battery powered wall clock at 8:57 AM.

Mr. President issues a "Statement on Federal Disaster Assistance for Louisiana." that now includes the southern parishes.

Reports that the Lower Ninth Ward is under 8 feet of water are confirmed. Water tops a floodwall near Lakefront Airport and more flooding occurs west of the Industrial Canal.

The storm surge peaks in southeast Louisiana.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~9:09 AM CDT

The Superdome roof begins losing the battle against Katrina. Most of the roof's membrane covering has been peeled away, and rain is coming in through holes in the 'dome' of the roof. There is no structural damage, but the frightened people inside - in the dark - have no way to know this.



In 2001, levee improvements and a new floodwall were completed on the London Avenue Canal.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~9:30 AM CDT



The eastern wall of the London Avenue Canal fails near Mirabeau Road. The huge concrete walls separate and snap off their supports. Reinforced earthen levees move under the force of water. Block by block, water rises to the roofline.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~9:40 AM CDT

WWL TV reports the failure of the Industrial Canal levee at Tennessee street. Up to eight feet of water is expected in adjoining areas. This shows that reports of actual events are not being communicated until hours after they occur.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~10:00 AM CDT

The eye of Katrina crosses New Orleans and the winds shift to the west. The surge begins to recede in the canals and southern bayous, but begins to rise in Lake Pontchartrain. The I-10 'Twin Span' bridge between New Orleans and Slidell becomes a casualty of wind and waves as concrete slabs are lifted from the bridge foundations and dropped into the water.



At least one person is stranded on the bridge at this time as the bridge disintegrates around them. One lucky person is rescued days later and treated for dehydration.

He does not have clean underwear.

The New Orleans Yacht Club and Marina, on the north end of the 17th Street Canal at Lake Pontchartrain is destroyed by wave action. Buildings on the lake front (not protected by the levees) are all destroyed. Among them was Sidmar's - one of my favorite restaurants.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 10:12 AM CDT

Marty Bahamonde reports to Michael Heath who reports to Michael Brown:

- * Severe flooding on the St. Bernard/Orleans parish line. Police report water level up to second floor of two story houses. People are trapped in attics.
- *Pumps starting to fail. The city has now confirmed four pumps are off line.
- *Windows and parts of the east side of the Amoco Building blown out.
- *New Orleans shopping center (next to superdome) destroyed.
- *Windows and parts of the East side of the Hyatt Hotel have been blown out. Furniture is blowing out of the hotel.
- *Top floors of the Entergy building have been blown out
- *Area around the Superdome is beginning to flood.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~10:13 AM CDT

"Katrina Spot Report" inside the White House Homeland Security Council notes, "Flooding is significant throughout the region and a levee in New Orleans has reportedly been breached sending 6-8 feet of water throughout the 9th ward area of the city." This is hard proof of exactly when the White House understood the conditions unfolding in New Orleans.

The west side of the London Avenue Canal fails at about this time as well, but in a much more catastrophic way. A wave of water flows through the adjoining neighborhood. City Park - one of the lowest areas - begins to fill with water.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~11:00 AM CDT

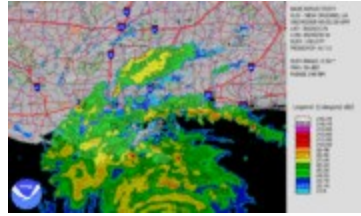
The eye is now 35 miles east of New Orleans. Interstate 10 near the Industrial Canal is flooded and impassable. Power is out across the region. Communications are down. Water pressure falls, and tap water becomes unsafe to drink. What little remains of the New Orleans Yacht Club is on fire.

In Mississippi, on the stronger side of the eye, neighborhoods for more than a mile inland are completely erased. Eighty percent of the city of Biloxi is destroyed. Keesler Air Force base is unserviceable.

In Mississippi and Louisiana, many areas that were once dry land are now open water. Reports begin to come out of people trapped on rooftops. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Thad Allen gives orders to begin rescue operations.

Mike Brown sends Mike Chertoff a memo requesting 1,000 rescue workers within 48 hours, and 2,000 more within seven days. He proposes sending these for training in Georgia or Florida, and then into the disaster area when "conditions are safe". Among the duties these people will undertake, he lists, "to convey a positive image of disaster operations to government officials, community organizations and the general public."

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, ~11:56 AM CDT



Marty Bahamonde reports that the New Orleans Fire Department reports that there is a 20 foot wide breach at the 17th street canal. This report is three hours after the fact - which is actually pretty good.

As the storm passes, it seems as though New Orleans has 'dodged the bullet', and that the Mississippi Gulf Coast took the fatal round right in the heart. This viewpoint, however, is one taken from people who are in areas that aren't flooding and haven't received much damage. The extent of the damage to outlying areas is unknown because no reports are coming from those areas.

In many areas the water is rising. Slowly at first, but in 24 more hours some streets that are dry now will be covered in 8 feet of water.

It's coming up on lunch time now, and I want to finish this page with a little editorial.

This is a picture of the Lower Ninth Ward. The view is facing west. The Mississippi river can be seen in the upper left corner. The flooding from the breaches in the London Avenue Canal is quite apparent.



Those who are familiar with aircraft will immediately know that this image is not from 2005. It is from 1964, and the flooding is courtesy of Hurricane Betsy. Forty one years ago, the same areas of the city that were underwater in 1964 are under water again. Anyone who stayed in these areas when Hurricane Katrina came knocking obviously lacked a CLUE.

In 1964, there was a very common scenario that played out in many homes. Water floods the street and quickly begins to rise. There is no escape because the water is moving fast. As the water rises it slows down, but now it is too deep to allow escape. Water is coming into the house. In order to escape the rising water, people climb atop beds, tables, and dressers. The water knows no mercy, however, and continues to rise. People swim to a small hatch in the ceiling and they escape into the attic where they are safe, high, and dry - until the water comes looking for them.

They think that it will not get much deeper, but the water comes up for them. Some manage to kick their way out of the roof. Others manage to find some object to make an escape hole with. Some people breathe their last breath with their faces pressed into the peak of their roof. Others do not drown immediately and are trapped for days without food or water.



After Betsy, the stories were passed around and ever since then if you go into any attic in New Orleans you will find an axe or a hatchet.

You will find one in mine.

We all laugh about this, but it is a grim laughter.

Yes, the levees and flood walls were newer, higher, and stronger - but knowing all of the history, why would anybody stay in an area that everyone knows is especially vulnerable as danger approaches?

Why?

LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!

As proof, I offer you this image:



There is a major hurricane on a collision course with your house. If your strategy is to have no food and no water in the house with three women, three children, and a 9 month old baby then you *really* need to work on that.

We'll come back and check on these folks later. For now, though, it is *Monday, August 29, 2005, 12:00 NOON CDT*. It's time for lunch. After lunch, we'll do a little analysis. For now, though, I'm going to pack the family up and find a burger joint or something and be very thankful that I'm not sitting on a rooftop somewhere surrounded by water.

ANALYSIS - Armageddon Lite

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 12:00 NOON CDT

An army of water now flows freely into New Orleans through gaping holes in the walled defenses. Huge sections of 'the bowl' fill slowly, mile after mile, as the army of water conquers again the land that it once possessed. It marches across the city, and through the night it will come upon sleeping civilians and show them no mercy. Freeways become islands, off ramps become boat ramps. Hospitals can only be reached by boat or helicopter. The water will continue it's relentless advance for two days until the level equalizes with surrounding water - and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot stop it. If the water had a general, he would stand before his troops and declare, "WHAT IS OURS, IS OURS AGAIN!"

Dark areas show flooding.



The nature of this disaster is apparent. It's all about water. The wind and the rain are minor factors in New Orleans. Moving water is the most powerful force on earth. In a very real way, water shapes the face of the planet. Too much water too fast is what overwhelmed the levee systems. If the levees had not failed, Katrina would already be a fading memory.

Mrs. Dallum, my high school journalism teacher, taught us about the six 'W's - Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. We've covered What, When, Where, and in some cases How, but our analysis needs to go a little further. 'Why', for instance, is something we ought to know. Over the next few pages, we are going to extract many lessons from this.

After days turn into weeks and then months and then almost a year, on June 1, 2006, the COE released a document of more than 6,000 pages that details what went wrong. After spending a lot of time reading that kind of thing late into the night, listening to people, watching video, and visiting the sites personally, the bottom line isn't too mysterious.

Top ten reasons the levees failed:

1. Engineering isn't an exact science, especially when it involves mud and water.
2. The major failures were foundation failures that, "were not considered in the original design of these structures," according to the COE report.
3. The engineered specification wasn't good enough.
4. The construction didn't meet the specification (which wasn't good enough anyway).
5. Maintenance was spotty and insufficient.
6. Bad luck.

OK, so there aren't ten...



The Corps spokesman said that the Corps has undergone a period of intense introspection and is "deeply saddened and enormously troubled by the suffering of so many."

Essentially what that means is that the Corps was standing around after the storm going, "Oops!"

This is where we let Huey stand up and preach it...

"Screw this! They're lying! The President's lying! The rich fat cats that are drowning you will do it again and again and again. They lead you into imperialist wars for profit, they take away your schools and your hope and when you complain, they blame Blacks and Jews and immigrants. Then they push your kids under."

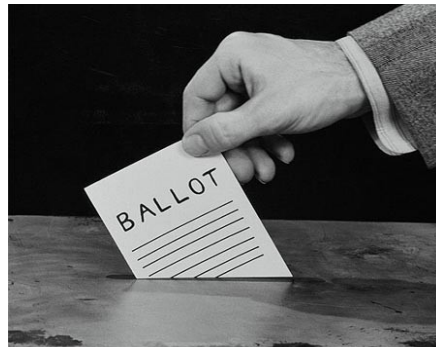
Huey is half right. The levees are, after all, populist projects driven and funded by populist politicians. Funded when popular, and built by the lowest bidder, they are just any other campaign promise - and like all campaign promises, they have weaknesses. The Corps of Engineers people who designed the levees, the people who built them, and the people who maintained them all live here. Their homes flooded too. As much as we'd like to find a conspiracy or fraud of some kind, it doesn't really exist except in small, individual cases. There was no grand conspiracy.

We can't blame the Corps, because the Corps only does what it's told to do. They certainly asked for more resources - over and over again - but they have to do what the

politicians tell them to do. No more, and no less. Yes, the specification should have been better. Less than 24 months before Katrina came, it is apparent that several people at the Corps realized that the current levees were *not* what they were promised to be - but Katrina came before the discussion of that could begin in earnest.



The politicians can be blamed then! We can blame it on Bush! Well, we've blamed everything from cancer to sun spots on Mr. President, but the simple fact is that the levees and other flood control projects were begun before Mr. President was a gleam in his daddy's eye. The long parade of federal, state, and local politicians who carried the torch for the preparations all bear some burden. The Corps, after all, only does what the politicians tell them to do. Unfortunately, the politicians only do what the people tell them to do - and they will only do as much as it takes to get elected and no more.



The levees are a comedy of politics, and in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, whenever government screws us on something, it's just us screwing ourselves. To make matters worse, after the screwing, we have to sleep in the wet spot. If any one has the desperate need to point a finger, the only place to point it is back at ourselves. The residents of coastal areas share another blame - we all make the active choice to live here.

A levee needs to be strong enough not to fail when it fills to the top. It also needs to be durable enough so that when water flows over the top of it, it will not wash out. Unfortunately, building such structures is very expensive - more expensive than popularism can provide for - so we end up with a 'best effort'. Most of the time, that effort is good enough. For severe events, it isn't.

The entire lesson in this is, "Government preparations will meet minimum standards, but fail under stress." We're going to see that over and over and over and over and over again...not just before, during, and after Katrina, but for all other sizeable disasters as well.

The human failures before, during, and after the storm will exacerbate the natural disaster. At this point in our timeline, we've had some failures, but we have also had some incredible successes. Almost two million people were moved out of harm's way in advance of the storm. Government had a tremendous role in this, from the NOAA providing storm data to local governments coordinating with state control to stage evacuation orders in an orderly way. I think that not enough attention has been paid to these successes.

On the state level, the coordination by the DOT and state police was professional to its core. Below the Federal level, government did everything it was supposed to do. In some cases, it was done a little late, but not too late to be effective. It's almost enough to make me proud to be a Louisianaian.



The pride in this success, though, quickly fades as the storm comes in and government at all levels face-plants faster than a drunk at Mardi Gras. If you have been a survivalist for any length of time, this will not surprise you. Everyone knows that the second anything bad happens, government is paralyzed in all its parts.

What few people understand, however, is *why* government becomes so paralyzed in times of crisis. They fail in this understanding because they have no realistic idea of what

government is or how government works. We will explore that in the next few pages, but for now let's stick with the actual events.

As Katrina rolled in, infrastructure began to take damage and fall offline. The major utility is, of course, electricity. The electrical grid is a rather fragile piece of infrastructure, and none of it survives under water. Even without flooding, electrical power fails during severe weather events for a whole host of reasons. Once the power goes out, power must be supplied locally by generator power, and generators are fickle machines - they don't run under water either. Generators also require fuel, and if infrastructure is collapsing then fuel supplies will become short quickly. Power failure means the rapid failure of cell towers, broadcasting stations, water treatment and supply, sewerage treatment, cable television, internet connectivity...and a long list of other things.

The first thing that is noticed under such circumstances is communications. While fire, EMS, and police have the capability to maintain communications during a crisis, most of the civilian population does not. What was not foreseen before Katrina was that while fire, EMS, and police can communicate with each other within their districts and departments, they cannot communicate with other districts or other departments because they do not use the same systems. They could not support each other because they had no useful communication infrastructure *between* agencies. An effort has been made post-Katrina to remedy this.

The people who are supposed to be in charge of this mess - people like mayors and parish (county) presidents - go deaf, blind, and dumb during a widespread disaster because of the communication failures. Even in a very localized emergency - something like 9/11 - there is such a confusion of communications that it is very difficult to know what is going on.



During the event itself, critical infrastructure collapses, regional leadership collapses, and critical services cease. The men and women we usually rely on under normal

circumstances - police, fire, EMS, and others - go into a self preservation mode and they do not take calls. Their focus turns within, and they do whatever they need to do to survive and to protect the equipment they will need after the immediate danger is over.

There are many examples of people who managed to contact emergency services during the course of Katrina and other storms who begged to be rescued. "We have small children! The water is rising in the house! Please come to save us!" Unfortunately, nobody was going to come because it was simply impossible to move under those conditions. You can't drive a rescue truck in six feet of water especially when the wind is blowing at 100 MPH.

Our list of lessons grows.

1. Government preparations will meet minimum standards, but fail under stress.
2. As infrastructure collapses, power, water, communications, and government go off line.
3. News of actual events will be delayed to some degree - often by hours.
4. At the State and Federal level, there will be no clear understanding of conditions on the ground for hours or days. This failure of understanding will cause delays in providing critical support.



Number four is very important. I have serious doubts that on the Federal level anyone actually understands the full impact of Katrina even today. Officials of the State gather information from local governments and local police departments - which means that the

State is essentially blind until the event passes and some of those local services come back online. In the age of modern media, television and radio often provide better information than the local authorities - especially in the early hours.

What most people know, but fail to fully appreciate, is that any widespread disaster that affects the civilians also affects every member of the local government - from the Mayor all the way down to the most rookie police officer. Eighty percent of New Orleans Police Officers lost their homes to Katrina. I am going to devote an entire page to this idea and explain it carefully. For now, just know that in any widespread disaster that goes on for more than a few hours, you will lose not just electrical power, but every critical service upon which you commonly rely. On top of that, you will lose EMS first, police second, and firemen third. For as long as it takes for the immediate danger to pass, and for some time after, you are on your own.

It doesn't take long for certain elements to realize that they are no longer constrained by the rules of polite society. Some of these will restrict their activities to making a few beer runs, while others will take to forming armed rape gangs that rove neighborhoods looking for their next bit of fun.

Well, the rape gangs not so much. Looters fall into several different categories, and at this particular point in our timeline they aren't very active yet. That will still take a few hours. While we wait for the party to start, let's Listen to Katrina and see what she has to teach us at this point.

Shane

PLAN - Location, Location, Location

Location, Location, Location is a common and almost hackneyed phrase in real estate. It is never more true, however, than when talking about SHTF. Even people savvy to the preparedness game rarely consider their location carefully enough. Yes, some folks have their mountain strongholds - but did they check the earthquake danger before they built that underground lair?

Whenever you are going to buy or build a house, you should Listen to Katrina and do some serious homework. You may *think* that you are aware of all the important aspects of choosing a home, but there is a lot of homework that most people skip.

You should create a worksheet for each property that you are considering. This will help you make good choices. If you aren't currently in the market for a house, then you can use the worksheet to evaluate your own property. Let's start from large and work our way down to small details.

You've chosen to live on Planet Earth, which is a smorgasbord of nations that all have their own political, economic, and social structures. Wherever you live, you should

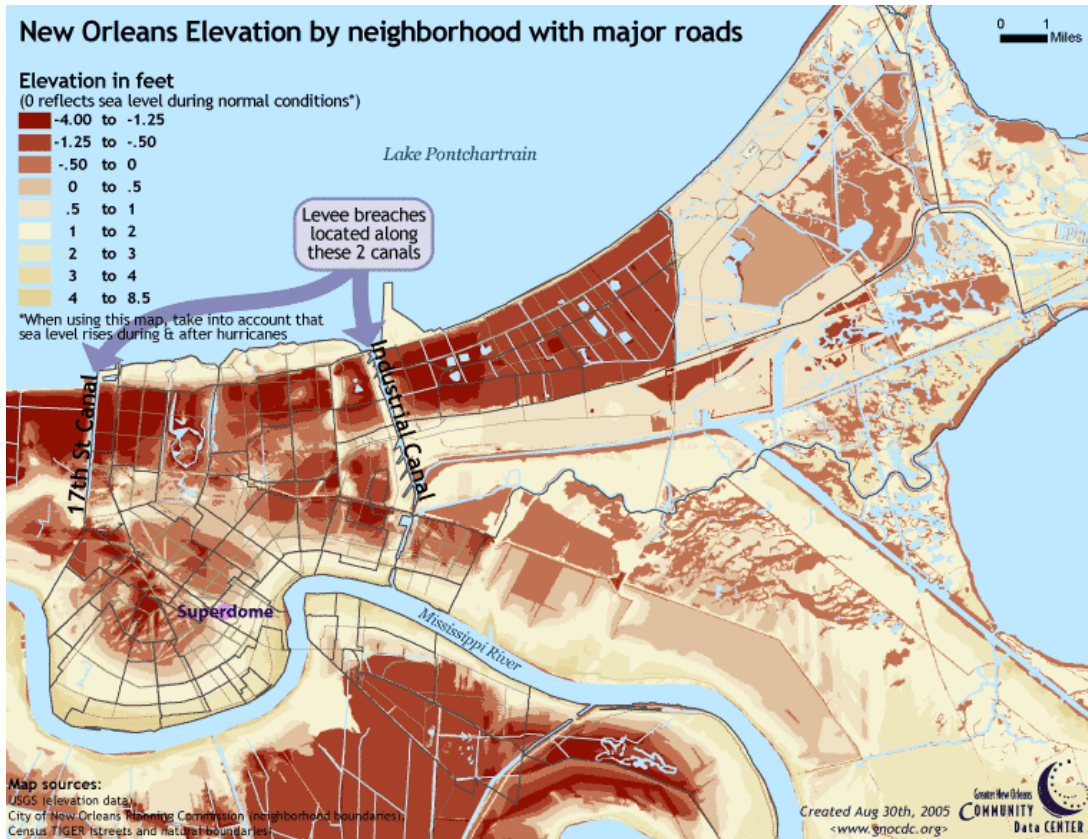
educate yourself on these aspects of your living arrangement. That scope is, however, beyond the reach of this blog.

I was fortunate enough to be born in the United States, and so I didn't have to move. I will make the arrogant assumption that this is the place to be - even if New Zealand often looks very nice. In the United States, there are fifty states all with their own political, economic, and social structures. Are you seeing the trend yet?

Once you pick a country and pick a state (or province, etc.), we come down to another set of local political, economic, and social structures. Even individual neighborhoods have their own structures sometimes. It is very easy to be lured into the trap of selecting a neighborhood based on these structures without fully appreciating the rest of the picture. Lakeview, for instance, was considered for many years to be where the affluent people of New Orleans made their homes - and indeed, Lakeview was one of the most affluent neighborhoods in the region. Right now if you drive through Lakeview, about a third of people have restored their homes and live in them, another third of homes is for sale, and the final third just sit abandoned waiting to be torn down.

Location, location, location...

From the day Bienville founded New Orleans, the primary consideration in the area has been one of flooding. We live and die by water here - literally. Your region will have other considerations as well, but for now let's talk about flooding. Twelve percent of Americans live in a flood zone. Andrea and I bought our current house in July of 2003. We had looked at several other properties, but snatched this one up even before it was actually on the market. Every single property we looked at before we bought this house flooded out during Katrina. Whenever we looked at a house, the primary map I had in my head was one like this:



Yes, it's an elevation map, and you can clearly see where the danger areas are. Go ahead and click on it for a closer look. After you see this map, then this image taken after Katrina is no real surprise:

Dark areas show flooding.

You can obviously see the line of the 17th street canal at the Jefferson/Orleans line. It doesn't take an engineer to figure out that even in a flood plain there are better places than others. Building your house at the very bottom of a dry lake bed is obviously a bad choice. My house isn't even in the flood plain at all, and the FEMA recommendations for my area don't even call for flood insurance. We do buy it anyway... With a little homework, you can save yourself a lot of heartache later.

We call such things MAJOR DANGERS in our worksheet. Two identical homes can be at different risk levels even though they are just a few miles apart. My house is less than eight miles from some of the worst flooding that occurred. If you build your house on an active volcano, you shouldn't be surprised when lava flows into your yard.



In the new Iron Man movie, there is an exterior shot of Tony Stark's house, which is fictionally located somewhere outside Los Angeles on the coast, perched on top of a cliff, hanging out over the ocean. The first thing that popped into my head when I saw it was, "You'd have to be insane to build a house like that, perched on a cliff like that, in an earthquake zone..."

On my last visit to Estes Park, Colorado, I noticed a house on the side of one of the mountains, which was built below a very large rock almost as large as the house itself. I likewise thought, "If the earth starts shaking, that house is going to be crushed to toothpicks..." Don't build your house where it can either fill up with water, fall off of something, or where it can be crushed by something. How complicated is that to understand?

Here are some other major DO NOTs:

1. Do not build or buy a home within 50 miles of the coast if that coast is affected by hurricanes or cyclones unless that home is at least 50 feet above sea level and built to withstand winds of 200 MPH.
2. Do not build or buy a home that is below the Base Flood Elevation Level unless the ground floor is elevated at least three feet above that elevation. Many people do not realize that most homes built in New Orleans until the 1980s were elevated with the entire ground space being used as a garage. As time went on, though, people forgot what this was for and built rooms into that space.
3. Do not buy or build a home near any active geological feature. Don't build a house on a volcano, for instance. I would also resist living in an earthquake zone, but there are better and worse areas for that too. You have to do the homework for whatever affects the area you live in. If you build on the side of a mountain, you must also consider things like mud slides.
4. Do not buy or build a home in any place that would be threatened by the failure of any man-made structure. For instance, if the levees fail in my area, my house will not be under water. It may be surrounded by water, but it will not be under water. Another area like this would be down river from a dam. If the dam breaks, you do not want to be in the path of that water.
5. Do not buy or build a home on any inland body of water unless you are 100% certain that such body of water is no threat to the property. Do not be easily fooled! If you need an example, go look up the Big Thompson River Flood. Don't let that little creek fool you!

6. Avoid HOAs (HomeOwner's Associations) like the plague. If you need to know why, go type HomeOwner's Associations Suck into Google and start reading.

You DO want to find property that is inland, elevated, geologically stable, not protected or threatened by man-made structures, and away from water. If you are buying a 'special' property - like that beach house you've always dreamed about - then insure it to the max. One day Mother Nature *will* come along and erase it.

Once you find a house that is properly situated geographically, there are some further considerations. (We are going to talk about what to look for when building a house as well.) If we are talking about rural property, some of these things do not apply. Most of America lives in suburbia, so that is where I will direct most of my comments.



If Katrina is clear on nothing else, the #1 DO NOT on location selection is this: DO NOT - EVER - LIVE IN A COMPLEX OF ANY KIND! That includes apartments, condos, or anything where you share common walls, floors, or ceilings with your neighbors. If you rent, then you should rent a single family dwelling at all costs. Besides the fact that if the neighbor's kid sets their apartment on fire, then yours can burn too, the reasons for this are myriad. We'll cover all of them in time, but renters had a *very* hard time after Katrina - and especially those in complexes. If you must live in a complex, then none of this page really applies to you anyway. Roll the dice and good luck. There will be another page for apartment dwellers further in the blog.

The next thing you want to look at is native vegetation. If there are a bunch of beautiful old-growth cypress trees in the front yard, you need to remember that cypress trees only grow in very wet ground. This next bit is a little more difficult to articulate, but you **want** trees. Big ones, if you can get them. This applies, of course, only to those areas which would be naturally forested without the presence of man. There is a strange practice among developers, and I have seen it again and again. They come in, cut all the trees down, put up neat rows of houses in neat neighborhoods, sell it all off and walk away. You can see that kind of construction commonly in Florida - and then along

comes a hurricane and blows it all flat. Trees act as a natural wind break. Don't buy a house in a neighborhood where they have all been cut down.

The negative aspect of trees is that they can fall on the house. You have to weigh the risk/benefit of them carefully. Before Katrina, my house was literally inside the canopy of two large oak trees. I was lucky, and none of the large branches that broke wound up on the house - but that was by dumb luck only. As it is, I'm going to have to remove the tree in the back yard before too many more years goes by because now it's leaning this way... Every one of the trees at my *prior* house all ended up on the house after Katrina. Ouch.

Native vegetation can also give you other clues about drainage. Just because the house is on high ground doesn't mean that you can't have drainage issues. In my case I did not fully appreciate that when it rains my back yard fills up with 4" of water before it drains off. Water also collects under the house and sits there for long periods of time. If the house has a basement, this can be especially critical - but nobody has a basement around here. It would be full of water all the time...which is probably some kind of clue...

The next things to examine are man-made hazards. This includes nearby refineries, chemical plants, and railways - which carry hazardous cargo. I'm not too keen on living too close to interstate highways for the same reason. The good thing about living close to major highways is that you can effect a quick escape if you're fast on the eject handle. Too close, though, and a truck spill could mean an evacuation in the middle of the night. The hazards from these are low - I lived practically on a set of rail tracks while I was growing up - but it's still something to consider.

Do not buy or build a house on a major thoroughfare. The best choice is a dead-end street or a cul-de-sac. If you can't get those, then try to select a property that is not on the way to anywhere else. Try to find a street upon which the only traffic is local traffic. Easy access works both ways...



The minutia comes down to exactly how the house or property is situated. I do not like corner lots, because two sides of the house are exposed to the street. That can make home defense more difficult. I prefer a house in the middle of the block, back from the

street, with good privacy - although for security purposes *less* privacy may actually be desirable. Your individual taste may vary. Do not buy a property that is at the dead-end of a T intersection. Any drunk might do 100 MPH down the street, miss the turn, and plough into your house. That's bad juju.

All of that is a full half of the considerations. The other half all involves community and culture. Remember that each neighborhood has its own political, social, and economic structures. You want to live - if at all possible - among people who are like you politically, socially, economically, and if possible, religiously as well. Let's go ahead and open the window and defenestrate all pretence of political correctness.

You do not want to be a poor man in a rich neighborhood. You do not want to be a rich man in a poor neighborhood. You do not want to be a democrat surrounded by republicans. You do not want to be the only Christian in a Jewish neighborhood. In some areas it's bad to be the only black person in a white neighborhood, and it's bad to be the only white person in a black neighborhood. THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RACE! It has everything to do with community. Whenever you move into a place, you are the outsider. If you are too different from the rest of the neighbors, you will never overcome that. While it is possible to hide your political party affiliation, it's better to be in a neighborhood where everyone else is more or less like you. If you are the only Jewish Latino in a neighborhood full of WASPs, you are going to have a hard climb to acceptance. If you are the only gringo in Little Mexico or the only gaijin in Chinatown, the same thing is true.

New Orleans has many 'mixed' neighborhoods that work well, but I think that New Orleans is a rare exception based on my travels to many other parts of the country. There *is* a difference between the sides of the track, even in modern America. Culture is more important than race, affluence, politics, or religion, and Community is more important than anything. If you aren't part of the culture you live in, then you are an outsider - and always will be. If you are the only one grilling burgers in a neighborhood full of vegans, do not be surprised if they sacrifice you to the rain gods during a drought - because you are the one that is 'different', and 'different' is bad.

Yes, everyone will smile at you and you will go to their kid's birthday parties, and you will send them Holiday Greeting cards - but when SHTF, they will eat you first. Remember that. It's important. Multiculturalism is some kind of strange un-natural bullshit that I don't quite fathom. People segregate themselves naturally for a reason.

I have friends across the globe of all races, religions, political affiliations, and national identities. On a daily basis I work with and for people of every ethnic and cultural background. Many of these people are *good* friends. Friends that I would fight and die for; but those are my *friends*. I'm not talking about friends. I'm talking about neighbors. How long would you last as the only American in a neighborhood in Fallujah? Pick your friends carefully, but pick your neighbors more carefully.

New Orleans really is a special place when it comes to this, because generally we mix well as people. We are New Orleanians first, and whatever else we are second. While I live in Harahan, I still consider myself a part of the culture of New Orleans - as does everyone else for 50 miles in any direction. It is more accurate to say that we are deep-south Louisianians, but that's hard for most people to say. Ask anybody around here where they're from, and they'll all say, 'Nawlins!

After you have considered all these things, there are a host of the 'usual' things to consider. You can get a lot of crime statistics and even crime maps from the internet. Lower incidence of crime is obviously better. Then there are things like schools, location of critical services like hospitals, grocery stores, gas stations, and all of the things people often consider when looking for a house. Whatever suits your tastes is fine by me.



After all of that, the last thing to do is to listen to your gut. How does the place *feel*? All logic aside, when you stand in the front yard, does it feel like home? If it doesn't, then you should probably keep looking. I offered to buy the house we live in now before I had even seen the inside. Standing in the front yard, it felt so much like home that I knew it was the place for me. Turns out that I was right in so many ways...

If you do decide to buy the property, my last piece of advice is to insist on Title Insurance. It's quite cheap, and if you ever need it you will thank me, thank God, and thank whoever invented Title Insurance.

The best insurance, though, is to do your homework so that you never have to pose for pictures like these.

Shane

EVENT - Hello Sugar Land!

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 12:00 NOON CDT
Location: Sugar Land, Texas, USA

I keep saying that we went to Houston, but Houston is just the locale. We were technically in Sugar Land, Texas. I'm not going to say anything bad about Houston, but Sugar Land is a real fine place. The public relations blurb goes, "Located 20 miles southwest of Houston, the City of Sugar Land sets new standards for livability for its 77,982 residents and the many businesses based there."

I had been to Sugar Land before, but I had never really paid much attention to the area. It's neat and clean, and the people seemed like people. I just never had any real opportunity to interact with them. The most important thing on my list at the time is that I needed to find a Wal-Mart, and lo-and-behold, there's one right there in Sugar Land. Sweet. (Yes, I know that Wal-Mart is the Devil, but any port in a storm...)

So off we go to Wal-Mart, and without much trouble we pick up a few things. A notebook, some pens, and some other supplies. I didn't have a list to go by, but we didn't spend much money. We picked up a few basics to get us through the next three or four days.

After Wal-Mart we had to find some place to eat, and McDonald's was convenient - and cheap. Cheap being operative when all the money you have in your pocket is all the money you're likely to have for awhile. It also gave the kids a distraction - although Madeline being only 3 months old, you can distract her with anything shiny.

I have eaten in many McDonald's restaurants - and I use that term loosely - and it is always the same. You sit down to your inexpensive death sentence and eat your poor excuse for a hamburger while drinking sugared poison out of a wax paper cup that makes environmentalist's eyes twitch. Other strangers, all consuming the same fare, are in the restaurant with you but everyone pretends like nobody else exists and the social poverty just about equals the nutritional poverty.

This McDonalds was somehow different. These Sugar Land people aren't the usual march of humanity. They notice things like Louisiana license plates, and total strangers came up to us to offer whatever assistance we might need. Someone brought the girls some toys - nothing fancy, but the gesture was appreciated. In the middle of this attention I managed to scribble an action plan in the notebook we picked up at Wal-Mart.

This action plan was fairly brief, but you have to start somewhere.

1. Establish Communications with Everyone
2. Determine the condition of my house.
3. Determine my immediate financial condition.
4. Determine, establish, and avail myself of public and private assistance.

While this action plan was created in a state of ignorance, it was actually spot on. Two pages from now I will detail each one and goes into the problems and pitfalls. For now, though, it's high noon on Monday, August 29, 2005. It's time to see what's gong on at Ground Zero.

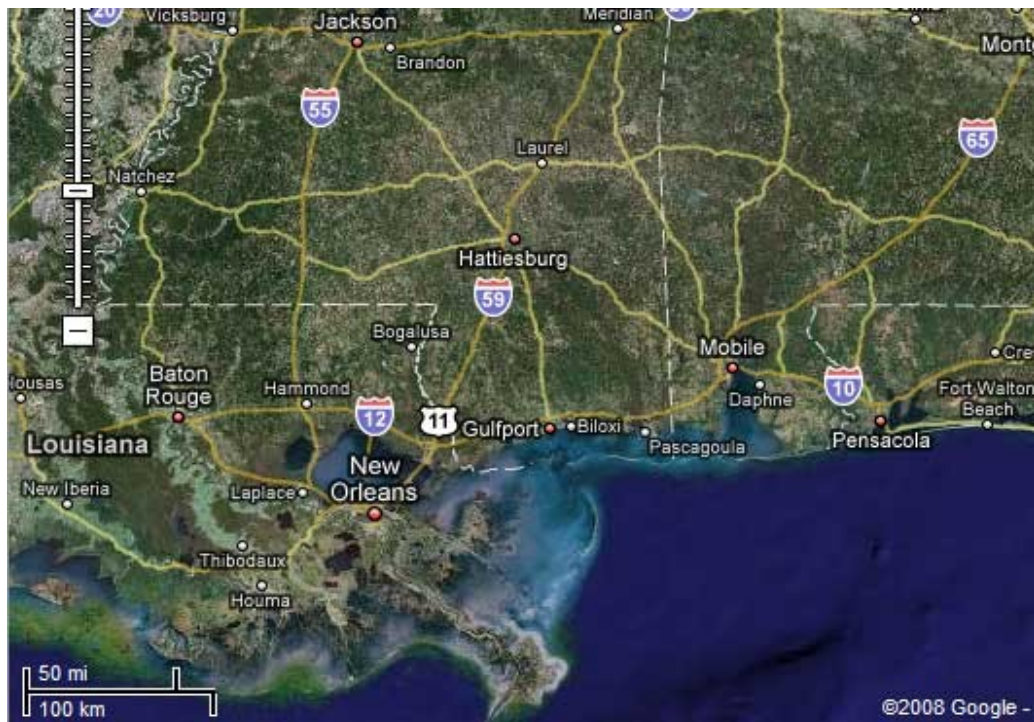
Shane

EVENT - SHTF

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 12:00 NOON CDT

Location: Hurricane Katrina Impact Zone

The Impact Zone



The bomb has gone off, and now the metaphoric mushroom cloud is beginning to dissipate. Unfortunately, this is where my skill as a writer fails me. How do you describe the aftermath of a nuclear bomb that explodes over the course of six hours? I have few words to paint such a picture. If you think my nuclear bomb metaphor is ridiculous, see the pictures below.

Find the dot on the map west of New Orleans that is Laplace, Louisiana. Everything west of there is mostly OK. Find the red dot on the map that is Pensacola, Florida. Everything east of there is mostly OK. Pensacola and Laplace both experienced wind speeds of 90 MPH. Everything between New Orleans and Mobile for 25 miles inland or more is pretty much fracked. It's not in the dictionary, but I think 'fracked' is the right word.

Bay St. Louis, just east of the immediate impact site of Katrina, is all but erased. Erased is the right word. As we move east from Bay St. Louis, other coastal areas are also erased. Pass Christian? Erased. Pictures are worth more than these words. Pick a house in the picture below. Imagine that it is your house. Now scroll down to see how your house fared.

Pass Christian – Before



Pass Christian – After



Gulfport MS – Before



Gulfport MS – After



Biloxi MS – Before



Biloxi MS – After



Conditions surrounding these areas is best described by the word 'devastated'. As you work outward in a circle centered on Gulfport, Mississippi, you find mile after mile of 'destruction'.

The impact on property and buildings isn't the only story. Resources have been consumed by the fleeing masses. I evacuated to the west 24 hours before impact, and experienced no fuel shortages. People who left less than 12 hours before impact were not so fortunate. There is no fuel in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There is no fuel in Pensacola, Florida. There is no fuel in Jackson, Mississippi. (Just off the top of the map.) Fuel supplies are completely exhausted in a 125 mile radius around Gulfport, Mississippi and local shortages surround major roadways for much greater than that distance.

Many people who waited too long to evacuate from the immediate impact area along the coast found themselves stranded without fuel. Local radio stations broadcast that if people are left on the highway they will be killed by the storm. Strangers pick up strangers.

Don O'Neil made it to Hattiesburg, Mississippi with a gallon of fuel in his Suburban. No fuel was readily available. He paid \$1,000 dollars for a tank of fuel to get out of Hattiesburg.



Losses to infrastructure could best be described as 'astonishing'.

The 504 area code is no longer on the network. Neither is area code 228. Major portions of 985, 601, and 251 are down. Power and communication outages will continue for weeks and months. Entire power grids in these areas are also off line. Water service, gas service, sewer service, cellular telephone service, and every other critical service is off line. You name it, and it was off line - not to mention that you can't order a pizza.

Police, Fire, EMS, as well as all other government and private entities have lost nearly 100% of their communications capacity. In many areas government is off line. The technical term for that is 'the government has lost continuity'. In normal English, that means that the government has collapsed. Most people in the impact zone have lost homes and offices - and that includes most people in Government service too.

Hospitals go into emergency mode with limited service - and no way to easily reach them in flooded areas.

The entire regional port system from Baton Rouge to the mouth of the Mississippi river is completely shut down.

The entire US petroleum industry in the Gulf of Mexico produces exactly zero barrels of oil today.

The human impact at this point can be described as 'tragic'. Many people have already died from the impact of the storm, and more will die. Some are trapped in attics. Some are trapped on rooftops. A woman calls into WWL radio on her cell phone. She is trapped in the attic with her children. The water is rising. There is no way for them to get out. We'll visit with some of these people on later pages. In some cases we will hear their stories. In other cases we will see their corpses.

If the human impact is 'tragic', the impact on flora and fauna in the region is nothing less than a holocaust.

If you circumscribe an area 80 miles in every direction from Gulfport, Mississippi you end up with an area of 20,105 square miles - an area the size of West Virginia.

Inside that area is only one phrase to universally describe the conditions there:

THE SHIT HAS HIT THE FAN!

Everyone inside a 350 mile radius from Gulfport, Mississippi is directly impacted in some way by the storm or by the influx of refugees into their area. 'Refugee' is the right word. We'll call that a cool 380,000 square miles - although some of that is in the Gulf of Mexico - which is larger than the state of Texas.

There is a common word that I heard - and said - over and over again. It is the most common word you encounter when you contemplate it, see pictures of it, drive through it, and experience it directly. It's such a little word for such a big idea, but over and over again all you can say is, "**Wow!**"

In many ways, this is where the real story begins. This is where the story gets interesting. Everyone wants to hear about the juicy parts, but I'd like you to stop here for a moment and really think about it. I want you to scroll back up and look at those pictures carefully again. The before and after shots are the exact same areas. Each of those homes was a home like yours. Each of those towns was a town like yours. Each of the people we are going to meet all along the way are people just like you. Just like me.

On an earlier page I told you to stay close to me in all of this and come along for the ride. The roller-coaster ride starts here. Everything up to this point was just the slow climb to the top of the first drop.

Ready? OK, everybody hold your hands over your head and start screaming.

Shane

PLAN - Lights, Camera, Action!

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 12:00 NOON CDT

Location: Varied

As I mentioned two pages ago, I scribbled a brief action plan in a notebook on the same day Katrina made landfall. To me this was actually a new idea. It certainly wasn't something that I had read in any of the books or magazines. The books and magazines are more geared toward the idea that you're completely on your own, and you've got everything you need. Even in that eventuality, however, the books and magazines never tell you what you're supposed to do at that point. I guess you're just supposed to sit in your BOL, fend off the zombies, and eat until the food runs out. Nobody ever seems to give good advice on what to do after SHTF unless you count planting a sustenance crop good advice.

Let's have a crash course in Action Plans and cover a little theory.

Pop quiz: Your Escape and Bug Out Plans are specifically designed to do what?

That's right, boys and girls! Escape and Bug Out Plans are designed to safeguard Your Health and Your Wealth. There is also a set of plans that we haven't talked about yet - which are Bug In plans - but we aren't to a place where we can talk about those in context just yet. The Escape, Bug Out, and Bug In Plans all share similar features, and we reduce many things to common denominators in order to build generic but useful plans - and we use them to Escape, Bug Out, and safeguard Health and Wealth.

We'll call all of that The Parachute.

You very carefully make all of these plans, pack your 'chute, and board the airplane. Now the airplane is on fire, and it's time to Escape. You, being the clever person that you are, know that you can handle this because you have spent a lot of time on your parachute - so you jump out of the aircraft. Unfortunately, if you haven't had any training and nobody has given you any instructions then you might not know how to actually open that parachute...which gets messy after a few minutes because you're going to hit the ground pretty hard. Chances are, you will not have clean underwear at that point.

Exactly what to do after you exit the burning aircraft is your ACTION plan - and it's every bit as important as your Escape plan. While you may think it's overkill or a little crazy to create these ACTION plans and put them in your workbook, DO IT. As we go along and fill in some blanks in the next few dozen pages, there will be a number of things you will want to make notes on. In the very beginning I told you that if you approach a disaster as an opportunity, you can certainly do much more than simply

survive. The ACTION plans are a road map for turning disaster into opportunity. Your ACTION plans can put you way ahead of the pack when the time comes. Your Escape and Evacuation Plans ensure that you survive. Your ACTION plans ensure that you ***WIN*** the disaster game.

Experiencing SHTF without a decent action plan is like jumping out of an airplane without a parachute. You ***will*** eventually land, but you may not be happy with the result. **LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!** I should know, because my dumb ass was in freefall for awhile before I figured it out...

Like the Escape and Bug Out plans, there aren't that many scenarios to cover. The two major contingencies are:

1. SHTF, and you're safe.
2. SHTF, and you're not safe.

'Safety' means several things in different contexts, but depending on that condition, there are really only two action plans.

SAFE	NOT SAFE
Assess	Assess
Communicate	Consolidate
Transact	Tactics
Inventory	Improvise
Observe	Observe
Navigate	Navigate

Let's for a moment assume that you've made poor choices or had bad luck. You've decided to Bug In (stay home for the emergency) and things got a little out of hand. In the context of a hurricane, that usually means that your roof came off or the water came up. You are in a NOT SAFE condition, which means that you need to follow the NOT SAFE ACTION plan:

1. **Assess** - What is my situation? What do I need to do immediately to protect Health and Wealth? What is the immediate state of my shelter, food, water, and other immediate necessities?

The answers to those questions have so many possible answers that it is impossible to plan much further than that. You will have to make decisions on the fly. We'll get into some more detail on this as we take some case examples from Katrina and other disasters on a later page.

2. **Consolidate** - What resources are immediately available? Bring together necessary and available resources.

This may be as easy as making a five second mental review of the contents of your BOB, or it may mean scavenging supplies from destroyed homes. It may also mean

consolidating resources with neighbors. Whatever you do in this stage, it means getting your shit together. Once you have an Assessment and have Consolidated resources, you can make some short term strategic decisions - like if you should stay where you are or move to better or higher ground.

3. **Tactics** - Once we have the Assessment, Consolidation, and short-term strategy, we need to work to put that strategy in motion by using good tactics. Your tactics may have to involve neighbors or other persons that you may have to think for. If their house collapsed or something and they ran to you for safety, then you may have to factor them in. Either that or turn them out.

4. **Improvise** - Just that. Like my friend Jerry says, "You'd be surprised what you can manage when you have a lack of a viable Plan B."

5. **Observe** - Keep your head up and your eyes open. Gather as much information as you can from as many sources as you can. Is what you are doing working? Do you need to do something different?

6. **Navigate** - Navigate means moving forward and continuing to make good or necessary decisions over time. That may continue to be a process of following the ACTION plan a second or third time - Assess (where am I now?), Consolidate, etc...

This is similar, if you recall, to the OODA loop, which is Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act - but there are some tricks and tips that come out when we use ACTION.



Let's go ahead and drag out the Flowchart of Strategy for a moment.

Where do our ACTION plans fit into this? Well for the Bug Out ACTION plan, it's the SURVIVAL part. For the Bug In ACTION plan, it's the [INVENTORY, DEFEND, REBUILD] part.

As we develop our ACTION plans, remember that our end goal is to KEEP MOVING FORWARD, and ultimately to go Home. We can't just survive and give ourselves a gold star. There is a *lot* of work to do in the middle, and the sooner we accomplish some critical tasks, the sooner we can work on our ultimate objective - Home.

If you are in a SAFE condition, then there is still work to do, but that work is a little different. We still use an ACTION plan, but the steps are a little different because our needs are different.

In a SAFE condition, our steps are:

1. **Assess** - What is my situation? What do I need to do immediately to protect Health and Wealth? What is the immediate state of my shelter, food, water, and other immediate necessities?

While the questions are the same, the answers are going to be different in a SAFE condition - but you still need to know the answers.

2. **Communicate** - This means reaching out to people, organizations, and government entities for information or assistance. You'll need to communicate with your insurance company, for instance, if you have a loss. You'll also need to communicate with FEMA if you are in a declared disaster area.

3. **Transact** - Once we have communicated, we need to follow through on that communication and perform other tasks to keep moving forward. Transact means to carry on or conduct (business, negotiations, activities, etc.) to a conclusion or settlement. HOME!

4. **Inventory** - Just that. Take stock of your wealth in every context. If you HYST, this should be easy.

5. **Observe** - Keep your head up and your eyes open. Gather as much information as you can from as many sources as you can. Is what you are doing working? Do you need to do something different? Is someone offering assistance that you can use? Is someone in need of assistance that you can provide?

6. **Navigate** - Navigate means moving forward and continuing to make good or necessary decisions over time. That may continue to be a process of following the the ACTION plan a second or third time. (Are you having that deja-vu feeling?)

As you can see, the foundation of ACTION plans isn't complicated. We are still going to create some pages in your workbook so that you can detail a few ACTION plans based on several scenarios. There will be a little redundancy between some of them, but that only means that our job will be easier. Unfortunately, there will be a few dragons along the way. FEMA being one of them...and FEMA is where we're going to start.

Gads... FEMA. OK, everybody go get your swords and put your armor on. This one is a real beast...

Shane

EVENT - Calling FEMA

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 1:00 PM CDT

Location: Sugar Land, Texas

If you recall, my initial action plan looked like this:

1. Establish Communications with Everyone
2. Determine the condition of my house.
3. Determine my immediate financial condition.
4. Determine, establish, and avail myself of public and private assistance.

At this time I haven't properly formulated ACTION plans.

When we get back from lunch I checked email, and continued to use the various capabilities of technology to reach out and communicate with people and try to find out what the conditions were in my immediate neighborhood. I really wanted to know if my house had survived. At the time, though, the media was all focused on the areas of severe devastation; sensationalism sells. While I am plugged into the media and data streams collecting information, Andrea is putting the kids down for a nap. When they crash out, she comes in and we have a strategy session.

I am not actively aware of it, but at this point we are performing the **Assess** and **Communicate** phases of our ACTION plan - but never having done this before, we're making it up as we go along.

Andrea and I discuss some realities that neither one of us really wanted to face. Being practical people, and having discussed these eventualities during some family planning sessions several years prior, we faced facts. While some things should be obvious, there are other things that we simply didn't know how to handle.

1. Our house (and our jobs!) are inside a disaster area (Federally Declared or Otherwise), and we do not know when we will return.

That means that we don't have permanent housing (duh!), and we do not have a regular income either (double duh!). This course of thinking quickly leads to the idea that we can't pay bills of any kind. The cash flow situation can best be described as Grim - between us we have something less than \$1,000. Our race on the Treadmill of the American Dream has come to a stunning halt. Oddly enough, rather than feeling any kind of rising panic, I feel a strange kind of freedom. I mean, what's the bank gonna do - repossess my house? Ha!

For many people, however, that kind of thing is unsettling. You're suddenly away from anything familiar, with no job, no money, and no home. All you need is a drug or alcohol habit, and you're any other bum. This is no ordinary country, though. This is America! This is the Land of Opportunity!

It's also the land of Insurance, Private Charity, and Government Assistance Programs. It is with these various entities that we must now Transact - but neither of us has any clue where to start or what we should do. The next few hours is an education through the intricacies of Corporate Power, Government Bureaucracy, and Human Charity. Well, Human Charity not so much.

Andrea volunteers for Mortgage Company and Insurance Company, while I tackle FEMA. At this point I have no real idea what FEMA is, although a couple of people have said things like, "FEMA is going to come in and write us all checks!", as though FEMA is some kind of magic fairy. The education I will receive while dealing with FEMA over the next few months will prove daunting and exasperating. It is my hope that through this page I can spare a lot of people a lot of headache when they have to deal with FEMA.

The first thing I do, of course, is hit Google and type in FEMA, which brings up <http://www.fema.gov/>, the FEMA website. WIKI also provides some light reading on the subject. WIKI says:

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, is an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security. The purpose of FEMA (begun by Presidential Order on April 1, 1979) is to coordinate the response to a disaster which has occurred in the United States and which overwhelms the resources of local and state authorities. The governor of the state in which the disaster occurred must declare a state of emergency and formally request from the President that FEMA and the federal government respond to the disaster. The only exception is when an emergency or disaster occurs on federal property or to a federal asset, for example, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in the 1995 bombing, or the Space Shuttle Columbia in the 2003 return-flight disaster.

While on-the-ground support of disaster recovery efforts is a major part of FEMA's charter, the agency provides state and local governments with experts in specialized fields and funding for rebuilding efforts and relief funds for infrastructure, in conjunction with the Small Business Administration. FEMA also assists individuals and businesses with low interest loans. In addition to this, FEMA provides funds for training of response personnel throughout the United States and its territories as part of the agency's preparedness effort.

OK, now I know what FEMA is, but I still don't know what FEMA is supposed to do for me. We'll get to that in a moment. I want to skip ahead about two years and give you

something other than the textbook answer because you really need to know this if you are going to deal with FEMA.

FEMA is not your friend. FEMA is also not your particular enemy. It is simply a government agency, and as such is a kind of clockwork that works through paperwork, information, and various departments. Despite the official definitions, the primary job of the FEMA (and Homeland Security) is not to protect the American people in times of emergency but to protect the government in times of emergency and keep it functioning. Their primary assignment is not to help people, but to control them. Some people will see that darkly, but FEMA isn't a bad agency - it just is what it is.

FEMA is not just one agency. It is a monster with many heads - many departments. It is actually nearly impossible to discuss FEMA as a whole agency. I will say that all of the actual human beings that I met that work for or as agents of FEMA **tried** to be 100% helpful. Those that failed to be helpful did not fail from a lack of trying. They usually failed from either a lack of information, a lack of knowledge, or a lack of common sense. I never had a negative experience on my end - except for what I came to think of as FEMA Control Agents. It's these Control Agents that go about mucking and dicking things up as much as possible - so much so that you think they are doing it on purpose. Later on in this blog I will teach you how to deal with FEMA Control Agents, and give you a magic phrase to use that works on them every time.

The FEMA Command Structure is completely clueless at the top. You really want to deal with people who are closest to the disaster itself. The people in Washington are so useless that it's a wonder that they haven't been assigned to mop floors in a McDonald's - with my apologies to the hard working employees of McDonald's.

Unless you are a government employee on some level, you will likely never deal with FEMA in all its parts - and you won't have to deal with the most bothersome parts. Your exposure to FEMA will actually be very small - but also important in some ways. FEMA can provide housing assistance, for instance. FEMA can actually provide many useful and valuable kinds of help in an emergency. The most important help that FEMA provides is not directly to individuals, but in putting civilization back together again.

When dealing with FEMA there is one thing that you should never do, and one thing that you should try to avoid. Unless you have no other choice at all, *never* go to a FEMA shelter of any kind. FEMA shelters or any other kind of Government Camp on the Government Vacation Program. Do not go there. I'm not talking about Red Cross shelters that may be directed by FEMA - we'll get to those later. I am speaking specifically to places like the Superdome and any other such 'processing' area.

The thing that you should try to avoid is calling FEMA on the telephone. Sometimes you may have to, but it's *much* better to deal with them online. If you do have to call FEMA, be very nice on the phone. Have a conversation, not a confrontation. The person on the other end of the phone has nothing to do with any of your frustrations, and they don't

have to help you if you are nasty. They can also cause your file to disappear - which will only set you back.

What you need to know about FEMA in three easy steps:

1. Get your notebook out, fire up your laptop, and log in to the Disaster Declarations Page - <http://www.fema.gov/news/disasters.fema>

Look up your declared disaster. If you do not have a declared disaster, then you can't register. Declared disasters do not have to be large. If you look up ALL disasters for your state, you'll see that sometimes disasters are declared for nothing more than some severe thunder storms and a little flooding. Find your declared disaster and write down the number and other information in your notebook.

There are two different types of disaster declarations. One is for Public Assistance (PA) and one for Individual Assistance (IA). PA permits government entities to apply for assistance. This money is dedicated to things like roads, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure. It can also help pay for expenses the cities, counties/parishes, and or state has accrued due to the disaster. It can also be used for mitigation of future disasters (turning flooded areas into greenspace). There are many other uses for PA, but that is a broad overview. The important thing to know is that a disaster with a PA only declaration does not allow for assistance to individuals.

For this you need an IA declaration. This frees up federal funds to members of the community to support their needs as a result of the disaster. PA declarations are much more frequent than IA. The decisions to provide IA is based on numerous thresholds that include things like the number of uninsured home owners, the number of destroyed homes, etc. All of these numbers are placed into a magical formula I'm yet to understand. The result determines whether the impacted area qualifies for IA.

An area can also be declared as being in a State of Emergency. This frees up federal funds and the red tape that affects certain types of mutual aid. The most common time to see a State of Emergency in our area is during an evacuation. This is often done early in the disaster to ease the evacuation and/or response.

2. Register with FEMA. Go to the Apply for Assistance Page - <http://www.fema.gov/assistance/index.shtm>

You will find helpful information on this page. Look for the APPLY ONLINE link. As an individual, you will be applying for the IHP (Individuals & Households Program). Businesses can apply to a different program in some circumstances. You should educate yourself about this program by downloading and reading the Help After a Disaster guide. This guide will tell you everything you need to know.

There are other assistance programs that fall under the ONA (Other Needs Assistance) Program. These include Aging Services, Agricultural Aid, Assistance From Financial

Institutions, Business Loan Program, Social Security, Tax Assistance, and Veteran's Benefits.

When you register, you will give FEMA all of your personal information, including your Social Security number, insurance information, and some other things besides. You should also give them a bank account number, into which they will deposit funds directly for any cash assistance you may receive. Some of you have just *freaked out* about that. "I would *never* give the government my personal information!" Guess what, folks... The government already knows everything about you. They know your Social Security number, and they know all of your bank account numbers, and they even know how much money you have in each account. You aren't giving them anything they don't already have. Take off your tin foil hat and register. If you're really that paranoid, then open a new bank account and give them that one.

When you register, you will have a login, a password, and a pin number. Make sure to write these down in your notebook. You will be able to log into the FEMA website, update information as you need to, check the status of your assistance, and fulfill any FEMA requests that way. It is 10,000% better than trying to do it on the phone. Each person in your family does not need to register. Only one person in each household.

The only problem I have with the FEMA website is that sometimes when I try to logon during peak ours, I get an error:

Internal Server Error

The server encountered an internal error or misconfiguration and was unable to complete your request.

Please contact the server administrator, tdladmin@fema.gov and inform them of the time the error occurred, and anything you might have done that may have caused the error.

More information about this error may be available in the server error log.

Apache/2.0.43 Server at www1.disasteraid.fema.gov Port 443

If you see that, just keep trying.

3. Wait.

In a few days you will receive an information packet from FEMA. It will include a copy of the Help After a Disaster book, some information about the other programs I listed, a

copy of your registration/application for assistance, and a nice cover letter. Keep these in your important files. Respond to any FEMA requests for information promptly. You will have to sign and return some documents. Stay on top of it, and the program will run smoothly. If you are eligible for any financial assistance, you should receive it into your bank account promptly. If you are too paranoid to provide your bank account, then they will either mail you a check or a debit card with the amount of your assistance - but that will take longer.

I don't remember exactly when FEMA dropped \$2,000 into my bank account, but it wasn't long - and it was a tremendous weight off my heart in the short term. FEMA no longer hands out that much cash all in one chunk - but if you are living in a place that is declared a disaster, FEMA can provide some short term help to keep you afloat. This is something that FEMA does well. There are many things that FEMA did not do well, and we'll look at those things as they come up - but I was personally satisfied with this particular transaction with my government. It was, in a very real way, one small step towards home.

If you do get financial assistance, do not do stupid crap with the money. Some people wasted it, and some people committed various kinds of fraud. When I got my money, I didn't think of it as a free check; I thought of it as a responsibility. If you have any of it left when you finally find Home, then consider reaching down and using it to pull someone else up too. I'll tell you everything I did with that money later on in context, but for now know that I used it well.

Depending on your circumstances, FEMA can provide various levels of assistance, temporary housing assistance, and a number of other things besides. You can't get *any* of that assistance if you don't register.

There are a number of things that FEMA will *not* provide. They aren't going to write you a big fat check to fix your house. They aren't going to give you anything personally that is going to help you climb out of the hole - but they will keep you from sinking much deeper than the initial disaster. Whatever you do, do *not* wait for FEMA. Register and keep moving forward. There is a *lot* of other work to do. Now that we're into Transactions, though, it's time to start building our ACTION plan into our workbook. We'll accomplish that on the next page.

Shane

PLAN - ACTION Plan SAFE

Let's go ahead and put an ACTION plan into our Workbook. We're going to call this one ACTION Plan SAFE, and we'll have another one later called ACTION Plan DANGER. Since in the context of Listening to Katrina, we are in the context of SAFE, we're going to do the SAFE one first.

There are two sub-sets of the SAFE and DANGER plans as well - Home and Away. In our context, I am Away, but some of this crosses over to the Home sub-set as well. Stick with me, it's actually very easy.

Go ahead and open or print the workbook page. Like all the other Workbook pages, you will want to print these out and have hard copies on hand in your binder. Feel free to make changes and additions to suit your needs. Let's cover the elements of the ACTION Plan SAFE, and you can fill in the blanks on your worksheet.

I will admit that ACTION Plan SAFE is kind of dry and nowhere near as exciting as ACTION Plan DANGER, but you've got to start somewhere...

ASSESS



You have had an emergency or a disaster, and one of several scenarios has played out. The fire department has put out the fire, or you've made it to your BOL (Bug Out Location), or you're camped at your in-laws. Remember that ACTION plans are essentially plans for 'the day after' - or even two days after. If your house is still on fire, or you're sitting on your roof, then it's not time to work on your ACTION plan yet.

A very major portion of ASSESS at this point is going to be trying to answer the question, "Are we ever going back to live on our property?" The forked path of that yes/no decision will be seminal in deciding the course you take toward Home. Sometimes the answer to that question is not readily apparent, but you will still need to do certain things while you work on having enough information to make that decision.

If you have followed the preparations I have outlined so far, then you will have protected a tremendous amount of wealth - both material and emotional. As odd as it may seem, if you have done that then it shouldn't really matter if you go back to your property or not because you should be carrying everything you need to go Home - even if home isn't where it used to be.

Once the immediate emergency is over - no matter what has happened or where you are - you should think clearly about your current situation. It may help to make notes at this point - but you aren't honestly likely to get out your workbook just yet in this scenario.

What *is* the situation? Is there anything that you need to do immediately to safeguard Health or Wealth? Do you need rescue? Does anybody else need rescue? Are all

members of your family accounted for? Rescue doesn't necessarily mean being lifted off your roof by helicopter. There are many other kinds of rescue which you may have never considered before. A person about to commit suicide, for instance, is in desperate need of emotional or psychological rescue. You may be in need of financial rescue. Persons of faith may suddenly have a crisis of faith and be in need of spiritual rescue - whatever that means for them.

The ASSESS phase is about gathering information and thinking about that information wisely. You cannot make good choices past this point if you do not have a CLUE - a Clear and Lucid Understanding of Everything. There may be some things that you do not and cannot know at this point. I did not, for instance, know if my house was standing or destroyed, flooded or dry.

There is a very important rule at this point: **VERIFY ALL FACTS.** Do not make assumptions or guesses. Do not listen to rumors.

Keep all the information you gather in diary format. Make notes every day about what you know, where you learned it, and how to verify it. This does not need to be tedious. A few lines is all it takes.

COMMUNICATE



Get out your phone book, your documents, your notebook, and a sharp pencil. This will take awhile...

There are different groups of people and different kinds of organizations that you will need or want to communicate with. Family comes first. Your mom worries about you, and you know that, so call her and tell her that you're OK, OK? If your house burns down, nobody may know except you. You'll want to let friends and family know that you are having a crisis because they may be in a position to help you in some way. Perhaps someone can watch the kids while you deal with the insurance company, for instance. Maybe someone will make you a meal. Perhaps someone has something extra that they can give you or lend you in the short term. Maybe someone will give you a shoulder to cry on. This isn't a reaching out for charity, it's a reaching out for Community.

If your best friend's house burns down tonight, aren't you going to *want* to help them? How can you help if you don't find out about it for a few days? **COMMUNICATE!**

This is the point where you break out your workbook, turn to Section Six - CONTACTS - and start calling people. Depending on the size and nature of the emergency or disaster will determine who you call. You don't have to call everyone in the book to tell them that you have a hangnail. In our case, we let immediate family know that we were safely evacuated, and then let that word spread through the grapevine. Every family has one, and if your family is like mine, the whole world will know that you are safely out of the danger zone before ten minutes passes.

Past this point you should use a single page in your notebook for each of the following contacts. That way you can make follow up notes on the same page. In all of your communications, remember to have conversations and not confrontations. Getting frustrated or abusive with people on the phone will not help you. The people who are answering your phone call probably deal with shitty people all day. Try to be one of the *good* callers, and you'll get special help and treatment just from that. Such a strategy has worked for me time and time again.

You should also avoid all emotion on the phone. Employers, landlords, and lenders are not interested in your emotion. Do *business* with these people. If you need a shoulder to cry on, find someone who cares.

The second person you want to immediately contact is your employer. If your house has just burned down, you really don't want to go to work tomorrow. If it's too late (or too early) to call, then put your employer first on the list in the morning. If your office is affected by the disaster or emergency you will want to find out what the protocol is for returning to work. If your house has burned down, ask for 48 hours off. You'll need at least two days to stabilize your living conditions. If you call your boss and tell him (or her) that your house just burned down and they *don't* give you the 48 hours, then you should find a new job. If you are self employed, then give yourself three days off. We'll talk about returning to work in subsequent pages. Depending on the size of your company and the nature of the business, there may be various human resources programs to help you recover from a disaster or emergency. After you talk to your supervisor, call human resources and ask.

If you are employed as a policeman, fireman, or other critical service personnel, then you may be required to report to work - in which case you **really** need to Have Your Shit Together in all of this before SHTF.



Who you communicate with from here will depend on the nature and scope of your emergency or disaster. If you have had a house fire, then the American Red Cross has

probably already spoken to you and offered you some short-term assistance. You should maintain communications with the Red Cross. They can give you information that may be helpful to your condition. The Red Cross responds to residential house fires - but many people are not aware of this important work until they need the assistance. Most of my charitable giving is directed to the American Red Cross for this purpose.

If you are in a declared disaster area, then FEMA should be first on the list after your employer because FEMA works on a first-come-first-served basis. See the previous page for detailed information on registering with FEMA.



After you have registered with FEMA - or if you aren't in a declared disaster - the next organization you will want to contact is your insurance company. If you do not have homeowners, renters, or flood insurance of some kind, then you are really behind the curve on the insurance game. I'll devote an entire page to that in the near future. Even if you do not know the condition of your house, you should contact your insurance company and open a claim. Many times homeowners policies will give you short term housing benefits and sometimes living expenses. If your area is under an evacuation order, that helps. This is usually noted on your policy as Loss of Use. If you have registered with FEMA, give the insurance company the disaster number. Document *everything* that you tell them, and make sure they give you a claim number. Nothing much will happen with insurance until an adjuster comes out to your home. If you have a very local emergency - like a house fire - that may be the next day. In a widespread disaster, it may take several weeks. We will talk about all the hurdles of dealing with insurance companies and adjusters as we come to them in context. For now, as part of your ACTION plan, contact them and open a claim. If you end up without any damage to your home, you can always close the claim with no loss.

When you call them, know that insurance companies are evil in all their parts. Calling to open the claim is the first step in what can become a kind of warfare that is horrific and cruel. In subsequent pages I am going to teach you how to win the insurance game. Well, maybe not win. You can never truly win the insurance game. You can, however, come away from the game without losing any major body parts.



After a disaster or emergency you may not be able to return to work for some time. That makes you unemployed. Rather than make a cardboard sign and stand on a street corner pan-handling, you should immediately file for unemployment benefits with the appropriate agency in your state of residence - even if you have evacuated to a different state. Find the contact information for the agency and write it into your ACTION plan. When you file for unemployment benefits, be sure to write all the details down in your notebook. If you are unemployed, then the rest of this list is for you - and the word of the day is 'deferment'. If you are suddenly unemployed for any reason, you can ask for deferments.

If you own your home, then you should contact your mortgage company (assuming you haven't paid the house off). If your home is in a declared disaster area, you will have different rights that vary from state to state. Ask the mortgage company for a deferment on your mortgage payments. They will usually be more than happy to defer your payments for several months because they will continue to charge you interest. If the deferment period comes up and you still are not employed, they may defer you again - but there will be some limit in their rules. The deferment process may even be written into your mortgage contract.

If you rent, you should attempt to contact your landlord or building super. He (or she) may be able to tell you the condition of your apartment if you are evacuated. Depending on the terms of your lease, you may get some rent relief - or you may not. Dealing with landlords varies from landlord to landlord. Renters after Katrina did *not* fare well - but that's a story for another page. If you rent, have renters insurance on 100% of your contents. The *only* thing *any* landlord is interested in is collecting his rent. That's just a simple fact. Be prepared for your landlord to tell you that if you do not continue to pay rent on your unlivable apartment that he will put all your shit out on the street with no warning. Part of surviving this part of the game is to have some kind of disaster agreement with your landlord ahead of time - but no landlord in his right mind will give you that. If you read your lease, the lease is all about what **you** are supposed to do for

him. That's just the way the rental business works - which is one of the reasons it's better to own your own home.

The next step is to contact other lenders. Car loans, credit card companies, loan sharks, and whoever else you owe money to. Start with secured credit first (like car loans) and work down to unsecured loans (like credit cards). If your residence is in a declared disaster area, mention that first. Ask for deferments.

If you aren't going to be going home for awhile, the last part of Communicate at this stage is to contact the United States Post Office and change your address. You can do this online. Type 'Change of Address' into the search box to find the page. You should notify everyone you can reach about your change of address. Doing this online or through email is very convenient in many cases. In other cases you should write or fax.

The last part of Communication is to speak to your spouse and children in a plain and factual manner. Talk about what you accomplished today. Focus on the positive, and talk about problems with an attitude towards solving them. We used (and still use) our evening meal for those kinds of discussions.

TRANSACT

Once we have communicated, we need to follow up and follow through on that communication. If you need to provide supporting documentation to someone, do so in a timely manner. Keep appointments. Meet deadlines. You should do something every day to keep moving forward.

INVENTORY

Create a section in your notebook - or keep a document on your laptop - and make a list of all your current assets. Again, if you HYST to begin with, then you should be able to do this very easily.

Inventory also means keeping track of everything that is going on so that nothing falls through the cracks. Our flood insurance was due to expire on June 1, for instance - just two days after Katrina. While I was pretty sure my house hadn't flooded, I really wanted to keep that insurance in place just in case any more levees gave way.

OBSERVE

Keep your head up and your eyes open. Gather as much information as you can from as many sources as you can. Is what you are doing working? Do you need to do something different? Is someone offering assistance that you can use? Is someone in need of assistance that you can provide?

Avoid getting too caught up in one aspect of the disaster and recovery. Continually monitor the mental and emotional condition of yourself and those around you.

NAVIGATE

Remember that our end goal is Home, so we need to Navigate and KEEP MOVING FORWARD. You should refer to the appropriate ACTION plan every day and follow the steps every day. When you get to Navigate, *do* something. Sitting on your ass in your BOL watching your TIVO recordings of Oprah re-runs isn't going to get you Home.

On the other hand, you and your family will need a break from time to time. You should pace yourself so that you do not exhaust yourself. Recovering from a disaster can be physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually draining. Take care of yourself and your family before you take care of anything or anyone else. It is important to have some relaxing fun sometimes, and it needn't cost a lot. Many fun things are free - parks, strolls, window shopping - the list is endless.

Even more-so than the Escape and Emergency Plans, this ACTION Plan SAFE is a bare-bones outline to develop your own, more detailed ACTION Plan SAFE. When you actually put it into effect, it will start to grow. Follow the ACTION Plan every day. Doing so will frequently take less than an hour, and you will find that you make a lot of progress in that hour. At first, the key focus of your ACTION plan is the stabilization of your situation. As time goes on, the ACTION Plan will become a Recovery Plan and eventually lead you Home.

Work on it.

LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER!

Shane

PLAN - ACTION Plan DANGER

There are two phases of the NOT SAFE or DANGER plan, and we're going to do the easy one first. Go ahead and pull up the Workbook page for this. You may want to make notes as we go along.

I have been trying to alternate pages between lessons, plans, and actual events. This page should be an EVENT page where I tell you gruesome true-life stories about people who stayed in their homes and experienced DANGER. To be honest, I was unsure how to do that. There are so many stories in my notebook that I had trouble knowing where to start. Trapped on a roof? Pulling your dead neighbor out of his house right after the storm? Stranded on the evacuation route due to breakdown or fuel shortage? Watching your spouse drown? Watching water rise in the street? Watching human beings turn into desperate animals as law and order collapse around you?

Rather than try to lay out a particular scenario at this point, I'd rather talk about the PLAN, and then tell the individual stories in their own time. The ACTION Plan DANGER found on this page is applicable to every scenario. It's a blueprint for short-

term success no matter what you are facing. We'll come back and 'test' the plan against various stories and anecdotes as we progress along the timeline.

I would like at this time to introduce you to my first smarmy motivational quote. I have tried to live my life to this ideal since I first read it at age 12:

However seriously systems and measures may be discussed, they cannot be put into practice unless there is the right man to do it. There is no deed without a doer. To have the right man is the greatest blessing! One must aim at being that man. - Saigo Takamori (1827-1877)

We'll come back to that. For now, on to ACTION Plan DANGER! I know it sounds a little comic-bookish, but what else can we call it?

There are two separate phases of this plan because there are two separate possibilities. The easiest scenario is that some kind of disaster strikes early on a Saturday morning while everyone is awake and at home. The hardest scenario is when some kind of disaster strikes without warning and you are at work, the kids are at school, and your spouse is half-way across town. If you manage to pull off the hard one, then everyone is probably going to end up at home - and you'll need this plan for that eventuality as well.

Let's assume that everyone is at home on a Saturday morning - awake, dressed, and just finished breakfast. Now we stir in some disaster, attack, or emergency. We already have our Escape and Bug-Out plans ready to go if we need to leave - but what if we have to stay? We need to know what to do if we either can't get out or have decided that leaving is worse than staying put. ACTION Plan DANGER is strictly a short term plan to get us to ACTION Plan SAFE. Once we reach a SAFE condition, then we can switch over to ACTION Plan SAFE.

Remember the key points:

Assess Consolidate Tactics Improvise Observe Navigate

ASSESS

You have had an emergency or a disaster, and one of several scenarios has played out. The fire department is on the way, a tornado just took the roof off, a hurricane has laid waste to the entire area, aliens have landed three blocks over and there is general panic and civil unrest - the list goes on. Whatever has happened, the Gods are Angry and we are in DANGER.



A very large problem with sudden disasters and emergencies is denial. When watching disasters and large emergencies on television, how many times have you heard these phrases:

"I never thought the water would get this high."

"I never thought the water would rise that fast."

"I never thought the fire would come this far."

"I never thought the building would collapse."

All of these are some variation of the same mindset, which is either, "It can't happen here.", or, "It won't happen to me."

There is another kind of psychological aberration that occurs in some people - and it's really strange to see. Having your house destroyed is a very traumatic event, and some people do not react well to that - to the point of disbelieving that it has happened at all. I was told one account by a fireman friend of mine who went into a burning house and found a lady sitting in an easy chair in the front room. The fire had started at the back of the house, and the lady was startled to see him suddenly come into her house through the open screen door.

"You have to get out! Your house is on fire!", he told her.

She looked at him and said the most curious thing; "No, it isn't."

Even after he pulled her out of the chair and into the yard, she continued to insist that her house was not on fire. Once the fire was out and she saw the gutted kitchen, she said, "Oh, that's all right. It's not really burned at all."

There are some case examples of people living in flooded out homes after Katrina who were in total denial that their home was unlivable. I suspect - given purely anecdotal evidence - that this is somewhat rare but can happen to people in any kind of disaster or emergency.

A very major portion of ASSESS in the beginning is going to be to think clearly about what has just happened and to honestly assess your situation - no matter how hard that might be. Do you have enough of an engineering background to say whether or not what's left of your house is in danger of collapse? What are the immediate dangers

around you? Where is your spouse? Where are your children? Is everyone accounted for? Does anyone need rescue?

The only thing we are interested in at this point is securing the lives of the people immediately around us and understanding the nature of the situation. Once you have done that, you can broaden the circle to include securing the neighbor's lives if that is applicable.

Another immediate danger is panic or hysteria in either yourself or those around you. Keep everyone calm and take the time to soothe children if that time is available. Time isn't something that is likely to be on your side...

If you are under direct attack by zombies, aliens, looters, rioters, or rabid chipmunks, then defense trumps all other considerations and you should vigorously defend your position. That's actually a good metaphor - defending your position. Your immediate goal in the ASSESS phase is to understand what is happening and to try to keep things from getting worse.

CONSOLIDATE

We've talked about the idea of HYST - Having Your Shit Together - before SHTF. Now we need to talk about something else just as important.



If you are following ACTION Plan DANGER then something has just happened. Some extremely serious shit, perhaps - maybe to the point that one or more of your family members is dead. It's somewhat amazing to me that none of the family-friendly 'emergency preparedness' manuals put out by government or charitable groups ever seem to address this point.

Shit has Hit The Fan - and it's everywhere. You need to Get Your Shit Together.

You already know about the physical dangers, but few people discuss the psychological dangers. Different people react differently to the sudden shock (and in some cases horror) of a disaster or emergency. Some may be in denial, some may panic, some may

simply freeze in place. You may have to think for these people and you may have to treat them roughly to get them facing in the right direction and moving forward.

This is where we drag up Saigo again.

However seriously systems and measures may be discussed, they cannot be put into practice unless there is the right man to do it. There is no deed without a doer. To have the right man is the greatest blessing! One must aim at being that man.

The same words apply to women as well. Few enough people physically prepare for SHTF, but even fewer people prepare *mentally* for that eventuality. You are what you do when it counts - so when it counts, take charge and take action.

If you are not alone, your first responsibility - and your first resource - is other people. Now is the time to apply all those leadership skills. Start giving orders like you expect them to be obeyed. People are very responsive to taking orders, and if you apply yourself to moving everyone in the same direction, everyone will benefit. If someone cannot or will not follow your directions then you'll have to make a decision on if you have the time and resources to save them - either from the disaster or from themselves.

If the water is rising and your kids don't want to get into the car, then PUT them in the car. If your 90 year old neighbor with no other friends or relatives doesn't want to come along, then you'll have to decide if her right to be stupid outweighs the practicality of dragging her out of her own home and 'kidnapping' her to a safe location. I suppose that will depend on how much you like the neighbor in the first place. For the most part I do respect individual rights of stupidity.

Sometimes, however, you have to make the decision to take them along with you - even if by force. Let's say that there has been a tornado and all the homes in your vicinity have been destroyed. The weather is very severe and you need to get out and find better shelter. You notice that the neighbor's 5 year old son is trying to pull his dead parents out of the wreckage of their house. You tell him to come with you, but he doesn't want to leave his mom and dad. It's very dangerous for him to stay, and another squall line is moving in. Given the circumstances, I'd 'kidnap' him and take him with me.



The photo above was taken in Biloxi after Katrina.



The photo above was taken in Honduras after hurricane Mitch.

After any widespread disaster there are likely to be children who have either lost their parents to the Reaper or have been physically separated from them. After Katrina there were more of these children than I expected - for reasons we will get into later.

Nowhere else on this blog will I advocate for a purely humanitarian act: Look for and care for these children. It isn't their fault that their parents weren't ready. I will admit that in doing so you take on a serious - and potentially dangerous - responsibility. You will also have to make a choice at some point; if you cannot find any rightful guardians of the child then you will either have to care for the child while you keep looking or turn them over to a government agency.

In addition to lost children, the same thing might apply to a neighbor who is mentally deficient to start with, or who is having some psychological breakdown due to the event and isn't thinking clearly. Perhaps you have an agreement with the neighbor's relatives to look after him or her. There are many factors you will have to consider quickly, and

make a case-by-case decision. If you reasonably believe that the fire is going to sweep through your valley and everyone who stays will die, then that can create hard choices. If these people are not your legitimate responsibility all you can really do is offer them a ride (if you have room) - and leave them behind if they decline.

Your responsibility to other people extends as far as your own humanity. If you hear an infant wailing in a shattered house, wouldn't you go and see what you could do to help? If it was your own infant and you were unfortunately killed in the event, wouldn't you want someone to rescue her and take her to safety?

Once you have consolidated all the living human beings within the scope of your influence, it's time to turn our attention to organizing for physical needs. If small children are involved, assign one of the adults (or an older teen) to keep those children at the ACTION point because that's going to be your immediate command center. If any adult is experiencing short term psychological breakdown, then those persons should likewise be kept from wandering away from the ACTION point. If at any time the situation becomes dire and you *must* move, escape or bug-out then you will want to know exactly where those kids are. You don't want them off somewhere playing in storm debris, contaminated water, or otherwise getting themselves into trouble.

Once you've secured the kids, work on the needs. If it's cold, then everyone needs to have appropriate clothing. If it's hot, then everyone needs to stay hydrated. If anyone is injured, they need first aid. Don't be surprised if the kids - and some of the adults - fall asleep due to crashing adrenalin levels after an exciting time. Immediate needs all revolve around shelter, water, and medical attention. We aren't worried about food at this point - it's not like you're going to starve between here and SAFE.

Once immediate needs are resolved - or you have accepted that you cannot resolve them at this point - then collect any available and relevant resource. Available means that you can get it without too much trouble without putting yourself in too much danger. Relevant means that you will or may need it within an hour. If you are stuck on a roof with flood waters all around you, then the nearest boat or large floating object is relevant. If civil unrest is the danger, then look to your defenses. Bring together whatever you can - that includes people and material.

Don't forget to keep track of your Life Goes On bag and all the wealth it contains.

TACTICS

Once you have a good assessment and have consolidated resources, it's time to apply tactics. Those who have been paying attention will immediately say, "Tactics are the individual elements of a strategy - so what's the strategy?"

In any such context, the strategy is, "Do what you can where you are with what you have." (Thanks, Ted!)

Your immediate tactics will revolve around a simple decision: Stay or Leave? If you are going to Leave, then you need a method of transportation (even if that's on foot) and you need a direction to move. Sometimes your direction will be towards some goal, other times it will be a simple direction - away from the fire, to higher ground, or to a more secure place, etc. This is something that you cannot foresee until the event itself, so it isn't a bad idea to consider some options beforehand.

You should already understand the risks in your area, so you can play different scenarios in your head based on those. If there is an earthquake and your house shifts off its foundation, what are your options? Really imagine some possible situations and imagine how you might resolve them.

If you are going to stay, then your tactics will include securing a stable shelter, providing for short-term (3-4 day) needs, establishing a secure perimeter, and continuing to consolidate resources in expectation of future ACTION.

If you are in need of rescue, then your tactics will all revolve around attracting rescue personnel and preparing to be rescued. I will provide an entire page on that later.

IMPROVISE

You may *need* something, but not have it. Your two options in that case are to do without it or to improvise.



The gentleman above is improvising a fallout shelter. The image was lifted from a 1967 government brochure on surviving nuclear fallout. While the actual benefit of his shelter is in question, it provides a mode of thinking about resources that is illustrative.

Interior doors can be removed from their hinges and used for many things besides the roof of a fallout shelter. Nailing them over exterior windows to seal your house against the elements and wandering zombies, for instance.

Furniture can be moved and used for different purposes - shoring up a collapsing wall or restricting access to a dangerous area of the house. Furniture can also be broken up for firewood. Area rugs can be used in the manner of tapestries to provide extra insulation in a room.

Know which walls in your house are not supporting walls - you could disassemble them if you need the material. Destroyed homes can be cannibalized for materials to make temporary repairs on standing structures or to construct temporary shelters. If you have prepared well (which is something we will cover in later pages) you should have various materials already on hand - such as tarps - to make emergency repairs.

If you need to appropriate or borrow anything that you need for your survival, then do so. I'm not talking about looting, I'm talking about scavenging and appropriating, which are different from looting. Looting is someone picking through someone else's belongings or property to steal valuables. Scavenging and appropriating mean using something in an emergency - even something that does not belong to you.

To use an easy example, let's say that your child falls down a well. In order to rescue the child, you need a rope. Unfortunately you do not have one. Your neighbor, however, has one and it is sitting on his front porch. He isn't home, though, and you cannot ask him if it's okay to borrow it. Don't bother about asking, go get the rope! What kind of human being would refuse to lend it to you anyway?

What if the rope is locked in his shed, but you know that it's there? Is it acceptable to break the lock on the door to get the rope? I suppose that depends on how much you love the child in the well. If it's all the same to you, then respect the lock. As for me, I'll burn the whole damn shed down if I have to - but I would, of course, rebuild it or pay restitution and compensation to the neighbor.

This is, admittedly, an easy example. Other situations may not be so easy to resolve. I would go so far as to say that you should appropriate any abandoned or unguarded property for your immediate use if that immediate use means your (or someone else's) immediate survival. If you do take or use something, the decent thing to do is offer compensation later.

Let's say that there is a wildfire blowing your way. Your family is the last to leave and you discover that your car will not start. The fire will overtake you in less than 15 minutes. Your neighbor was smart enough to evacuate early, but left a perfectly good car in his driveway. If escaping from the dangerous area means breaking into the neighbor's house to get the keys and stealing the neighbor's car to escape, then that's what you should do. Considerations of life and limb trump property rights in an emergency. The neighbor might even thank you later for saving his car from the flames.



Some hard-core property rights people will have a problem with this. Too bad. If property rights are more important to you than life and limb, then you can just sit there and burn in that scenario. How noble.

If you are stranded with your children on your roof because the water came up too fast, and a perfectly decent boat floats by with nobody in it - then that's your ticket to escape. Take it. You can work out the rental fee with the lawful owner later. I would not have any problem with someone who borrowed something of mine because they needed it for their immediate survival. I would appreciate it if they would replace whatever it was at some later time, but if it made the difference between life and death then I'm good with it.

I am not talking about items of comfort or convenience. I am only talking about things that impact your immediate, short-term survival in a desperate situation. Anything else is looting - and looters should be dealt with in the harshest terms.

OBSERVE

Keep your head up and your eyes open. Gather as much information as you can from as many sources as you can. Adjust your Assessment as you gather information. Is what you are doing working? Do you need to do something different?

A lot of people in Metairie evacuated two days after Katrina because there was a concern that the levees would fail on the Metairie side. The levee held, but if it didn't... Do not believe rumors. Only trust legitimate sources. Listen to the radio - but be aware that official announcements may be an hour or two behind actual events on the ground.

NAVIGATE

Remember that our end goal is Home, but right now we're just looking for SAFE. Concentrate your efforts on that for the time being. Take care of yourself and your family before you take care of anything or anyone else.

ACTION Plan DANGER is a bare-bones outline applicable to just about any DANGER situation. It is not, however, something that you are going to open your workbook for and start checking off boxes. You'll have to remember what to do because time is not likely to be on your side. If you make it through one pass of the DANGER plan, then start again with Assess and adjust your assessment and keep going.

Katrina showed us over and over again that people who sat around on their butts and waited for someone else to help them did very poorly. KEEP MOVING FORWARD!

Shane

EVENT - Out of the Woodwork

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 12:00 NOON CDT

Location: National Hurricane Center

NHC Advisory: Katrina is still dangerous, but weakening as it moves farther inland. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) advises that Katrina is now a Category 2 hurricane with sustained winds of nearly 105 mph. Katrina remains huge, with hurricane force winds extending 125 miles from the center, and tropical storm force winds extending 230 miles. Katrina's center is now 40 miles south-southwest of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Minimum central pressure has increased to 940 MB.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 1:00 PM CDT

Location: South East Louisiana

Several Areas in Greater New Orleans Area are under water. Residents in the Lower 9th Ward and St. Bernard Parish report heavy flooding. Some are being rescued from rooftops by passing boaters. The first floor of Chalmette High School, a St. Bernard Parish shelter of last resort, is flooded and residents are reporting that they can see only the rooftops of nearby homes. St. Bernard Parish's government building has at least eight feet of water inside. St. Bernard Emergency Management official reports, "We cannot see the top of the levee!"

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 2:00 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans

Mayor Nagin confirms the 17th Street levee breach on WWL radio. Four feet of water is confirmed in the vicinity.

NHC Advisory: Katrina is still Dangerous, but continues to weaken. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) advises that Katrina is now a still-dangerous Category 1 hurricane, with sustained winds of nearly 95 mph. The hurricane remains huge, with hurricane force winds extending 125 miles from the center, and tropical storm force winds extending 230 miles. Katrina's center is now 20 miles south-southwest of Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 2:15 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans

The Times-Picayune Blog reports that looters are “streaming from Coleman’s Retail Store, located at 4001 Earhart Blvd., about two blocks away from the newspaper’s offices. The looters, who were men and women who appeared to be in their early teens to mid-40s, braved a steady rain and infrequent tropical storm wind gusts to tote boxes of clothing and shoes from the store. Some had garbage bags stuffed with goods. Others lugged wardrobe-sized boxes or carried them on their heads. The line going to and from the store along Earhart Boulevard numbered into the dozens and appeared to be growing. Some looters were seen smiling and greeting each other with pleasantries as they passed. Another group was seen riding in the back of a pickup truck, honking the horn and cheering. The scene also attracted a handful of curious bystanders, who left the safety of their homes to watch the heist. No police were present in the area, which is flooded heavily with standing water two to four feet deep on all sides of Earhart Blvd.”

News reports of widespread looting will become common, and the media sharks will feed on it. Coleman's Retail Store isn't in a better part of town. It's walking distance to one of the now infamous public housing projects.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 3:00 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans

Confirmed reports of three feet of water near Xavier University. Water is overflowing in Bayou St. John. Early satellite photos pinpoint breaches. Ham radio operators contact the Coast Guard to report people stranded on rooftops in Treme - a famous subdivision in New Orleans. Ham radio operators quickly become a vital asset as communications resources collapse to nil.



Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 4:40 PM CDT

Location: California

President Bush gives a Medicare presentation. He mentions hurricane Katrina in passing, promising that the government will move in and "help those good folks in the affected areas."

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 5:00 PM CDT

Location: Baton Rouge

Governess Blanco advises the public to 'pray a lot'.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, Late Afternoon

Location: New Orleans

Police officers from the City of Gretna, Jefferson Parish, and State Troopers close off the west end of the twin Crescent City Connection bridges to all foot traffic across the Mississippi river. This will play out bizarrely in the coming days.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 6:00 PM

Location: Homeland Security Operations Center

A report from the Homeland Security Operation Center says: "Preliminary reports indicate the levees in New Orleans have not been breached."

These folks obviously had no idea what was going on...

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 6:10 PM

Location: Sugar Land, Texas

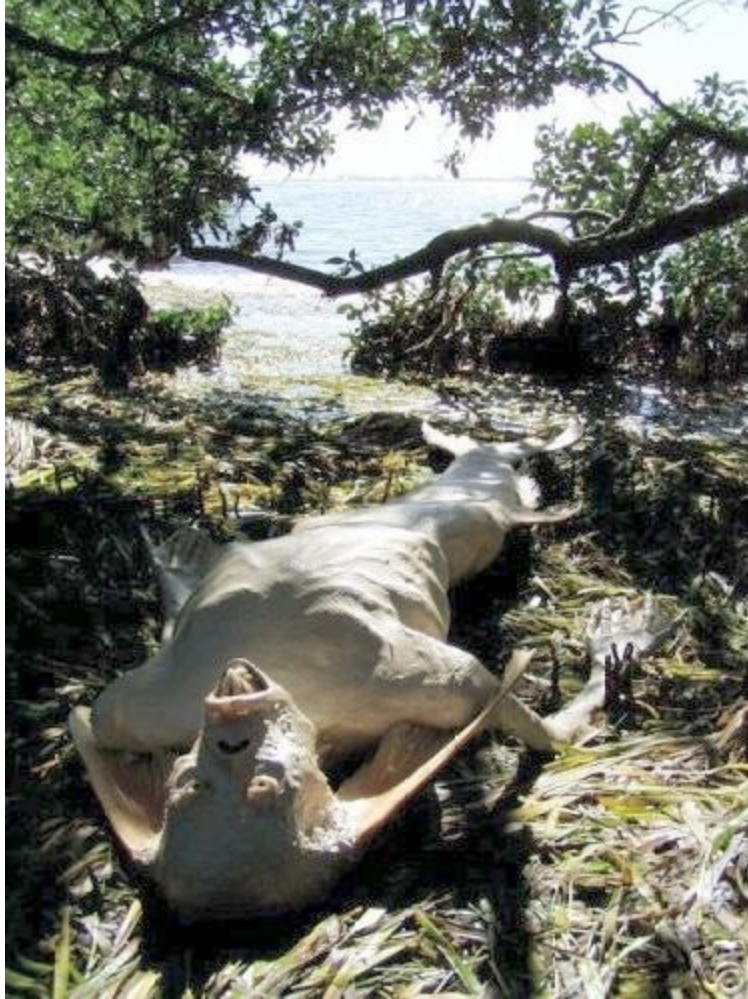
Twelve hours since landfall finds me watching the news on television and sucking all the information I can out of the internet. Not only is the data stream confusing, but it's downright bat-shit crazy. That's probably not in the dictionary, but 'bat-shit crazy' is apt.

After lunch we came back to the house and I further organized and inventoried my known worldly possessions and resources. My bank's website is down. No surprise. No call to any telephone in the 504 area code connects. No cell phone in the area connects either, but I do occasionally get a call to my cell phone - so *some* calls are going through. More than 1.3 million homes and businesses in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama are without electricity - and communications need juice. In actuality, some cell towers are still operational on backup power, but the system is overwhelmed and the backup power won't last long.

I have to admit that in this time I became a spectator - glued to the TV and internet data streams and I didn't really accomplish anything terribly useful. I did manage to establish some communications with a few people, but I didn't manage to do anything important. I was, however, collecting data - which may be useful, so I don't really consider it time wasted.

One of the things I noticed about the data stream, like I said, is that it was bat-shit crazy.

After a disaster you are going to hear stories, rumors, lies, and things that will curl your hair. Like mermen washing up on the beach.



There will even be photographs, live action reports, and eye witness accounts - and 99% of it will be bullshit.

I started making notes in my notebook under the heading, "This has got to be crap." The list got so long that I gave up just a few hours later. I had an expectation that eye witness accounts would be reliable, but that didn't prove true either. In fact, very few things that were reported in the first 12 hours proved to be true - or have any element of real truth at all.

To give you the short list, I heard from various people that there were thousands of bodies floating in the streets. Depending on which source this came from it was variously ten thousand, fifty thousand, or one hundred thousand. I actually had people well known to me tell me that they had seen these bodies with their own eyes. Later on I would ask them about that, and they would say, "Well, that's what somebody told me..."

"Who?"

"I don't remember..."

After much examination, it's pretty clear that people under stress are not reliable witnesses - and that's an understatement. As we ate dinner with our hosts, I tried to piece together things that I knew for sure. Things that I could definitely rely upon. I determined that I knew with 95% certainty that all of St. Bernard parish and most of Plaquemines parish - at least the entire eastern half - was underwater. Some portion of New Orleans was underwater. Kenner - an incorporated area in Jefferson parish - was underwater, but I didn't know to what extent. Given what I could get out of the flood maps and storm track, I had an idea - maybe 85% certain - that Harahan was not flooded. Harahan is where my house is, so that's all I really cared about at that point.



I knew that Katrina was 'bad', and I knew that power, comms, water, sewer, and other critical services were all offline. Past that, however, I really knew nothing else at this point. Despite analyzing every media source I could find, there was just nothing of value coming from 'official' sources - and it's damn stressful because above all else you *want* to know what's going on. It's crucial to know what's going on so that you can make reasonable decisions and take reasonable actions.

Having some dumb-ass weather reporter standing on a street corner somewhere going, "Hey! There's a lot of water here!", is only useful if your house happens to be in that block. Otherwise it is what it is - just a stupid media stunt.

Yes, that's my shot for today...

There are a number of lessons here. I would like to tell you not to watch the television or listen to the radio, but like any other train wreck you will be glued to some kind of media trying to figure out what's going on. That's just human nature. So, go ahead and watch it, but while you watch it, know that you cannot trust it. Remember that everyone is trying to sell you something. Media is trying to sell you a kind of sensational entertainment product. Their broadcast isn't intended for you, the victim, but for the broader 'audience' looking for bread and circuses. Local government officials are going to try to paint a situation as badly as possible while trying to portray the idea that they are in complete control. State officials are going to try the same game. Federal officials are going to tell everyone that it isn't as bad as it really is, and that they are in complete control and taking care of everything on every level. People at the very top are going to be entirely clueless and they will actually know *less* than you know. Even knowing that, you'll sit there and eat that bullshit with a spoon and a grin on your face.

The best lesson in this is to Have Your Shit Together (HYST) in the first place so that you are one of two places at this point. Either (1) safely evacuated - in which case you are just another spectator - or (2) well provisioned and safe at home - in which case you are just waiting for the dust to settle...or the water to go down. The other benefit of HYST is that you can do what you really should be doing at this point - which is to rest. In the next few days you'll want your energy. If you don't HYST, then you are going to lay awake at night worrying about this or that.

If you HYST, then any disaster isn't a disaster at all - it's a *payoff*. Now you are going to get a return on your preparation investment. I am the laziest man alive, but I like to sleep when the wind blows. That idea comes from a little story I heard some time ago, which I have repeated below. HYST together is the difference between hours and days of worry or having a relaxing visit with family for a few days. I fell somewhere in the middle. I didn't quite have it all together, but next time you can bet your bottom dollar that I'm gonna be relaxing somewhere drinking one of those little drinks with a paper umbrella in it, and I will NOT be watching the media circus and their little freak show.

Shane

Sleep When The Wind Blows

Years ago a farmer who owned land along the Atlantic seacoast constantly advertised for hired hands. Most people were reluctant to work on farms along the Atlantic because of the awful storms that raged across the Atlantic, wreaking havoc on the buildings and crops. As the farmer interviewed applicants for the job, he received a steady stream of refusals.

Finally, a short, thin man, well past middle age, approached the farmer. "Are you a good farmhand?" the farmer asked him.

"Well, I can sleep when the wind blows," answered the little man.

Although puzzled by this answer, the farmer, desperate for help, hired him. The little man worked well around the farm, busy from dawn to dusk, and the farmer was well satisfied with the man's work.

Then one night the wind howled loudly in from offshore. Jumping out of bed, the farmer grabbed a lantern and rushed next door to the hired hand's sleeping quarters. He shook the little man and yelled, "Get up! A storm is coming! Tie things down before they blow away!"

The little man rolled over in bed and said firmly, "No sir. I told you; I can sleep when the wind blows.."

Enraged by the response, the farmer was tempted to fire him on the spot. Instead, he hurried outside to prepare for the storm. To his amazement, he discovered that all of the haystacks had been covered with tarpaulins. The cows were in the barn, the chickens were in the coops, the doors were barred, the shutters were tightly secured, everything was tied down. Nothing could blow away.

The farmer then understood what his hired hand meant, so he returned to his bed to also sleep while the wind blew.

MORAL: When you're prepared, spiritually, mentally, and physically, you have nothing to fear.

EVENT - Good, Bad, Ugly

Read this whole page. I know it's very long, but it's important, and at the end, you'll be glad you did.

The Hurricane Pam exercise run in 2004 predicted 61290 dead. This number is accurate, and that is, indeed, how many people died in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This is a shocking statement, I know - but you'll have to read all the way to the end to understand why that number is right.

THE BAD

As the sun starts to go down, the madness is just cranking up. I'll go to bed at midnight, but there are things going on that I will not find out about until much later - good, bad, and ugly. Let's start from the top down - even though this is something you already know. It really isn't my intention to demonize anyone or tell you how shitty FEMA is. The focus of this blog is to tell you things that you need to know to make educated choices when preparing for disasters of any kind. I am not going to spend much more time in this blog on Mr. President or Mr. Chertoff or other federal officials except when they appear in major roles on the stage. The purpose of this blog isn't to rehash old news,

but to frame that news in the light of your preparations for disaster, so I am going to keep the rhetoric down. Even so, It's important in that context to understand how government works and thinks during a disaster - so stick with me through this.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 7:00 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans

Bahamonde returns from a personal inspection of the area in a helicopter, and calls Brown to report a 200-foot levee breach and heavy flooding of 85% of the city. Brown thanks him for the information and says he'll call the White House. (Bahamonde testimony to Congress)

Brown's call goes through. He reaches an unidentified member of the White House staff. By midnight Eastern time (11 Central), this is general knowledge in the White House. (Testimony of White House spokesman Trent Duffy)



Chertoff receives the situation report from New Orleans. As he testifies later, he hears, "There are some reports of breaching, but nothing has been confirmed. We're looking into it." Later testimony also indicates a disastrous lack of communication between Brown and Chertoff.

Bahamonde: "FEMA headquarters knew at 11 o'clock. Mike Brown knew at 7 o'clock. Most of FEMA's operational staff knew by 9 o'clock that evening. I don't know where that information went." (Additional Bahamonde testimony)

Later, everyone from the president on down will insist they knew nothing of the flooding until August 30. Brown will call Chertoff a lousy boss, and Chertoff will call Brown an insubordinate incompetent. Everyone else will simply marvel at all this.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 9:27 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans

Despite the White House and FEMA's initial claims to the contrary, someone in the public affairs staff at FEMA headquarters in Washington, DC is apprised of Bahamonde's report and sends the following to John Wood, Chertoff's chief of staff:

FYI from FEMA [...] Conditions are far more serious than media reports are currently reflecting. Finding extensive flooding and more stranded people than they had thought [...] also a number of fires.

For reasons that are still being debated, this news never really registers at the top of the chain of command. The next morning, Bush expresses relief that New Orleans had dodged the bullet, and goes to Coronado for his observance of World War II's end. Chertoff relaxes and goes to Atlanta for a briefing on bird flu. (Additional Duffy testimony)



There just isn't anything much to say about this. The facts speak for themselves, and the lesson is that people at the highest levels of leadership are variously clueless or stupid. (My friend Rick doesn't like the word 'stupid', and prefers 'dumb', but I'm trying to avoid the word 'jackassery', so I'm gonna stick with 'stupid'.) If they'd have been watching television like I was they'd have had better intel. The harder lesson is to come to understand that the people at the highest levels of government simply do not care about Americans in any meaningful way. Perhaps they care as far as vote counting goes for their popularity contests and the taxes they manage to bleed out of us, but you may as well send them on a trip around the moon for all the good they're going to do you.



Gee...that sounds kind of bitter. I am not really anti-government. I think government is a swell idea. The problem with government is that it is full of asshats at the uppermost levels. (*asshat*: n. (slang) a person who has his or her head up his or her ass)

Let's talk about this for a minute, because it's *really* important to understand a few things. The first thing that you really need to understand is that government is a myth. The 'government' is made up of persons in power who are all acting in their own best interests. This is only natural, and so it isn't a matter of conspiracy or anything overly dark. That's just the way it is. Brilliant lawyers like Skeletor...er...Mr. Chertoff are up in Washington going to dinner and schmoozing for their next deal - which is why when SHTF he can just sit there and spew bullshit like, "There are some reports of breaching, but nothing has been confirmed. We're looking into it." Yeah... Keep looking into it.

Later on, many people will be calling names on the people at the top. Words like 'incompetent' and many others of a harsher color are frequent. The truth is, though, that the people at the top don't actually *do* anything. It's their *job* to schmooze and make deals. For all of the real work...well...they have people for that. The figureheads of government agencies are just that - figureheads.

Remember Uncle Huey? *"Screw this! They're lying! The President's lying! The rich fat cats that are drowning you will do it again and again and again. They lead you into imperialist wars for profit, they take away your schools and your hope and when you complain, they blame Blacks and Jews and immigrants. Then they push your kids under."* Well, that's still true, and it will always be true.

The lesson in this is very plain: Do not trust any high level government official for any reason on any subject in any context. Everything they tell you will be a lie, and even when they tell you that they are lying, that will be a prevarication. Bottom line: All politicians are full of shit. The politically correct word is 'doublespeak'.

Just to use the current example, let's translate Mr. Chertoff.

"There are some reports of breaching, but nothing has been confirmed. We're looking into it."

Translation: "How should I know? I have people for that."

Whatever happens to you, no matter how bad it is, just remember that the people at the top do NOT give a damn about you. They are pigs that are going to eat rich food and sleep in a warm, dry bed tonight. If anything goes desperately wrong, these people have goats to sacrifice to the masses. For Katrina there are a lot of goats that will end up sacrificed to appease the angry populace. Goats like Michael Brown, Gov. Kathleen Blanco, and Mayor Nagin - who are also people who actually have very little to do with things that go right or wrong on the ground. Don't spend too much time on them. When SHTF and the goats start being sacrificed, you can be pretty sure that you're fooked. DO NOT PAY TOO MUCH ATTENTION! They're just part of the freak show. Ignore the freak show and work on your ACTION plan.

Now that we have pigs and goats, let's talk about sheep and build our little Animal Farm as we go along. The sheep are the general populace. They bleat a lot, aren't terribly clever, and tend to get themselves into trouble. The pigs and the goats have to keep them around, otherwise who are they going to fleece?

Whoops... There I go again...

THE UGLY

Whenever I think about The Ugly, I am reminded of Winnie the Pooh's experience of heffalumps and woozles. He isn't really sure what Heffalumps and Woozles are, but he *knows* that they are out there, and he *knows* that they are up to no good. In the context of Katrina, the Heffalumps and Woozles seem to be primarily employed by FEMA in upper level administration. We don't actually know who they are, but we know that they are out there, and they frequently seem to be up to no good. The Heffalumps and Woozles song fits them perfectly. You'll likely remember it from your childhood...

I am now going to make a grandiose claim, and then I'm going to prove it to you.

The primary job of the military, FEMA, and Homeland Security is not to protect the American people in times of emergency but to protect the government in times of emergency and keep it functioning. Their primary assignment is not to help people but to control them.

Exhibit A for the prosecution is FEMA News Release Number HQ-05-174, dated August 29, 2005 - that's today, the day of the storm - which reads in part:

WASHINGTON D.C. -- Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response and head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), today urged all fire and emergency services departments not to respond to counties and states affected by Hurricane Katrina without being requested and lawfully dispatched by state and local authorities under mutual aid agreements and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

In that document, David Paulison throws his lot in with the Heffalumps and Woozles:

“It is critical that fire and emergency departments across the country remain in their jurisdictions until such time as the affected states request assistance,” said U.S. Fire Administrator R. David Paulison. “State and local mutual aid agreements are in place as is the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and those mechanisms will be used to request and task resources needed in the affected areas.” You can read the entire news release on the FEMA website.

In the late afternoon at Fort Polk Army base in Leesville, an Army helicopter unit sits on the tarmac, awaiting approval to deploy. Unable to deploy until they receive orders from the Pentagon, they sit and watch National Guard helicopters conduct search-and-rescue missions until Wednesday. “We were packed and ready to go,” Chief Warrant Officer Clint Gessner, a helicopter pilot with the Ft. Polk unit will later recall. “We never got the call. It’s just a sad story, man.” “We could have been the first responders.” [Los Angeles Times, 9/11/2005]

Responders are also told by EMAC rules that costs incurred by people who self deploy will not be reimbursed. This is a not-so-subtle kind of intimidation that we will see FEMA use over and over again.

Translation: Don't do anything until we tell you to do it. The activity of the Heffalump and Woozle Gang is so openly apparent that we are going to have to deal with them directly over and over again - and I'm going to teach you the methods for that. For now, though, this page is getting pretty long and I want to tell you the good story now.

Where are we? Well the sheep are in peril while the pigs are setting up to sacrifice the goats. The Heffalumps and Woozles are on the prowl. We have yet to talk about the wolves - but that's coming. Fortunately for the sheep, there are some animals in the middle. Brave and noble animals like eagles, guard dogs, lions, tigers, and bears, oh my!

Which brings us to:

THE GOOD

There is a story that you probably haven't heard. Let's rewind the timeline a few hours, and let's see if I can tell this story well.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 3:00 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans. Franklin Avenue at I-10.



The underpass is full of water here, but the interstate is elevated. Let me introduce you to Paul Valteau, an Orleans Parish civil sheriff who has had his share of problems in office over the years - but August 29, 2005 isn't a day that he can be charged with malfeasance in office. He arrives at this intersection at the same time we do. Later he will recount his experience.

You have heard all the horror stories, and all about the failures of this agency or that agency. You have eaten the shit sandwich served up by broadcast media. I want you to stand with Paul and I on this overpass because you are going to see something that you haven't seen before. Things to make you stand and cheer and be proud to be an American.



For as far as we can see, we can see nothing but submerged houses stretching into the distance. Survivors stand on rooftops - some in waist deep water that is still rising. Some rooftops are higher than others. People are screaming everywhere. We can hear people pounding and wailing in their attics - with no way out. A handicapped man clings to a tree as water swirls around him. We have entered the Holy Shit Zone.

The wind is still up, and there isn't anybody but us on the bridge. Describing the scene as 'eerie' would get us slapped in the head by the understatement police. When Paul tells the story, he says, "I saw things I never saw in 23 years as sheriff. I saw things I never want to see again."

Take this in. There are over 60,000 - **SIXTY THOUSAND** - Citizens of the United States of America at this very moment that need help right now and the Heffalumps and Woozles are telling the rescue responders what? "Ya'll don't help nobody until we say so."

<Cue Music: *Flight of the Valkyries* by Richard Wagner>

Then the scene starts changing faster than we can keep up - because USCG Vice Admiral Thad W. Allen doesn't speak the heffalump and woozle language. No less than thirty six United States Coast Guard helicopters have tracked in behind the storm, fighting 60 MPH winds to arrive in the combat zone at the earliest possible moment. Three of them suddenly appear around us and pilots who have passed the REAL MAN test with straight 'A's dodge power lines while rescue swimmers (who also passed with perfect scores) jump into the turbid water again and again to winch the terrified sheep to safety.



While we are distracted by the air show, something else has sneaked up on us. We are suddenly surrounded by other men - and women. These are not Coast Guard Heroes. They aren't from FEMA. They aren't from the Red Cross. They are nothing but common American Citizens. Citizens with boats. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Maybe not 'ordinary' citizens. These are what we might call, "Good 'ole boys" who have been raised in these parts and have mucked around in marsh and swamp all their lives. Literally hundreds of them show up all over the place all by themselves and launch their own rigs into the water. They form impromptu rescue crews and start pulling people to safety.



While federal, state, and city officials are still standing around wearing their ass-hats and the Heffalump and Woosle Gang stands around holding their privates, Coast Guard Rear Admiral Bob Duncan is on the job. He is a man with a plan. He didn't just send the helicopters. He is IN one of them.

"People are most in need right after the storm goes through," he says. "When they feel comfortable going up on the roofs of their houses, we hope a big orange helicopter is waiting."

Not to be out done, the Louisiana National Guard's 1-224th Aviation Battalion and the 812th Med-Evac unit bring up ten Black Hawks and six Hueys while we're still standing around in amazement on the bridge.



Let's meet Captain Shawn Vaughn - a Blackhawk pilot. "It was like a scene from a Stephen King movie. We just got back from Iraq and saw nothing like this kind of devastation there." Many of the crews are from New Orleans, and they know the city well. They coordinate together and self-deploy to where they expect to be needed most - and they aren't wrong. One pilot is plucked from his flooded house by his own unit. They find him a helicopter and he starts flying too.

The Blackhawk helicopters aren't rigged for rescue. They have no winch. The pilots have to lightly touch down on the rooftops while the crews snatch people into their flying lifeboats. Crews start stripping out seats so that they can fit more people. Standing room only in a helicopter...fun!



The boat crews aren't wasting time. They start breaking people out of their attics and taking on passengers until their craft are overloaded. Standing room only in a flat boat...more fun!



As people are unloaded onto the 'high ground' of the overpass, reinforcements arrive. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries arrives with 250 agents who promptly put their boats in the water in different areas of the city. They start fishing people out of the water without waiting for FEMA to issue them a fishing license. Other volunteers from within the agency join the battle. Lt. Col. Keith LaCaze's operation will rescue 20,000 souls by September 8, at which point he cancels calls for more volunteers and boats. He tells us, "There were a lot of people we rescued on the first night in houses and in attics where the water was almost over their head."

Remember those local first responders who were swallowed by Katrina in the dark? They come out of their safe places and launch nearly 200 boats in the first 24 hours. They find and commandeer still more boats and pull people out of the water. When Sheriff Valteau self-deployed, he pulled together a pair of retired cops, a regular New Orleans policeman, a contractor, and a couple of other volunteers and started his own operations. See you later, Paul. Good luck.

It's not all fun and games, and rescuers have to make hard choices. Coast Guard Lt. Chris Huberty is a Dolphin pilot who will use night vision to fly rescue tonight after the sun goes down. I don't know about you, but my man card is NOT stamped for that. He tells us that crews carefully selected who was rescued first. "We'd put a rescue swimmer down to determine who needed to be taken away. I'd see three women, all healthy adults, and a guy in a wheelchair who was a diabetic; I'd say, 'He needs insulin, let's get him out of here first. The others might have to wait.'"

Chris resents the negative focus on the black residents of New Orleans. "As many bad stories as you hear about looting, there were plenty of people sacrificing for others, regardless of their demographic. I can't tell you how many times a man would stay behind an extra day or two on the roof and let his wife and kids go first. It broke my heart. We'd go to an apartment building and you'd see that someone was in charge, organizing the survivors. We'd tell him, 'We can only take five,' and they'd sort out the worst cases. It happened many times that the guy in charge was the last to leave."



Katrina hasn't officially left the area yet, but more troops continue to arrive on day one as we stand around watching the show. A helicopter from the Navy ship Bataan lifts 19 people from the roof of a burning building. Wisconsin National Guard is on the way with two Blackhawks and three Hueys from their 832nd Medical Company and 1st Battalion, 14th Aviation unit. Three Hueys from the Georgia National Guard's 148th Air Ambulance have also self-deployed and begin flying nonstop from sunup to sundown for days. State Police and various sheriffs' departments man rescue boats. Civilian search-and-rescue teams from out of state, and as far away as Canada, respond on their own. A volunteer team from Exxon Mobil activates itself, self-deploys, and starts doing what FEMA hasn't decided to do yet. I have told you about the pigs and the Heffalumps and the Woozles, but there are plenty of low-level FEMA people already on the ground who haven't waited for specific instructions. They know what they're supposed to do, even if the Heffalump and Woozle Gang doesn't.

You've never heard any of this, have you? By Wednesday - while the media screams about the slow response and bombards us with images from the Superdome - over 100 helicopters are flying around the clock. Boat crews are driving themselves to exhaustion. Admiral Duncan complains that one of his largest problems on the first day was that so many helicopters were operating, they risked crashing into one another. Slow response? Where do they get slow response from?

The mayor, for one, and from other high officials - the goats - who we have already determined had no idea what was really going on. That's where they're getting their information. All the media had was...nothing...because they weren't aware of the amazing rescue going on all around them. Instead they had to come up with something

sensational, so we got murder, gang violence, rape, snipers, rampages in the Superdome, aliens, zombies, and anything else they could come up with. (There's a lesson there too, which we will cover a little later.)

The Hurricane Pam exercise run in 2004 predicted 61290 dead. This number is accurate, and that is, indeed, how many people died in New Orleans. What the Hurricane Pam exercise didn't calculate was the heroic - and heroic is the right word - effort of so many people who managed to snatch over 60,000 people from the water, and from death. If everyone had done what they were supposed to do and waited for FEMA, we could have added those numbers to the death toll.

This is a largely untold story. Not everything went well, and there were some issues and some incidents. We'll cover those in detail as time goes on. If you look at it from a distance, though, Louisianans have managed to do at least two un-possible things at this point. We have managed to successfully evacuate 90% of a modern American city in less than 48 hours. Secondly - but perhaps even more amazing - we managed (with help!) to mount and execute the largest, most successful search and rescue effort in the history of the world to take care of most of the other 10%. By the numbers, there was less than a 2% mortality rate in New Orleans among those in jeopardy.

Even though I am now ready to run out in the yard and wave a giant American flag and sing 'My Country Tis of Thee', I haven't actually told you the half of it. The area FEMA folks are cranking up. The utility companies have trucks lining the road waiting to drive in. The Red Cross - and thousands of volunteers - have begun a work that is several orders of magnitude more amazing than the rescue effort itself.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 7:26 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans. Franklin Avenue at I-10.

Sundown.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 7:26 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans. Franklin Avenue at I-10.

End of civil twilight.

The city goes dark, an a sliver of moon will not rise until 1:45 AM. The city goes dark, but the rescue effort does not stop. Coast Guard Lt. Chris Huberty is wearing his night vision goggles now, and he keeps flying. The rescue effort barely slows down.

I didn't know any of this at the time, of course. At the time, I didn't actually have a real understanding that so many people were stranded in (and on!) their homes until quite some time later. On the next page, we're going to visit with as many of these people as we can so that we can piece together some lessons. As a precursor for this, go stand in your attic and pretend that it's neck deep in water. What do you do?

Shane

EVENT - No Way Out

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 2:00 PM CDT

Location: LaPlace, Louisiana

I am going to use the right and proper name of a man I want you to know. I have known Mr. Fournier (four-nay) since I was a small boy. Mr. Fournier is a real Cajun. The genuine article. A WW-II veteran somewhere above 80 years old, he's prowled, hunted, fished, boated, camped, and hiked more of Southeast Louisiana than most people probably think exists. I learned my perfect Cajun accent from Mr. Fournier on several 'shopping' expeditions during my boyhood. 'Shopping' meant hunting, fishing, and picking wild berries and other plants all rolled into one. I don't think the man has ever eaten fast food. His freezer is stocked with various fish and game. Lest you think that he lives in a cedar shack in some back woods swamp, he actually lives in a modest brick home in Chalmette near New Orleans.

Of course, all of Chalmette is underwater, and I certainly have no idea what he might be up to right now in our timeline. When I finally got to see him many months after the storm, he gave me a big hug and the usual greeting. "What cha say, Reverend?" He gets a kick out of calling me Reverend.

"Same as always, Captain. Same as always. Workin' hahd an' not causin' no trouble ta nobahdy."

As it turns out, at this point in our timeline, Mr. Fournier is sitting comfortably in his niece's house in LaPlace, Louisiana - about 25 miles to the west of New Orleans. He's worried after his airboat all morning, because he was afraid the wind might flip it off the trailer. Ann and Joe called Mr. and Mrs. Fournier and told them to come to LaPlace for the storm, and Mr. Fournier being a wise old man took her up on it. Mrs. Fournier packed up while Mr. Fournier hitched his boat to the old Ford pickup truck he uses to tow it. He ran out on Friday and filled the tanks with gas and got a cooler full of ice out of habit.



I need to take a good picture of Mr. Fournier's airboat. It's a big custom job similar to this one. His will seat six when he puts the seats on. Across the front he has some SERIOUS spot lamps because he's nearly blind in the dark.

At about 2:00, Mr. Fournier faces facts and tells his wife, "Da house she unda' whoata, momma.", giving voice to something that they both knew. "Noathin' ta do for it, papa.", she replies. Mr. Fournier says, "Dem levees broke. Remember Betsy? Folks is goahnna be in trouble. I'm goahnna go get 'em."

Ann - his niece - tries to talk him out of it. Gently at first, then she works up into a tirade about how an old man in his boat will just be in the way of *real* rescuers and he'd probably get arrested or killed or worse. When she runs out of wind, Mr. Fournier turns to Joe - his nephew-in-law - and says, "Joe?"

That's when "Let's Go" Joe gets his nickname, because Joe just stood up and said, "Let's go."

Mrs. Fournier starts making sandwiches. Joe puts a few things in the boat - including a rifle - while Mr. Fournier checks the truck. In less than 10 minutes, they're driving away while Ann cries and Mrs. Fournier starts cooking. "Papa might bring in some comp'ny."



By 4:00 PM, Mr. Fournier has managed to wind his way through the debris and slide his boat into the water off an interstate off ramp. Joe admits some nervousness. "That old man is hell with a truck..."

This picture isn't them, but it gives you the idea.

There are already other rescuers at work, and Mr. Fournier considers Ann's words as he runs away from them and up a back street in deep water. His airboat is built to skim submersed stumps and other things, so it's ideally suited to work in the debris filled water. Only the peaks of some roofs are visible, and some folks are sitting on their roofs in shock. Mr. Fournier isn't looking for them, though. He's hunting a different quarry. He cuts the motor on the airboat and listens. He's half blind, but his hearing is excellent. His ears finally hear what he's listening for and he turns his head from side to side a little then fires up the airboat again. He pilots for the white gable of a house that is only 3' above water. The roof has lost most of its shingles. He glides the boat up to the house and cuts the motor again.

"This one.", he says to Joe.

Kandra is two years old. Her daddy is a truck driver who is running a load of something out of Canada. Kandra's mommy lost her job three weeks ago and her new job doesn't start until Monday. With money tight, Kandra's mom has decided not to evacuate because they "can't afford it". As the storm waters rise, Kandra's mom takes her to the only safe dry place in the house - the attic. Kandra's mom doesn't know that you're supposed to have an axe in the attic. After Hurricane Betsy, everybody around here knew that - but Kandra's mom is from Dallas. Kandra's mom holds on to her as the water rises into the attic, trying to stay calm. As time passes, there are various horrors. A swimming rat tries to climb onto them to save itself. Mom finally drowns it. The water keeps rising, and they are forced into the peak of the roof. Kandra's mom stands and holds Kandra out of the water as long as she can - but the water keeps rising. She beats on the roof and screams for help, but the only one that hears her is Death himself, who slips into the attic with them. He waits. Not long now. Not long. Kandra's mom is totally exhausted, but she beats on the roof until her hands are bloody pulps. Three of the bones in her right hand are broken. Her blood floats in the water all around them - but thankfully it is pitch black, so they cannot see it. They can't see anything.

When Joe pries the facing boards off the gable and smashes through the slat boards, light pours into the attic around them and Kandra begins to cry for the first time. Kandra's mom cries too. Joe slips off the boat and treads water. Mr. Fournier moves his old bones off his pilot's seat and reaches down as Joe pulls Kandra out of the attic.

"Come heah ta me, dahlin'. Don't you cry none. Papa got you now."

He lifts her out of the water and holds her. Joe has to pry off a few more boards to get Kandra's mom - Joy is her name - out of the attic. She has a hard time getting into the boat, and Joe has to struggle in the water to help roll her in.

"When she got in the boat," Joe says, "She had some kind of nervous breakdown. She got on her knees and wailed and screamed and sang and prayed and I didn't know what to make of it."

While Kandra cried and her momma wailed, Joe got back in the boat and Mr. Fournier fired up the engine again. He slid out into the middle of the street-turned-river and cut the motor again. Joe looked back at him and looked away, because the old man was crying too.

He finally managed, "Be quahiet, lady. I need t' hear." Mr. Fournier listened a minute and fired up again, aiming for another roof while Joe wrapped Joy's hands in some paper towels and his shirt. They didn't have any kind of medical supplies at all.



Old Man Fournier and 'Let's Go' Joe snatched family after family out of the clutches of Death himself over and over again until the sun went down. When it finally did go down, Mr. Fournier ran up the spotlamps and they kept snatching families out of the inky blackness of the night. Around midnight, Joe was completely exhausted, and the last few times he had trouble lifting himself back into the boat. Joe works a desk job and isn't really hero material. Joe says, "Full load pop. I don't know if I can do this all night."

On the way back to the bridge, they pass Kandra's house - which is completely under water now. Joe notices and says, "I can swim as long as you can pilot, pop." They go to 3:00 AM, taking just one break to siphon gas out of the truck to fuel the boat. They make the last run on fumes in the tank. Mr. Fournier dumps the last gallon out of the spare can, fires up the motor, and navigates back to the interstate. They manage to get the boat back on the trailer with some help from the people they helped rescue. They don't know how many people they saved, or even how many runs they made.

They didn't know what happened to Kandra and Joy, but they figured that somehow they got a ride out. That is what happened - as they found out when Joy finally managed to track down Mr. Fournier many months later. She had memorized the license plate on his truck and conned someone at the DMV to give her his name.

Kandra's dad came too in order to thank Mr. Fournier and Joe properly.

"Ahll I got ta say ahbout that," Mr. Founier says with a tear in his eye, "is dat is a tehrible thang ta see a groahn man cry."

They made it back to LaPlace, but not before Mr. Fournier stopped to fuel the truck and fuel the boat while Joe slept in the truck. Ann reports that, "I wouldn't let him in the house. I got a scissors and cut him out of his clothes because he couldn't lift his shirt over his head. He was that exhausted. I hosed him down, right there in the yard in all his glory."

Mrs. Fournier washed out the truck and the boat when Ann was done with the hose.

At 10:00 AM - after just 5 1/2 hours of sleep, Mr. Fournier knocked on the doorframe of Joe's bedroom.

"Joe?"

"Yeah. Let's go."

Shane

ANALYSIS - The Road to Hell



Everyone is familiar with the quip, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." The metaphor for hell on this page is The Louisiana Superdome.

Before Katrina, some people went to the Superdome on purpose. After the storm many people went there because they had no choice. Rescued persons not in need of immediate medical attention were brought to the Superdome because that was the staging area to get them out. Of course, that took longer than anybody wanted.

My neighbor Tony had evacuated in his usual way - he checked in to one of the high-rise hotels in New Orleans. This is actually a pretty good plan for smaller storms and disasters - if you have the funds. They are capable of withstanding the storm, all services are provided, and you aren't far from home home after it's all over. This time that didn't work out so well, but we'll tell that story in its due time. There are other people in the hotels too. Reporters, thrill seekers, tourists who didn't manage to get out, and other people who for whatever reason decided that being at ground zero for a category 5

hurricane was a good idea. What kind of dumbass do you have to be, to be in a place that you **know** will be a disaster area in 24 hours if you don't *absolutely have to be there*?

In our timeline, Katrina, as a weather event, is over. She passed in 12 hours, and did what she did. There is almost no need to ever mention the weather event again. Katrina was just the finger that tipped a very large, complex row of dominoes - and those dominoes have started to fall.

There are many people in New Orleans that should have gotten out, but didn't. All of these people are on their way to the same destination: The Louisiana Superdome. Some of them, trapped in dark attics, will gladly take the ride. Others still have no idea that their fate is sealed. Their streets are dry now, but New Orleans has become a giant water clock, and that clock is ticking.

Why would you stay? Why would *anybody* stay? Well, let's talk about that. As we do so, I want to be clear that it is not my intention to mock, deride, or otherwise throw metaphorical stones at these people. They are part of the story, so let's listen to them.

Late in the evening of August 29, 2005, sitting dry and comfortable in Sugar Land, Texas, I found an online copy of The Times-Picayune - the local New Orleans newspaper. You can still find it online here: <http://www.nola.com/katrina/pages/> The strange thing about newspapers is that a newspaper dated today is about what happened yesterday. Since I couldn't make much sense out of the media stream from today, I figured I might have better luck with the data stream from yesterday so I read it.

Back on the page called What's it Worth? I postulated that the people who ended up in the Superdome had one common denominator: They all made bad choices. While a lot of those folks were poor, there were also a lot of poor folks who did manage to leave. It may surprise you to know that there were a lot of people who ended up at the Superdome (and later the Convention center) who were not poor by any stretch of the imagination. In order to appreciate the situation in the Superdome, and to discuss a few things from a preparedness and survival standpoint, it is a good idea to analyze what happened there. Who was there? Why were they there? What can we learn from that? The first thing to understand is that there were two groups of people at the dome. The first group went there on purpose. They made the active choice to go to a government camp where they were told two things:

1. You will not be provided for.
2. There is a category 5 hurricane coming this way.

Even so, people made the choice to go to the dome. Why? Times-Picayune has a nice article about this on page 1. The article starts, "A 2-year-old girl, clutching a bottle and ignoring her knock-off Barbie doll, running in circles around her mother. Homeless men trying to doze on the sidewalk, using backpacks as pillows. People without cars. People with cars but nowhere to go."

"More than 10,000 of them."

"These are the people without enough money or luck to leave town as Hurricane Katrina was poised to have its way with New Orleans. With a mandatory evacuation hanging over the city Sunday morning, they were left with no other choice but to assemble outside the Louisiana Superdome, waiting in an unorganized line to take refuge in a sprawling building meant more for touchdowns than for emergencies."

The article goes on to interview people who give their reasons.

1. No funds.
2. No car.
3. Car, but nowhere to go.
4. Didn't want to ride with the kids in the car for hours.
5. Decided not to fight traffic.
6. Too ill, too old, or otherwise too infirm to travel.
7. Looking for food.

The article notes that, "About 150 National Guard soldiers, New Orleans police and civil sheriff's deputies were patrolling the facility. Some weapons were confiscated." (Which is a reason in and of itself never to end up in a government camp.)

The article concludes with, 'Geraldine Johnson, 67, has no car. So she and her 41-year-old daughter and three grandchildren, ages 8, 10 and 12, caught the bus from Algiers early Sunday and landed at the Dome after 11 a.m. "This is my last resort," Johnson said, seated and surrounded by her family. The children had their suitcases and snacks. "They may provide food," Johnson said. "But it would take so long to wait in that line. You can't depend on people to give you everything."

HURRICANE KATRINA



The people who initially go to the Superdome aren't the lowest dregs of the poor. They aren't bad people either. Geraldine, at least, has the proper attitude. They aren't all black, despite what some of the hate sites will tell you. There are people of all kinds. They're just folks who have made a very bad choice. Sometimes, however, the choice is made for them out of bad luck. Bad preparation frequently seems to lead to bad luck.

On the last page of the paper there is a picture of Dan Fuller.

The caption says, "Dan Fuller, who lives in Mid-City, walks down Canal Street after trying unsuccessfully to hitchhike out of town. He caught an RTA bus that was headed to the Superdome."

Dan isn't a person you would typically think of when you think of people who went to the Superdome. His bio goes like this:

Dan is an artist who grew up in Central Pennsylvania, near the Susquehanna River. 1962, Dan started to paint and became active in the Rochester art community, where soon he became known for his landscapes, figurative paintings and his portraits. In 1970 while painting a portrait, his subject told him about the art colony on Jackson Square in New Orleans and urged him to look into it as the artists there were well known for their excellence. So the first week of 1971 he took a bus there, and found it was an ideal place to paint and market his results among them. Although he has made occasional forays to other places since then to paint portraits, Dan has long been a well recognized fixture in the New Orleans art community. In 2001 he was selected to be the first to have a one man

show, and the second to have an artist in residency at the Degas House. Edgar Degas, the French Impressionist was the first. He joined the artist's co op in the Dutch Alley Gallery just one week before Katrina struck.

Dan is a successful artist. I like his work. He is most famously known for his Treehouse Collection. Like so many others, he isn't someone you'd expect to find in a government camp. He doesn't own a car, and couldn't get a ride. We'll chalk that up to bad luck - but bad luck brought on by bad planning. If you live in a hurricane zone, you really do need a car. I'm willing to bet that Dan would be willing to pay \$1,000 not to have to go to the Superdome - and he could buy a car that would get him 100 miles for \$1,000 easy. We can add bad luck and/or bad planning to the list.

1. No funds.
2. No car.
3. Car, but nowhere to go.
4. Didn't want to ride with the kids in the car for hours.
5. Decided not to fight traffic.
6. Too ill, too old, or otherwise too infirm to travel.
7. Looking for food or other relief.
8. Bad luck and/or bad planning.

We have to account for the people who did not go to the Superdome, but who stayed in their homes. Why did they stay? After talking to several hundred, they give many reasons, including some of the above. They also add several others:

9. Didn't think it would be too bad. This is usually a poverty of imagination fueled by denial. Also in this number are the people who had experienced other hurricanes and had a false expectation that Katrina would be no worse.
10. Didn't want to leave pets. (Some people have so many pets that they cannot move all of them.)
11. Didn't want to leave (or move) someone with special needs. (Elderly parents seem to top the list.)
12. Wanted to stay in order to protect and defend property.
13. Knew they should leave, but didn't want to. "Didn't feel like it." (This is either denial or laziness.)

Let's break the list down.

1. No funds. = BAD PLANNING
2. No car. = BAD PLANNING
3. Car, but nowhere to go. = BAD PLANNING
4. Didn't want to ride with the kids in the car for hours. = LAZY
5. Decided not to fight traffic. = LAZY
6. Too ill, too old, or otherwise too infirm to travel. = BAD LUCK AND/OR BAD PLANNING
7. Looking for food or other relief. = BAD PLANNING

8. Bad luck and/or bad planning. = BAD LUCK AND/OR BAD PLANNING
9. Didn't think it would be too bad. = LAZY
10. Didn't want to leave pets. = BAD PLANNING
11. Didn't want to leave (or move) someone with special needs. = BAD LUCK AND/OR BAD PLANNING
12. Wanted to stay in order to protect and defend property. = BAD PLANNING
13. Knew they should leave, but didn't want to. = LAZY

No matter what the excuse, it really breaks down in to three reasons. Bad Planning, Bad Luck, or Lazy. Bad Luck frequently follows bad planning (or no planning!), and bad planning is usually a result of lazy - and we already know that LAZY PEOPLE DO NOT PROSPER.

Sometimes even good plans backfire or unforeseen circumstances overtake us. If we invented a time machine and went back a few months and told Dan all about his ordeal in the Superdome, I bet he'd have sold some extra art and bought a car. His choice not to have a car was a BAD choice - but only in hindsight. In a cosmopolitan city like New Orleans, owning a car is optional in many ways. Until it comes time to flee...

I have a case story to tell you later about a friend of mine who was actually very well prepared, and did very well after the storm - until his house filled up with 8 feet of water.

Sometimes bad luck is honest. If you come down with the puking disease right when you really need to be evacuating, then that's just bad luck. Barometer Bob told me the story of how his wife was on crutches when they had to evacuate for one hurricane. Nothing to do for it but to do what you can with what you have. If you are old, infirm, or otherwise unable to travel when you need to escape or evacuate, then you very well may become a statistic. We are going to examine such cases later.

We come down to a bottom line. If you live in a hurricane zone, then you absolutely need to HYST and have the funds or whatever else it is that you need to escape when a monster comes calling. I know what it's like to live hand to mouth, and I'm not clueless when it comes to class issues. Even so, you don't have to prepare all at once. We all know the story of the grasshopper and the ants attributed to Aesop. Remember the ants admonition in the end?

Idleness brings want.

To work today is to eat tomorrow.

It is best to prepare for the days of necessity.

In the original story - before Disney got hold of it - the ants didn't give the grasshopper anything. Saving a little something aside is not impossible except for a very tiny fraction of people. We all make choices. Sometimes it's better to make the choice to put something aside for days of necessity than to buy that luxury item, no matter how small.

The majority of these people fall into the 'bad luck caused by bad planning caused by

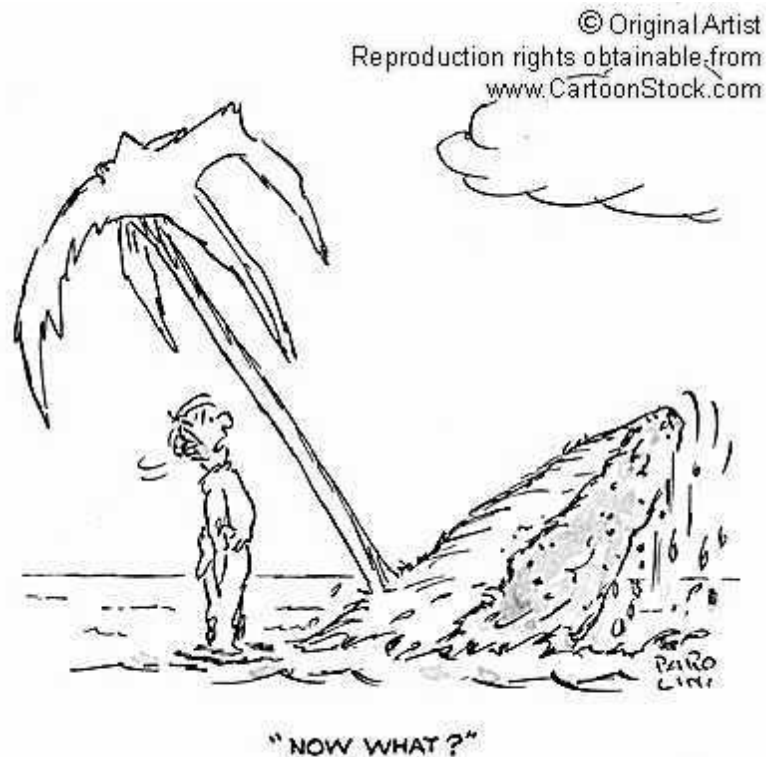
laziness' classification. That isn't to say that everyone who went to the Superdome was lazy. Failure to prepare and other bad planning mistakes are also made by people who do not appreciate the magnitude of the situation. Even so, the people who went to the Superdome early did do one thing right. They saved their own lives. Their road was paved with good intentions.

For everyone who came after, the road was paved with water.

Shane

PLAN - Get a Neck Safe

I am not the kind of person who actually likes to plan for 'worst case' scenarios, but Katrina has some *very* interesting lessons in that regard.



My grandfather was famous for saying, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go astray." I heard this often in my boyhood. When I was older and properly educated, one day I told him, "You know, that's actually from a poem by Robert Burns called 'To A Mouse'. The line in the original Scottish is 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley'."

To which he said, "Son, an education is only valuable if it's useful."

While I frequently considered these bits of my grandfather's wisdom, it took me a long

time to fully appreciate them.

In Listening to Katrina in the context of the stories I collected from rescuers and the stories I collected from those rescued, I started to think about something that I had never thought about before. Preparations do not come with a warranty. Even if you are well prepared - as many people actually were - that's no guarantee. Even good plans sometimes go astray. Or awry. Or whatever.

This section is about ACTION plans, and plans don't come with a warranty either. Sometimes, despite your best effort and intentions, the Unexpected Circumstances Monster rears its ugly head and chews your face off. The purpose of our ACTION plans is not to anticipate every unforeseen circumstance, but to prepare for the collapse of all of our plans and all of our preps - which is something that can be very hard to do. Fortunately, we can Listen to Katrina.

There are many paths to follow, and many anecdotes to tell. Let's start small, though, and work our way up. In talking with rescue teams, helicopter pilots, law enforcement personnel, Red Cross folks, and individual families, I've gained an appreciation for something that I had never before considered. As a parent, I will tell you that I would kill and die before I'd ever be separated from my children. Every parent will tell you that - but the Unexpected Circumstances Monster sometimes has other plans. If you are in a danger area and the helicopter drops a basket and they say they can only take one, then you're going to put your kid in the basket.

For one reason or another, children get separated from parents. During the aftermath of Katrina, it happened quite a lot. Families were separated and scattered. It happens, and sometimes you cannot control this. A ten year old might know his name and address, but he isn't likely to know the address and phone number for the family contact outside the danger zone. Even if you drill it into his head so that he can repeat it in his sleep, the shock and trauma of a disaster can render such memories faulty. Your three year old? Forget it. Children aren't the only group at risk. Persons with special needs or conditions - like Down's Syndrome, for instance, are also in danger. Persons with Alzheimer's for another. Remember that the Unexpected Circumstances Monster is frequently hungry. Anyone can become ill, injured, or otherwise incapacitated. Even you.

In the absolute worst case, someone will need to identify your body.

Beetle Bailey



During the War of Northern Aggression, some soldiers pinned paper notes with their name and home address to the backs of their coats. Other soldiers devised other means of identification, and in 1906, the United States Army started issuing what has come to be called, 'dog tags'. Dog tags are stamped steel or aluminum tags with a few lines of embossed text. That's useful for identification, but we need something with more information. In the days after the storm, the ability to identify young children was a real problem for rescuers and law enforcement. Some of that task also fell to the Red Cross. In some cases children were rescued and it was later discovered the parents were dead - and that creates an entirely different set of problems.

Another circumstance is also apparent from the Katrina experience. Rescuers are not going to take your LGO bag. They are going to take you, and you're going to have to leave everything behind. You might get away with a very small bag (which I cover on the next page), but sometimes you may have to abandon even that. Many people were dropped at the Superdome, Convention Center, or at an interstate boat ramp with ABSOLUTELY NOTHING but the filthy, wet rags on their backs. This even happened to people that would have been considered 'well prepared' at the time because all their preps and plans collapsed entirely. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. All same-same.

We need a plan and a physical preparation that will serve many functions:

1. Identification.
2. To provide contact information to facilitate family reunification.
3. To protect data wealth.
4. To provide immediate access to core aspects of the preparedness plan.
5. To serve as a capsule for memory and identity. (I'll explain that in a minute.)
6. To be useful otherwise in everyday life. (Because special purpose things are often neglected.)

I also want this plan to be easy, cheap (*really* cheap!), durable, waterproof, and as small and light as possible.

There are several answers to this problem. The first answer is a permanent marker, like a Sharpie. I like Sharpies, but any thick tipped permanent marker will do. Writing your name and address on your arm as the plane goes down isn't a new idea, but it works for us in this context and is cheap, fast, easy, and workable. While workable, it doesn't do much for you beyond identification - just like dog tags. We need to spend an extra few bucks and get something better.

Answer number two is to implant microchips in the whole family. This is working well for pets, and many pets were returned to their owners after Katrina because of the microchips. It seems a little freaky to me, however, to implant microchips in my kids. If they came with GPS tracking, I might consider it...but I can't quite bring myself to it. It can also be expensive, and rescuers would have to have the reader and know that there

was a chip in your shoulder to begin with. Sometimes the fancy technology is going too far...



I found answer number three before I completely contemplated the problem. While on a trip to Disney world, I wanted a way to let my 7 year old carry her park pass and a little money around. I also wanted to be able to look at her and know that she hadn't lost it. While passing through the hotel gift shop on the first day, I noticed Witz 'Surf Safe' cases. I thought, "Well, that might work, but they're probably expensive." As it turns out, they were six dollars - and simply brilliant. They fit all of our criteria listed above. I immediately bought one for every member of the family - even me. They come in eight colors, so order a different color for each family member.



While I really like and strongly recommend the 'Surf Safe' cases, there are some other solutions. They make an 'emergency case' which has a whistle and a compass. This is a little gagety for me, but might be cool for the kids. They make larger cases (which are too large, IMO). There are also some cheap-cheap ID holders with Zip-Loc style closures that would work - but those are nearly as much as the Surf Safe. While I would *really* like one just a tiny bit wider (as wide as money folded in half), the Surf Safe really does blow everything else out of the water (so to speak) so spend the six bucks.



Let's talk about the container itself for a minute. I'm going to focus on the 'Surf Safe' case, but all of this applies to similar things. We have come to call these 'neck safes' in our family, so that is the terminology I'm going to use from here on out. No matter which type you have, that's what it is - a neck safe.

If you order them online, you may have a choice between a lanyard and a clip (like a small carabineer). Get the lanyard. This is a stand alone item. You aren't going to be clipping it to anything. (They have actually just started shipping them with both clips and lanyards, so you may not have an option.)

I have found the best thing to do is to wear it around your neck under your shirt. The problem with the lanyard is that it fastens with a cheap plastic break-away clip that is supposed to keep you from hanging yourself. This clip is worthless and will cause you to lose the case, so cut it off and melt the ends of the cord with something hot and tie them together. The instructions specifically warn against this, but the break-away clip is absolute junk. Get rid of the cheap metal ring that comes with the case and thread the lanyard through the hole directly. If you're fancy with knots, you can tie a double tautline hitch and make the lanyard adjustable. In order to keep the little rubber gasket around the lid in good shape, you can squirt a little Armor All or similar product onto a Q-Tip and clean and protect it easily.



The next thing to do is write the owner's name on the neck safe with a permanent marker. If you happen to be handy and you own an engraver, you can engrave everyone's name into the plastic quite easily. Be sure that you let little kids pick their color first. If you fail to do this and engrave your kid's names onto them before they get to pick, everyone will want a different color and you will lose points in the 'favorite parent' poll. You can also solve this by having the same color for all the kids - but that might get confusing. Once they've chosen their color, do write or engrave their name and address on the case itself. That way even if the contents are lost, the case itself serves as an ID tag.

The neck safe is a cool gadget, so involving your kids (and your spouse!) in decorating them with stickers or markers or something is one of those fun family touchy-feely things that serves several purposes. If you have a spouse that is against all this 'crazy paranoid preparation crap', this is a good opportunity to engage them - especially if you have kids. "Well, gee, honey. You wouldn't want to lose the kids, would you?", is just the kind of parental guilt trip that works. Second, by involving the kids you're not just giving them something that they have to wear around their neck like a millstone. You're making it fun, and they're making the neck safes their own. Once decorated, they will also be hard to mistake. If you see a stranger walking around with your kid's neck safe, you can be 100% certain that you can clock the stranger with something heavy and you'll be in the right.



I have a black one and installed some tacticoool options on mine - like swapping the shoelace lanyard for 550 paracord. I attach a whistle to my daughter's lanyard for an emergency signal. She is old enough to be responsible enough with this that she doesn't drive me crazy with the whistle...

The primary reason for engaging the kids (and the spouse!) is to talk to them about what the neck safe is, what it's for, and how to use it. I have a lot of success with my 7 year old on this, but the three year old not so much. I have a slightly different strategy with the three year old.

Well, what IS the neck safe? What IS it for, and how DO you use it?

The neck safe is a container for wealth. Just like our Life Goes On Bag contains various kinds of wealth, our neck safes are smaller clones of the same concept. There isn't much space in a neck safe, so we'll have to be economic in our use of that space. The first thing to do is create a single page for identification and contact information. This is where the worksheet comes in. You don't have to use my worksheet. You can write the information clearly and legibly on any sheet of paper, or create your own.

We should next consider photographs. If you're looking for someone, a photograph is a huge help. School photos are good for this, and seem to be just the right size. You can also make your own using your digital camera and some photo paper. You should write the person's name and the date of the photo on the back of the photo. Parents should

carry a photo of each child, and children should carry photos of each parent and perhaps siblings as well. Depending on who lives in your home, you may also want to include photos of grandma, grandpa, uncle Joe, or other members of your household. One slick trick is to print the photos on the back of the contact information worksheet. Photos provide positive identification, and can help in a search for a child or other family member.



Once you have filled out the sheet for each person and printed photos, we need to fold the paper in such a way that it fits neatly into whatever container we have prepared.

At this point we can start including things. I include a 2GB Transcend Flash Drive with a copy of all the digital data wealth I showed you how to assemble earlier in this blog. At the time of this writing, you can get 2GB Transcend drives for less than eight bucks. Each member of the family carries a full copy. You can also include additional photographs, identifying documents, and medical information on the flash drive. You should not encrypt this so that it will be accessible to medical and law enforcement personnel. Everything else can be encrypted if you like, but leave the additional photos and medical documentation where someone can access it if they need to. By the age of 6 or 7, children should be taught the password to open the encrypted files. If you are killed or incapacitated and you were the only person who knew the password, then all that data is lost.



Cash money shouldn't be overlooked. It is my opinion that adults should carry a \$100 bill in their neck safes, and children should carry a \$20 bill or some amount appropriate for their age, with the understanding that this is money for a dire emergency only. If they blow it on bubble gum one day, you're going to have to get heavy on the discipline.

Assemble the ID paper, flash drive, and money together and wrap them tightly in some plastic wrap. Not so much for waterproofing, but to keep it all together. This is especially important for the kids, because they will lose and scatter things quickly. If you make a neat bundle out of it, they can carry and use their neck safes to carry other money or other items of that size - like park passes when you take them to Disney World.



If you've folded it correctly, it shows PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION at the top. Very neat. Another item that you can put into the neck safe is critical medication. Of course, this is going to have to be something small, like a nitroglycerine pill for heart attacks or something - but it is possible.

While I assume that I will always have my wallet with me, that's not guaranteed either. Some credit card companies will issue a duplicate credit card, and I keep the duplicate in my neck safe. When I renew my driver's license, I go back to the DMV the next week and claim to have lost it and I get another one. I keep the spare in the neck safe. If you don't want to go through that trouble, make a nice color copy of your driver's license (front and back) with your scanner and printer and keep that in the neck safe.

If you have created the neck safe exactly as I have done so here, you will find that your total cost (less the cash) is less than \$15 per person. That's what it *costs*, but can you tell me what it's *worth*? For 15 dollars each, you can have a durable, waterproof case that you can wear around your neck that contains all your photographs, all your important documents, and all the other data wealth you have accumulated on your memory key (USB Flash Drive). EVERY family member will have this, along with positive identification, local and remote contact information, a small amount of cash, and a few other things.

This fulfils our design concepts of easy, cheap, durable, waterproof, small, and light. It also fulfils our design criteria of providing identification, contact information to facilitate family reunification, protecting data wealth, and to serve as a capsule for memory and identity.

Let me explain that.

Let's say that something terrible happens and one of your children is rescued, but the rest of your family doesn't make it. That child is cut adrift in the world, and while he or she may be found and raised by a remote family member, chances are that the child will grow up with many questions - questions that could be answered by the contents of the neck safe.

In the best case scenario, everyone is rescued. Now what? Each member of the family has immediate access to core aspects of the preparedness plan - you know who to call to start to coordinate your efforts. If you have the neck safe, then the contents of that neck safe serve as a seed. A seed you will need to nurture to find home again. Hopefully you will never need it, but you can ask more than 60,000 victims of Hurricane Katrina what it's like NOT to have such a seed. I *have* asked them, and the look in their eyes is all the answer you need.

Shane

PREP - Scat Pack

Some of you are by now screaming at me something like, "You keep focusing on this data wealth idea, and that's nice and all, but this section is called ACTION! When are you going to tell us about some real preps that don't involve all of this geekery? When are you going to tell us about things that we can *use* for ACTION!?"

Well, this is the page you have been waiting for. We've covered the LGOB (Life Goes On Bag), the BOB (Bug Out Bag), and now I am going to introduce you to the Scat Pack. The Scat Pack is the gear equivalent of the 60 Second Plan. We could call it the 'Run For Your Life Bag', but RFYLB seems goofy.

Before I got married and had children, I did a lot of long distance backpacking. Somewhere along the way, I picked up the habit of keeping a small fanny pack of critical items. I can't tell you exactly how this idea developed, but somewhere along the way this bag coalesced into a philosophy. That philosophy will be familiar to you because it's, "Don't keep all your eggs in one basket." That philosophy led to the theory that if I ever needed to abandon my backpack for whatever reason, a small emergency kit would be useful. At some point I started calling it my Scat Pack because the name is kind of clever.

We've talked about Shit Hit The Fan. Another word for Shit is, of course, Scat. Scat has another meaning, which is as a verb meaning 'to go off hastily' (often used in the imperative.) I took to saying, "If SHTF, Scat!" The Scat Pack also tends to collect random shit, rather like a woman's purse, and so the name is triply apt.

I did eventually use the Scat Pack to 'rescue' myself from a stupid mistake while backpacking.

The Scat Pack idea translated into city life for me and I took to carrying a purse. Women have known the benefits of the Scat Pack all along. The idea of a man with a purse (AKA 'murse') is fairly common in other countries, but a little strange in the United States. I never really understood this. Some people say that women carry purses because women's clothing doesn't have pockets - but I think that's just an excuse. Cultural and social pressures are weird sometimes. Jesus carried a purse - and in Luke 22:36, specifically admonishes the Apostles, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one." If Jesus was good with a murse, what's the problem? We'll get to that whole sword thing later...

The man purse or 'murse' idea got some traction in American culture when fanny packs became common in the late 1980's and early 1990's, but they are now considered unfashionable. Of course, our focus on contents will be a little different. I no longer actively carry a purse, because for the most part I always have my LGO Bag handy. The situation could arise, however, that I would have to abandon the LGO Bag. When I don't have my LGO Bag, I normally carry a camera bag and keep a few things in my pockets - which serves the same purpose.

The Survivalist equivalent is something called a GHB or Get Home Bag, which tends towards being one of those 80 pound backpacks. I saw one online recently that included three road flares and other crap that crosses the line into bizarre. Uh... OK... The problem with such a GHB is that if you need to run for your life, it will only slow you down. If you need to take the stairs out of an office building, you aren't going to want that monkey on your back - and most of the contents will be useless anyway. If you have to be rescued off your roof by helicopter, they aren't going to take your LGOB, BOB, or GHB or anything else for that matter. We need to have a Plan B. (The neck safe is actually Plan C.)

The scat pack fills a need similar to that of the neck safe, and requires similar parameters. It should be small, light, easy, cheap (but not too cheap!), and durable. Waterproof is optional. The neck safe is about identity, data wealth, memory, and some physical wealth as well. The scat pack is about general tools to support general strategies. The contents of your Scat Pack will be determined by your particular circumstances. If you work in high rise buildings all day, then the contents of your Scat Pack will differ from someone in a purely rural setting. You may also configure your Scat Pack for trips, or for whatever your daily activity is going to be.

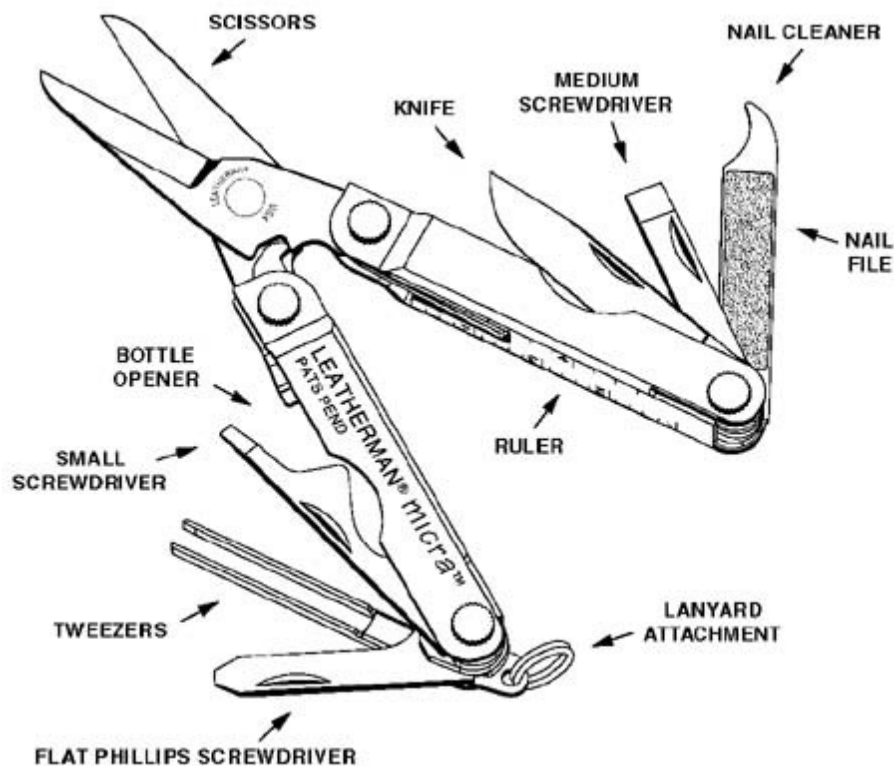
On September 11, 2001, I watched with the rest of the world as people tried to escape the developing disaster of airplanes crashing into skyscrapers. My mind began playing the usual 'what if' game. What if I was there? What would I wish I had carried with me to work that day? My short list was comfortable shoes, a dust mask, a bottle of water, and a headlamp - things that would fit in a fanny pack. Being able to parachute off the roof might have been handy, but carrying around a parachute isn't practical or even particularly sane.

I'm going to show you my basic setup, and give you some strategy and a few tactics. My scat pack is actually a part of my LGO Bag, because that bag comes everywhere with me anyway. For the most part, the scat pack is just a sub-set of the LGO Bag and not actually something different. The scat pack, however, contains the core tools of the LGO Bag plus a few 'extras'. If I needed to abandon the laptop computer, wires, and other things that I could replace given time and money, then I'm left with the things that belong in the scat pack.

You already know that I am the cheapest man alive, so it won't surprise you that my scat pack is an Outdoor Products fanny pack that I bought from campmor.com on clearance for eight bucks. It's the old RoadRunner model. I have bought and assembled scat packs from Wal-Mart for six or eight dollars by scavenging bits of this and that. A medium sized camera bag could work, but I like fanny packs because you can attach them positively to your body and your hands are free for other tasks. Whatever bag you decide to use for this, do not get a large one. Something the size of an ordinary fanny pack is best - which is about 200 cubic inches. Anything over about 300 cubic inches is too big. If it's bigger than your head, then you've done something drastically wrong.

The very first item you should put in your seat pack is some kind of medication. If you do not need to take medication, then an old prescription bottle with aspirin in it will do - but have some medication. Why? Because if a rescuer says, "Leave that bag!", you say, "It's my medication!" That's strategy #1.

As I noted, the rest of the items will vary depending on your individual needs, but these are the items I consider most useful:



Leatherman Micra - A Micra is a very small and handy tool, its main function being a very strong (if small) pair of scissors. It also has a small knife, various screwdrivers, nail cleaner and file, tweezers, and a bottle opener.

Multi-Tool - I carry a Leatherman Charge, but if I had to recommend one, I'd recommend the Wave. You may have a personal favorite, but I have found my multi-tool to be the #1 most useful tool in my kit. I'm constantly using it for jobs too numerous to describe. The thing I like about the Charge and Wave tools is that they have full size folding knives built into them that can be opened easily with one hand.

Headlamp - A headlamp is better than a flashlight in so many ways that if you only have one light, have a headlamp. I am quite fond of my Princeton Tec Aurora. Any LED headlamp will do. Be sure to choose something with a long battery life. You can frequently find last year's models at cut-rate prices at www.campmor.com. In this context, think SMALL. You don't need some nuclear-bright x-ray-vision model

headlamp. The smallest LED headlamp will work nicely. The Princeton Tech Aurora really is more than enough.

Small - VERY SMALL - first aid kit.

Water Bottle - Any water bottle will do. I don't always have my water bottle in my scat pack because I'm drinking out of it. Water is a universal tool that most people do not consider fully. Clean water isn't just for drinking. Yes, you can drink it, but you can also rinse your eyes, mouth, ears, and sinuses. You can use it to take medications, wash wounds, extinguish small fires, and a long list of other things up to and including performing a little Chinese Water Torture on someone. A bottle of water is nearly as useful as a towel - which brings me to that item.

Towel - Obviously you aren't going to fit a beach towel in a fanny pack. A small hand towel of some kind is a very useful tool sometimes, however, and should not be overlooked.

Pen & Note Pad - Any pen and any small note pad will do. The ability to jot down a note, or leave a note, or record something, or write your last will and testament while trapped beneath rubble as your life blood oozes away can be invaluable.

Fire - All human beings should carry fire. Well, maybe not little kids or pyromaniacs, but excepting those, everybody should carry fire. Fire is one of those universal tools that should never be ignored. In my area and climate, a small Bic lighter is just the thing. I also like to have a little container of Lifeboat Matches, which burn hot even in the wind.

Latex Gloves - Or Nitrile gloves if you are allergic to latex.

Snack - I like granola bars or bags of mixed nuts.

Depending on your daily tasks, you may also want to consider one or more of the following: Whistle, condoms, lightstick, some string or paracord, ear plugs, super glue, carabiner. If you are into uber-tactical-ops or something, you could carry lock picks and various other mall-ninja accoutrements.

Above all else, keep your scat pack small and light.



There is another 'trick' that I want to mention in this context. If - for whatever reason - you need to abandon your Life Goes On Bag (LGOB), you may not want to abandon certain critical contents of that bag. In my case, I keep report binders with original documents in my LGO Bag at all times. If I have to escape a high-rise building, or otherwise be 'rescued' from some situation, the LGO bag is going to have to stay behind.

My clever wife accidentally bought some very large Hefty brand zipper lock plastic bags. I found that the document binders fit very nicely into them. My daughter had a cheap draw-string 'backpack', and I went looking for something a little better and found it. It's a nylon bag with drawstrings that work as shoulder straps. If you search on Google or Amazon for 'drawstring backpack', you'll find some.



I now keep the binders in the bags at all times, which protects them from water, moisture, and other hazards. The 'backpack' folds neatly and slips into the same compartment in my LGOB. If I have to ditch the majority of the bag, it takes five seconds to slip everything into the 'backpack' and I'm good to play the Run For Your Life game.



There is enough room for other things as well, but I think that lighter is better when running for your life.

As you can see, it lays flat, and if I pull a large shirt or a light jacket over it, you'd hardly notice it.

If you have to carry another backpack with critical supplies, this setup will fit under that very nicely as well. It's a good way to keep important things from going missing if you have to abandon larger groups of supplies. It's not high on the macho scale, but it works to its purpose.

Shane

EVENT - Descent Into Chaos

As the twilight deepens and the city goes dark, many things are happening. The avalanche has begun, and the pebbles no longer have any choice.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 6:30 PM CDT

Location: United States

All the major network evening news program report the Industrial Canal breach. All of them also report flooding in New Orleans. This is old news, and just demonstrates that anything you get from mainstream media is likely to be hours (and sometimes days) old.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 7:30 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans, Louisiana

Marty Bahamonde briefs Mayor Nagin on the extent of the damage. Marty says that the surge of water flowing through the city is “surprising in its intensity.” Mayor Nagin takes it hard. Others attending the briefing begin to cry. [Knight Ridder, 9/11/2005] Bahamonde asks for a phone. “I need to call Washington,” he says. “Do you have a conference-call line?” He's somewhat shocked that the answer is decidedly, "NO!" Bahamonde manages to find a phone that works, but he has trouble reaching senior officials in Washington. When he finally gets someone on the line, the city officials hear him repeating, “You don’t understand, you don’t understand.” [Newsweek, 9/19/2005] Bahamonde also calls the FEMA team at Louisiana’s Emergency Command Center in Baton Rouge to brief them on the situation. [Knight Ridder, 9/11/2005]

About this time, Col. Richard P. Wagenaar, the Army Corp’s district commander, files a formal situation report, via e-mail, with the Corps’ national headquarters. The response to this is unclear, but ACOE does start to hustle.

A Baton Rouge TV station announces breaking news: “I’ve just been handed an announcement. There is a breach in the 17th Street Canal levee that’s going to cause flooding for the next 18 hours. The water level will rise nine feet and flood 80 percent of the city.” [National Public Radio, 9/9/2005]

There are unconfirmed (and unfounded) reports by some local media that the 17th Street Canal has also breached on the Metairie side.

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson will later report that this evening, New Mexico’s Urban Search and Rescue Team leaves for Baton Rouge, where they will receive specific instructions on deployment. He also orders 200 members of the New Mexico National Guard to leave immediately. [New Mexico, 8/30/2005; Newsweek, 9/14/2005] New Mexico’s National Guard will be held in New Mexico, however, until they receive the required mission assignment from the Pentagon late Thursday, September 1

Federal investigators with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, are placed on standby to fly to the devastated region “within hours of the hurricane making landfall.” [Newsweek, 9/14/2005]

Mayor Nagin appears on WWLTV to provide viewers with a “status report” on the city: “My heart is heavy. I don’t have any good news to really share. Other than at some point in time the federal government will be coming in here en masse. But, the city is in a state of devastation. Eighty percent of it is under water, as much as 20 feet in some places. There’s an incredible amount of water in the city. Residents are on roofs and trapped in attics, awaiting rescue. Fire, Police, and National Guard personnel are out rescuing those trapped right now. Both airports are under water. Twin spans in New Orleans East are totally destroyed. Three huge boats have run aground. An oil tanker has run aground and is leaking oil. There is a serious break at 17th Street Canal,” and the water continues to rise. Houses have been picked up off their foundation and moved. The Yacht Club has burned; it’s totally destroyed. A barge has hit one of the main structures of High Rise (a bridge over the Industrial Canal) and we’re not sure that the High Rise is structurally

sound. All of Slidell is under water. Most of Metairie is under water. (The last two aren't true.) "The list just goes on and on." There are gas leaks throughout the city. It's not a pretty picture. On the somewhat good news side, many people have survived. Uptown is pretty dry. The French Quarter and Central Business District is dry, but they also have buildings that look like a bazooka was shot through them. There is no clear path in or out of the city, whether east or west. I-10 West is still full of water.... The water system has been contaminated except for the Central Business District and Algiers. We have no electricity and they expect electricity to be out about 4-6 weeks. "And the list goes on and on." Nagin reports that flooding is worst in New Orleans East and in the Lower 9th Ward, but it's "coming from everywhere." Nagin is basing his information on a briefing he received, apparently from Marty Evans, President of the Red Cross. Nagin states that he is reading from a briefing provided by a FEMA official (later identified as Marty Bahamonde). "The FEMA guy here is saying that 80 percent of New Orleans is under water and a significant portion of Metairie and Kenner—everything north of I-10 is under water." (Not entirely true.) Nagin also reports that St. Bernard is in even worse shape: "There is total devastation in St. Bernard alone." (WWLTV reporter notes earlier Associated Press report that 40,000 houses in that parish are under water.) [WWLTV 4 (New Orleans), 8/29/2005]

In a later New York Times interview, FEMA Director Mike Brown will state that by this evening, he is calling the DHS and White House to report that the emergency response is in chaos. Reportedly, in a status call with Washington, Brown reports that Governor Blanco's office is "proving incapable of organizing a coherent state effort." (Bob Mann, Blanco's Communications Director flatly denies Mr. Brown's description: "That is just totally inaccurate. Everything that Mr. Brown needed in terms of resources or information from the state, he had those available to him.") Brown also reports that his field officers are reporting an "'out of control' situation" in New Orleans. According to Brown, he informs the White House early and repeatedly that state and local officials are overwhelmed and that the response is going badly, saying a dozen times, "I cannot get a unified command established." The White House, contend that Brown's communications are "not filled with the urgency" that he later recalls. [New York Times, 9/15/2005] Other officials report chaos within FEMA's Washington headquarters. It becomes "a zoo" at the height of the disaster, according to one longtime FEMA official. "Everything is being done by the seat of the pants," the official will say. "It's like reinventing the wheel. We're starting from scratch as though no planning had even been done before." Chertoff representative Russ Knocke, however, will insist that FEMA's response is relying upon long-standing plans and goes "much smoother than the response to the Sept. 11 attacks." "Because of the National Response Plan," Knocke will say, "there is no confusion, no chaos, there's just immediate action and results." [Los Angeles Times, 9/11/2005]

At some point this evening, city officials say they might open the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center as a temporary refuge to shelter an estimated 50,000 people made homeless by the storm. [Times-Picayune, 8/30/2005] FEMA officials will later say that they knew nothing of this plan.

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 8:00 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans, Louisiana

Louisiana Governor Blanco calls President Bush this evening. Reportedly, she tells him, “Mr. President, we need your help. We need everything you’ve got.” Blanco later recalls that Bush was reassuring. However, the conversation is rather vague, according to later reports. Blanco does not specifically ask for a massive intervention by the active-duty military. “She wouldn’t know the 82nd Airborne from the Harlem Boys’ Choir,” says an official in Governor Blanco’s office (who wishes to remain anonymous). [Newsweek, 9/19/2005] Blanco will later acknowledge that she does not “give him a checklist or anything.” [Time, 9/11/2005] “Do we stop and think about it?” she will ask. “We just stop and think about help.” [New York Times, 9/11/2005] Blanco’s aides will contend that she should not have to provide a detailed list under the circumstances: “That’s like telling a drowning man that you are not going to help him until he asks for a life preserver.” [Time, 9/11/2005]

Apparently, only moments after saying that the New Orleans levees have not been breached, FEMA Director Michael Brown tells Fox’s Bill O’Reilly the opposite: “... Now we averted the catastrophic disaster here, but a lot of the things that we anticipated that we practiced for are coming true. We now have breaches. We now have water moving into New Orleans. And you know what? It’s going to be a long time to get that water back out of New Orleans.” [Fox, 8/29/2005]

Louisiana Governor Blanco tells CNN’s Larry King that entire parishes in southeastern Louisiana are underwater, with many homes flooded to the rooftops, leaving thousands stranded: “[W]e’re in full search and rescue operation. We have pulled hundreds of people out of the waters. As we speak we’ve got boats moving up and down streets that, well, canals that used to be streets and people are beckoning our rescuers.” Asked whether Louisiana has adequate National Guard troops on hand, Blanco responds that, “We have an extraordinary number of National Guard members who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan but we have activated 4,000 members. We have some support coming from Texas as well. Our Guard is really helping us in extraordinary ways in bringing in a lot of search and rescue equipment in the morning. We will be in full swing tomorrow. We believe there will still be hundreds more people.” [CNN, 8/29/2005]

Timeline: Monday, August 29, 2005, 10:30 PM CDT

Location: New Orleans, Louisiana

FEMA Director Michael Brown appears on ABC’s Nightline. When Ted Koppel asks Brown about the massive flooding in New Orleans and the need to drain the water from the city, Brown responds as follows: “[A] few years ago, I decided that FEMA really needed to do some catastrophic disaster planning. And so, the President gave us the money to do that and the first place we did a study was in New Orleans. And as you know, you’ve probably heard everyone talk about the bowl. What happened is, you know, Max Mayfield at the National Hurricane Center was right. We had a huge storm surge that came across those levees. I’m not sure we had breeches but we certainly had

some areas where there's some leaks and flooding continuing to occur. That water all gets in. We now have to rely upon the pumps. We need generators to do that pumping because the power was out. And some of those pumps may or may not fail. So, it's going to be a long, tedious process to now get that water back out so we can then even start rebuilding homes, let alone let people back into them." Asked to compare the damage in New Orleans to elsewhere in the region, and even though he has just acknowledged the widespread flooding in the city, Brown responds as follows: "[W]hat happened—believe it or not, I think New Orleans is the one that got off easy because Katrina moved to the east 30 or 45 miles. And that prevented what we would have seen had it hit the bull's eye. And that is widespread flooding, breaches of all of the levees. And you would have seen downtown inundated also." [ABC, 8/29/2005]

It's pretty obvious in hind-sight that Mike had NO FISKING CLUE, and was in the colloquialism, 'talking out of his ass'.

Shane

EVENT - Vinnie's Looters

Timeline: Tuesday, August 30, 2005, 8:00 AM CDT

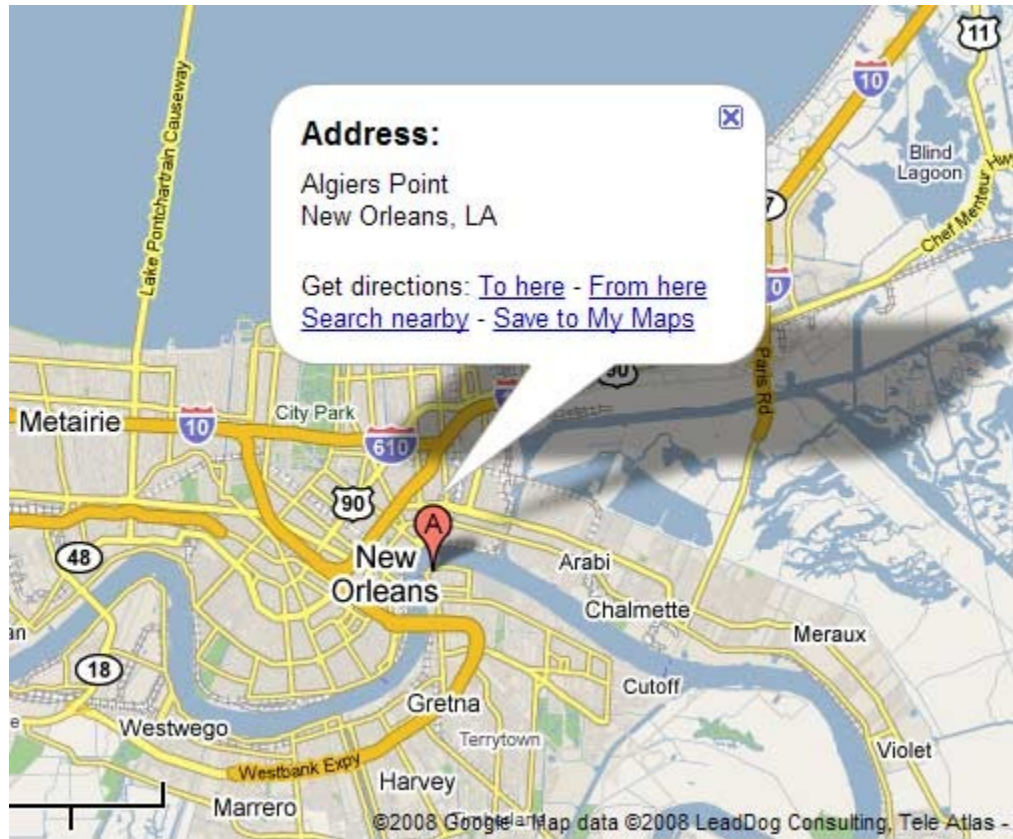
Location: South East Louisiana

No, I didn't sleep late. I want to start here, however, and we'll talk about what I am doing in Houston a little later. Here's a photo for you from this morning:



That's the down ramp off the I-10/I-610 split, which you can easily find on the map below by finding the word **Metairie** and following I-10 just past the **10** symbol. You see where it makes that right hand turn down towards the city? That's the spot.

I want to leave the rescuer's to their work for now and go visit a place that is actually high and dry. Algiers Point, Louisiana.



I'd tell you that Algiers Point is any other neighborhood, which it is. Some time in the 1970's, Algiers Point grew out of the larger community of Algiers and the community began to focus on the historic value of the neighborhood. Everybody started fixing up their houses and showing some local pride. They managed to form the Algiers Point National Historic District. Some of the houses and other buildings predate the American Civil War, but most were built right after the 1895 fire which destroyed hundreds of structures in the area. The neighborhood has several bars, restaurants, and coffee shops. It is a neighborhood full of character - and characters. One of the characters we're going to meet is Vinnie Pervel, who has become somewhat famous in some circles. He is surrounded by a cast of other characters - most of them his neighbors, but some others of unknown origin.

The Austin American-Stateman ran an article on September 12, 2005, which documents an interview that provides a dramatic view of today's events. I have reproduced the article below.

Armed Militia Protects its New Orleans Neighborhood

By BOB DART [bobdart@coxnews.com]

Cox News Service

Monday, September 12, 2005

NEW ORLEANS -- The Algiers Point militia put away its weapons Friday as Army soldiers patrolled the historic neighborhood across the Mississippi River from the French Quarter.

But the band of neighbors who survived Hurricane Katrina and then fought off looters has not disarmed.

"Pit Bull Will Attack. We Are Here and Have Gun and Will Shoot," said the sign on Alexandra Boza's front porch. Actually, said the woman behind the sign, "I have two pistols."

"I'm a part of the militia," Boza said. "We were taking the law into our own hands, but I didn't kill anyone."

She did quietly open her front door and fire a warning shot one night when she heard a loud group of young men approaching her house.

About a week later, she said, she finally saw a New Orleans police officer on her street and told him she had guns.

"He told me, 'Honey, I don't blame you,' " she said.

The several dozen people who did not evacuate from Algiers Point said that for days after the storm, they did not see any police officers or soldiers but did see gangs of intruders.

So they set up what might be the ultimate neighborhood watch.

At night, the balcony of a beautifully restored Victorian house built in 1871 served as a lookout point.

"I had the right flank," Vinnie Pervel said. Sitting in a white rocking chair on the balcony, his neighbor, Gareth Stubbs, protected the left flank.

They were armed with an arsenal gathered from the neighborhood: a shotgun, pistols, a flare gun and a Vietnam-era AK-47.

They were backed up by Gregg Harris, who lives in the house with Pervel, and Pervel's 74-year-old mother, Jennie, who lives across Pelican Street from her son and is known in Algiers Point as "Miss P."

Many nights, Miss P. had a .38-caliber pistol in one hand and rosary beads in the other.

"Mom was a trouper," Pervel said.

The threat was real.

On the day after Katrina blew through, Pervel was carjacked a couple of blocks from his house. A past president of the Algiers Point Association homeowners group, Pervel was going to houses that had been evacuated and turning off the gas to prevent fires.

A guy with a mallet "hit me in the back of the head," Pervel said. "He said, 'We want your keys.' I said, 'Here, take them.' "

Inside the white Ford van were a portable generator, tools and other hurricane supplies. A hurt and frustrated Pervel threw pliers at the van as it drove off and broke a back window.

Another afternoon, a gunfight broke out on the streets as armed neighbors and armed intruders exchanged fire.

"About 25 rounds were fired," Harris said.

Blood was later found on the street from a wounded intruder.

Not far away, Oakwood Center mall was seriously damaged in a fire caused by vandals.

"We were really afraid of fires. These old houses are so close together that if one was set afire, the whole street would all go up," Harris said. "We lived in terror for a week."

Their house is filled with antique furniture, and there's a well-kept garden and patio in back.

"We've been restoring this house for 20 years," Harris said.

There are gas lamps on the columned porch that stayed on during the storm and its aftermath. The militia rigged car headlights and a car battery on porches of nearby houses. Then they put empty cans beneath trees that had fallen across both ends of the block.

When someone approached in the darkness, "you could hear the cans rattle. Then we would hit the switch at the battery and light up the street," Pervel said. "We would yell, 'We're going to count three, and if you don't identify yourself, we're going to start shooting.' "

They could hear people fleeing and never fired a shot.

During the days, the hurricane holdouts patrolled the streets protecting their houses and the ones of evacuees.

"I was packing," Robert Johns said. "A .22 magnum with hollow points and an 8 mm Mauser from World War II with armor-piercing shells."

Despite their efforts, some deserted houses in the neighborhood were broken into and looted, Pervel said.

Now the Algiers Point militia has defiantly declared it will not heed any orders for mandatory evacuation. The relatively elevated neighborhood area is across the Mississippi River from the city's worst flooded areas and has running water, gas and phone service.

"They say they're going to drag us kicking and screaming from our houses. For what? To take us to concentration camps where we'll be raped and killed," Ramona Parker said. "This is supposed to be America. We're honest citizens. We're not troublemakers. We pay our taxes."

"It would be cruel for the city to make us evacuate after what we've been through," Pervel said.

The roof was damaged on her house, and the rains left "water up to my ankles," Boza said. So she moved into her mother's home nearby.

She said she still has 42 bullets to expend before she'll be forcibly evacuated.

"Then I hope the men they send to pull me out are 6 feet 2 inches and really cute," she said. "I'll be struggling and flirting at the same time."

A Reuters report of Wednesday, September 21, 2005 by Andy Sullivan provides some additional detail. Again, I have reproduced the report below.

After the storm, came the carjackers and burglars. Then came the gun battles and the chemical explosions that shook the restored Victorians in New Orleans' Algiers Point neighborhood.

"The hurricane was a breeze compared with the crime and terror that followed," said Gregg Harris, a psychotherapist who lives in the battered area.

As life returned to this close-knit neighborhood three weeks after Hurricane Katrina, residents said they hoped their experience could convince political leaders to get serious

about the violence and poor services that have long been an unfortunate hallmark of their city.

"I think now it's a wake-up call," Harris said.

After the storm, the neighborhood association had to act as law enforcement and emergency response unit as city services collapsed and the police force was unable to protect them.

Citizens organized armed patrols and checked on the elderly. They slept on their porches with loaded shotguns and bolted awake when intruders stumbled on the aluminum cans they had scattered on the sidewalk.

Gunshots rang out for days, sometimes terrifyingly close.

For Harris, the first warning sign came on Tuesday, the day after the storm, when two young men hit his partner, Vinnie Pervel, over the head and drove off with his Ford van.

"A police car drove up behind me and saw it happening but he didn't do anything," said Pervel, who heads the 1,500-household neighborhood association.

Then residents heard that police vehicles were being carjacked and looters were taking guns and ammunition from nearby stores.

"We thought, 'Perhaps this is going to get really ugly,'" said Gareth Stubbs, a marine surveyor who lives across Pelican Street from Harris and Pervel.

A Texas woman who runs a Web site called Polimom.com served as a link between those who stayed and those who had left. With her help, they stockpiled an arsenal of shotguns, derringer pistols and an old AK-47.

They were put to use the next day.

"Some looters came up and pulled a gun on the wrong group of men," said Harris, who said he did not fire a gun himself and declined to say who else was involved in the battle.

"Two men were shot right there," Harris said, pointing down the street as he watered his rose bushes. "One was shot in the back, the other in the leg, and the third I was told made it a block and a half before he died in the street. I did not go down to see the body."

The next day a nearby stockpile of chemicals exploded, shaking the houses and sending a fireball 300 feet into the sky. The fire burned for another three days, Harris said.

"For five days we didn't need FEMA, the Red Cross or the National Guard," Harris said. "The neighborhood took care of itself."

Vinnie didn't just make it into the paper. He's also a chapter in a book:



Thank God I Had A Gun True Accounts of Self-Defense By Chris Bird

You can visit the website and find a copy of the book by clicking on the cover image. It's a pretty good book.

Chris gives us a little preview, and I have reproduced some of the Privateer Publications web page here, and interspersed my comments in red.

“What Katrina demonstrated is that we’re just one disaster away from anarchy. Many police officers simply fled the city and many who remained were part of the problem, not part of the solution. And anyone who tried to ride out the storm was left to fend for themselves,” says Bird. “And that includes protecting themselves from the thugs who were stealing cars and roaming the streets looking for dry, empty houses to loot.”

Chris starts off a little dramatic, but what he says is essentially true.

Bird points to the story of Vinnie Pervel, a gay rights activist & local contractor in New Orleans who up until the aftermath of Katrina, didn’t like guns and was uncomfortable having a weapon in the house. After being hit in the head and carjacked, Vinnie became a believer in armed self-defense. “That experience transformed Vinnie,” says Bird. “He went home, found an old shotgun that belonged to his partner and for the next few weeks, Vinnie, his family and a neighbor stood armed watch over their home and street to protect themselves from the criminals who were trying to take advantage of the disaster. They knew the police weren’t going to help them; they had to rely on themselves for protection.”

This provides a perspective not available in the original article. Vinnie is not a man prepared. He doesn't even own his own gun.

Vinnie got out of his van and put his keys in his pocket. He noticed a lavender-colored Geo Prism, driven by a young black woman, had pulled in right behind him. He was paying attention to the Prism when he became aware of two young black men at the front of his van. They were about nineteen years old, both wearing long white T-shirts that reached to their knees, black jeans, and white tennis shoes. They were about Vinnie's height – five feet eight inches – and a little lighter than his hundred and sixty pounds. Both wore their hair in long cornrows.

The Prism drove off as the men started asking questions. Vinnie recalled the conversation.

“How do we get out of here? We want to evacuate,” one of the men said.

“If you go right down this road here you can catch the ferry by the ferry landing; they're evacuating free,” Vinnie said.

“You don't realize, we have children.”

“They take children as well.”

At that point, Vinnie noticed that one of the men was holding one hand behind his back and he could see the end of what looked like a sledge-hammer handle.

This definitely provides more information than the original article. If we take it at face value, Vinnie has a very serious lapse of what we call 'situational awareness'. How can he be so aware of so many details, but manage to completely miss two young men getting out of a clown car with a big stick?

We also get a better glimpse of Vinnie's attackers. If we are to believe the account at face value, then perhaps these aren't just random thugs. Maybe they aren't bad guys at all. Maybe they're just desperate people willing to do desperate things to get themselves and their children out of a bad place. We're going to revisit that before long, but while a lot of the sensation revolves around bands of roving thugs and professional 'gangs', if you examine each account what you frequently find are common people driven to desperate means out of desperate circumstances. I say that not by way of any excuse for their behavior - on the contrary I'm telling you this because I want you to be ready to encounter such people after any SHTF event because you *will* encounter them. Just ask Vinnie.

He was afraid the men meant to harm him so he turned away from them intending to yell to a group of about a dozen friends and neighbors who were at the end of the block. The group consisted of men, mostly armed with shotguns, and their wives. Vinnie knew them because they were all members of the neighborhood association.

Now we add to the mix a group of neighbors, standing around with shotguns and chewing the fat with their wives. Less than a block away, they all fail to notice Vinnie's plight.

While Vinnie is getting murdered, they have no watch strategy at all. A couple of neighbors with guns do *not* a militia make.

Before he could open his mouth, one of the young men hit him in the back of the head with his fist, and Vinnie went down. As he fell, he hit the front of his head on the edge of a brick planter that was on the sidewalk. The other guy stood over him with a three-foot maul in his hand.

OK... Pop quiz. From reading all the accounts, was Vinnie hit with a handle, a mallet, or with a fist?

“Just stay down. We want your truck, the keys to your van,” the man demanded.

Is this the behavior of hardened thugs?

Vinnie told him the keys were in his pocket. One of them took them, got into the van and cranked it up. As soon as it was running, the other guy ran to the passenger side and got in, and the van took off south on Belleville. As they drove away, Vinnie’s fear gave way to anger.

“At the time I had a pair of pliers in my hand ‘cause that’s what I was cutting the gas off with. I just stood up and I flung the pliers and knocked out the back window of the van,” Vinnie said.

“I hit right in the middle of the back window and busted it out. The guys both turned around and looked at me because they thought I was shooting at them. They almost hit a tree but they just managed to turn left, go down another block, and turn right.”

Vinnie yelled to the group of friends and neighbors for help. They piled into a truck and drove towards him but Vinnie was chasing after his van and had made it another block when he saw a black police officer in uniform sitting in an unmarked white Crown Victoria. He told the officer the two men had stolen his van and hit him in the head. The officer said he would go after them.

“He turned around and went the other way.”

The cavalry manages to arrive late. We’ll deal with the behavior of the officer later.

He was the last police officer Vinnie and his friends would see for ten days.

Is anyone genuinely surprised by that? You shouldn’t be.

“I went home, told Gregg what happened, and he freaked out. My Mom freaked out, and I guess I freaked out ‘cause I went upstairs, and I got the gun, and went on my front porch upstairs off my bedroom. I sat on my second-floor balcony with the gun.”

Suddenly this doesn't seem like the competent neighborhood militia we heard about in the first article. It's a bunch of people freaking out. People with guns. Traumatized people. People unprepared to face the evolving nightmare.

The assault and the hijacking of his van was the defining moment for Vinnie Pervel. In those few minutes, he went from being a supporter of gun control to an ardent supporter of the Second Amendment. He realized why ordinary law-abiding citizens needed guns to defend themselves. He had just seen that residents could not rely on the police for protection or even to stop crime when it was happening. He was hearing random shots being fired, mostly across the river. He knew that with the break down of law and order, ordinary citizens would have to provide their own security. And that didn't mean burglar alarms and deadbolts: it meant guns...

Very prosaic, but nearly guaranteed to be bullshit. Vinnie didn't suddenly become a Second Amendment supporter, able to quote the wisdom of great men in the defense of a philosophy of self determination. Vinnie was scared shitless and decided to arm himself because S was HTF and his self preservation instincts over-rode his liberal philosophy. I actually wonder why Chris includes this in his book because Vinnie is such a poor example. Vinnie can't say, "Thank God I had a gun!", because when it counted, he didn't. Oh... Wait... Maybe that's why Chris includes him in the book... Interesting.

I put this page here because I want you to think about something. You may not like guns, and I respect that. I'm not going to try and change your mind today - but I want you to start thinking about Vinnie. I also want to point out that 90% of the people who come to my 'self defense' and 'rape prevention' seminars have recently been the victims of violent crime. Only rarely do people take *any* personal responsibility for their own safety and security until something bad happens to them. You aren't going to learn very much from such a seminar, no matter how much effort I put into it. Why do I do it? Because those seminars serve the same purpose as this web page - to start you at least *thinking* about the fact that one day the only person between a desperate person and your family, your health, or your wealth might be you.

As part of your ACTION Plan, you need a solution set for this problem.

So, how about it? What do you do when 911 stops working? You better answer quick. Here come some more thugs, and this time they want *your* car - and they think your 15 year old daughter is pretty cute too, and maybe they'll take her for a little ride.

Shane

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

You have come to the end of the blog as it exists now. I try to add a few pages each week, so check back soon for more. I only get to work on this after my kids are in bed at night, and sometimes work progresses slowly. Please be patient.

LAST UPDATE: 17 OCTOBER 2008

