**Prepping 101**

Introduction

In a perfect world you would have everything you need and all the space to store it securely. But alas, we are still of this world. So being prepared comes down to choices and priorities. The first thing to do is to develop a strategy or plan. What are you preparing for?

Don’t get preppers envy. The only difference between new preppers and advanced preppers is time. Everyone starts at the beginning. Pick the most likely event, say a power outage, and start from there. Here are some events and tier categories for prepping. Obviously, this is not a comprehensive list.

Tier 1: Minor (Short-Lived) Disturbances

 Event Duration

* Local Power Outage A few hours to a couple of days
* Moderate Earthquake (Water, Gas & Power Out) A few days to a week
* Construction / Accident (Power Outage or Water Out) A few hours
* Civil Unrest (Can’t get into town) A few hours to a couple of days
* Supply Shortage (Run on a few items only) A few days to a couple of weeks

Tier 2: Moderate Disturbances

 Event Duration

* Major Earthquake or Eruption A few weeks to a month or two
* Supply Shortage (Run on many items) A few weeks to a few months
* Pandemic A few months to a year

Tier 3: Major Disturbances

 Event Duration

* War w/ EMP or Cyber Attack A few years to many years
* Global Severe Pandemic A few months to many years
* Economic Collapse A few years

The idea is to start preparing for the more common lower-tiered events and to continue to build your preps to the major disturbances.

The goal here is survival. What do you need to continue living when services and/or supplies are not available? It is different for every person. So, you must make an assessment and plan accordingly.

Consider your limitations as well. How much space will I need? Is it suitable for storage? How will I keep it organized? What are my energy requirements and energy backups? How do I keep a low profile during an emergency? How secure is my home? How do I maintain my transportation? How do I communicate with family and friends?

Basic Requirements

Most preparedness sites list a few basic requirements: Water, Food, Shelter & Security. There are subcategories to each. Let’s start with Water since you can only go 3 days without water before you suffer severe injury/death.

Water is heavy and takes up a considerable amount of room when stored. You also need to keep it in a cool and dark environment for long term storage to extend the shelf life. That said, the best prep for water is a natural source of drinkable water nearby. Other than that, you will need to find a source and transport the water to a purification station or store the water for use in an emergency. An individual can use about a gallon of water a day. This is for drinking, cooking, hygiene and cleaning. It is also advisable to have multiple sources of water in the event of an emergency. You may want to store water and be able to find, transport and purify water. Where are water sources close to you? Can you get to them? How will you transport the water? Do you have a means of purification and storage? Is your purification system reliant on electricity or gas? Is your transport system reliant on electricity or gasoline? How secure is your route to/from your water source? Can you take advantage of natural rainfall and a collection system? Gravity water purification systems are pretty good prepping tools. Look at Berkey Water Purification Systems. Rain collection systems can be good as well, especially in the Pacific Northwest. See if your place is suitable for a gutter diversion. They cost about $40.

Now that you have addressed your water needs, let’s eat! What are your dietary requirements? Are there foods you can’t eat? How many calories/day do you need? How flexible is your diet? You may need to eat to survive in the short-term without regard to long-term health effects. Do you have enough food stored for Tier 1 events so that everyone in the household gets what is needed? Do you have frequent guests or neighbors that may need assistance? Are your food preps dependent on electricity or gas? Do you have the ability to cook without public utilities? If you store freeze dried foods, you may need to add more water to your daily needs. We have a mixture of freeze dried, canned, home canned and frozen foods as our preps. Start out saving enough food for a short-term emergency. You can do this pretty easily by picking up an extra something each trip to Safeway or Costco. Make sure you are storing stuff you will eat. That way you can rotate your stored items out of inventory and replace with newer items.

There are other parts of the food category that are important but not considered as food. They are medications and dry goods. You can ask your physician to give you a 3 month buffer of prescription medications you need to survive. You should also store a limited amount of over the counter meds that you use consistently (Tylenol, Tums, allergy meds, etc.). Dry goods like toilet paper, Kleenex, feminine products, paper towels, trash bags etc. are all items that in an emergency disappear off shelves quickly. Again, only store what you normally use. Give yourself a couple of months of backups and rotate items out.

Shelter is the next item and the easiest thing since you have shelter already in your home. The prepper thing is to consider what if I had to relocate? Where would you go and how would you get there? What would you bring along if you had to “bug out?” These things you should consider and prepare for ahead of time. When the authorities come knocking and ask you to vacate your home for whatever reason, you should already have these decisions made and some kind of checklist prepared so you can efficiently be on your way with what you need.

Security you already have down as well. The biggest factor in securing your home is to not look like you have anything of interest or that you are an easy target. The second factor is to be able to defend yourself when the bad guys come to get your stuff anyway. It is obvious but worth saying that your home may be your last line of defense. None of us stand much a chance out on the street with little or no resources, shelter or supplies. So defending the home is a kind of do or die situation.

The last thing isn’t one of the basics but **IS** incredibly important, and that is Community. There are a couple of factors here. Get to know your neighbors. Who do you know that can provide additional resources (medical, mechanical, transport, security, etc.)? How can you contact them? It may be that phone services are disrupted depending on the event. How will you communicate with people to get help or even news? Most preppers for these reasons get a HAM license. It is relatively easy to do and a HAM radio nowadays costs about $40. With radio, you don’t need any additional infrastructure to communicate. You have your own equipment, and the person at the other end has theirs. That’s almost all you need. The missing piece here is a communications plan. I can go over that with you in person if you’re interested. You should also consider how to protect your electronics from an EMP. Again, that is a conversation based on your specific needs, equipment and space limitations.

Lastly, it is unlikely that even the most prepared individual has everything they need. To fill the gap you need to be able to barter for goods and services. Commodities like gold and silver are popular but impractical. How much gold for a loaf of bread? But you likely have things other people may need. Bullets are a great example. They will be in demand, small and in short supply. Wine and cigarettes are other examples of good barter items. Have some of these tucked away and ready if you need to trade off grid.

That pretty much does it. Start with the basics and develop a plan, then execute the plan. Easy! Don’t forget to have fun.