

Thoughts on Personal Resiliency

Part 1: Why prepare?

March 2022

After reading about this stuff for a few decades, listening to Chris Martenson and others, and some long talks with friends, I have come up with the following guidelines or suggestions concerning personal resiliency. I hope it helps.

The basic premise is that if something disruptive happens, you want to be able to sail through it without having to leave your home (or wherever you think is your safest place). You probably won't go into town, unless it's a crisis, like a visit to the emergency room, or to help someone in need. For most people, their safest place is usually their home, so I'll assume that's what you're working with.

Another basic premise is that the most probable cause of a bad scenario would be the electrical grid going down, which is essentially the life-blood of everything else. I seem to be attracted to understanding this stuff, probably because my major in college was Industrial Design, with a minor in Environmental Studies. From the start, I was always trying to understand how the technological, industrial world worked, in conjunction with environmental concerns.

The main two ways the grid could become inoperable is: 1) weather occurrences or natural disasters and 2) acts of terrorism, which could be regional, or even parts of the globe, in the case of an EMP attack.

The German government has advised its citizens to be prepared for a 2-week shutdown of the grid. They should try to prepare to survive for 2 weeks with no electricity, and of course no gasoline, financial services, communication, food, water, etc. Without the electric grid, everything pretty much stops working.

Having some cash available is a good idea, but has limited value, because without electricity, no stores will operate. Even if you could buy some stuff with cash, the food stores will empty in about 3 days, probably less with panic buying. Gas pumps work on electricity, and could be reserved for emergency vehicles, if the pumps can operate with emergency back-up generators that are already in place.

So, my plan is to be able to sail through all of this without leaving home, unless I want to, probably to visit or help friends in some way.

I also feel that being prepared is doing the local community a service, as I will be at home, and that's one less frantic person burning up gas on the highway, heading to get emergency supplies at Walmart or Costco. Think of the problems you might encounter there!

A few of the main things to consider include: home safety and security, basic medical care, food, water, communication, and transportation (your car, which also has multiple other good uses). The most essential and difficult to figure, is a source of power for your home. Electricity is the key, with some way of providing it being essential. The more you have, the better. Everyone should prepare for a reduced technology lifestyle during an emergency. Batteries and candles are a small start.

If you have gas in your car it can be used for: heating or cooling, sleeping in, news on the radio, light to read, charging your cell phone, charging a battery which could be used in your house for small stuff, and of course transportation (emergency room visit, helping friends, bringing or getting food or water etc.).

Food and water are easy to prepare for, but one of the biggest questions is how to produce at least some electricity for personal use. If you can't do it for your home, then the car offers some help.

Circles of support are important, with like-minded people. Different people may have different areas of expertise which can be helpful. I'm working on two lists of people: 1) the people I would consider to be kindred spirits that I could communicate with during an emergency (if cell phones are working) and 2) the people I could work with that are within a 15-minute walk from my home. I'm working on getting monthly dinners going here at my place for some neighbors. On my road we have 3 neighbors, with 3 different areas of expertise. I can grow food and fix things, my other neighbor is good with animals and animal products, like goat milk and cheese, and eggs. My other neighbors are both nurses and grow some food as well. I am getting friendly with a filmmaker, who is our connection to the Thunder Mt. community next door. On the other side, I have a friend and neighbor who is a local activist who has lots of local contacts. We can also walk between all the properties without going on the main road, and we can walk to the Cane Creek Reservoir, which is nice to know. If we can't get potable water from our wells, we could get water from the reservoir and filter it at home with a non-electric water filter.

The easiest way to start with food and water that I have found is this:

1-Water-the most essential. You can buy food grade 5-gallon containers and fill them with water and a few drops of a solution they give you that will keep it bug free for up to 5 years. They stack, and can also be used practically, like pillars for shelving or legs for tables, if your space is tight. An easier way is to go to Food Lion and buy 2.5-gallon jugs of water for \$2 apiece. They have built in handles and spouts which make them really nice to use. I bought 12 of them for \$24 and have enough water for a month (1 gal per person per day). I also have 4 of the 5-gallon containers, for another 20 gallons.

2-Food-go "deep pantry". Look through your pantry, give away anything that you will never consume, like that can of water chestnuts that you bought years ago, and have never used. Look at your current stores of food, and get more of them. If you have 4 cans of chicken soup, get 12. If you have 5 lbs. of rice, get 20 lbs., etc. A really easy way to prepare is to simply buy a lot of rice and cans of soup, beans, tuna fish etc. You can

easily get enough for a month. You may get bored with your choices of cuisine, but you won't starve.

I would also stock any "comfort foods" that you might need to feel better about your situation, like coffee, chocolate, etc. And don't forget about the dog or cat, if you have one.

As far as cooking goes, if you have a large propane tank like I do, you can keep using it for cooking. I also have a fireplace/gas heater, which can operate without electricity, so I can heat a room or two without electricity if need be.

If you have electric appliances, you could buy a grill or stove for use outside with a propane cylinder. You want to have 2 cylinders, even for normal use, so if one runs out, the other one is right there. Remember, "two is one, one is none" in emergencies Another option is to simply buy a Coleman camp cook stove, with small gas cylinders. Use either of them somewhat regularly, so you know how to use them in an emergency. Either one is pretty cheap, and can make a big difference between eating food cold or having a warm meal and some coffee or tea.

While food and water are pretty easy and cheap, electricity is the biggest decision for most people. You can buy some small portable solar panels and battery systems that are a great idea, but you have to check what you can really power with them. It's generally not much, but may be enough to make some sort of difference. Make sure to see what you can really get, beyond charging up your phone or a small light. Your car might do the same thing, plus you can get multiple uses at the same time-heating, light for reading, radio for news, charge the cell phone, possibly charge a battery for home use. You can also get a small coffee/hot water maker that plugs into the cigarette lighter for making hot water for drinks or meals. Newer cars may have a 110-volt outlet that you could actually run as a power source into your house.

A generator is nice, but check them out. And remember, you have to store gasoline with them, which is not always fun or safe. I have a Honda generator because it is extremely reliable and only weighs 45 lbs., which means I can take it with me in an emergency. I could also bring it to someone else's house. I don't mind storing gas on my property at the farm, far from the house. If you live in town, you might consider storing 5-10 gallons of gas just for hurricane season and winter. I would replace the gas every 4-6 weeks (fill up your car) and re-fill them until the end of winter, and then let them store empty.

I also have a propane generator, and am working on adding some batteries to my grid tied solar system, for added backup. I'm well prepared, but most people can get by with far less. The important thing to remember about energy is that even a small amount is infinitely better than none in an emergency. And "two is one, one is none..."

As far as levels of emergency, I assume that there would be no grid for some period of time. I would call a short-term emergency a time period up to a week. A mid-level would be up to a month. A long-term emergency would be over a month or two.

My thinking is that it's best to prepare for a mid-term emergency, up to a month. Everyone should always be prepared for a short-term up to a week. However, if you're not, you'll probably get by one way or another, and can always drive somewhere to get help or supplies or stay there for a few nights.

I wouldn't worry about a long-term emergency, because if we lost the grid for a year or so, most of us would probably die, or want to die.

So, I prepare for a month or two.

I would suggest preparing for a solid week and see what that entails. Then I would go for a month and see how that feels. I would start with water, and then start buying food gradually, always on sale if possible. You can actually save money doing this, as food will generally be cheaper now than in 6 months. This is a type of insurance that you actually use, especially if you remember to rotate stuff. I spend about \$5,000/year on insurances that I hopefully never use, and am glad that I have them. You can probably spend 1/10th of that, \$500, for food insurance once, and actually use it!

You can also get some freeze dried or dehydrated emergency buckets of food. I have some, but you have to remember that if you go from your "normal" diet to a strictly emergency one, you might have some digestive problems, either diarrhea or constipation...most people recommend going "half and half", with half of your diet being regular food and half of it from the emergency supplies.

In summary, I would start with water, then food, then make some sort of decision about an energy source. I would keep my car and house in good shape. During hurricane season and the winter, I always keep my cars at 3/4 full or better, especially if I hear that severe weather is around the corner.

When I think about friends and neighbors I wonder if I know them well enough that I could sleep on their sofa for a few nights (or vice versa), without if feeling weird. If it would be awkward, maybe I need to get to know them better now, or make another choice.

There's a whole lot more, but more later ...