

# *SurviveInPlace*

## Lesson 11

### Lessons Learned From Katrina

By

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## **Natural Disasters vs. Man-Made Disasters**

Katrina illustrated one of the unfortunate new realities that we have in our entitlement-minded America: The response of criminals and entitlement-minded people who have nothing to lose to a disaster may be worse than the actual disaster.

There is no doubt that Katrina had a devastating effect on Louisiana and Mississippi, but many of the biggest lessons that we can learn from the event had to do with what happened afterwards. Most of the horror stories of Katrina were man-made. On one hand, that fact sickens me, but on the other hand, it means that the lessons can be applied to all disaster situations... and that the people who went through the experiences didn't do so in vain.

### **Timing is Everything**

The first lesson that we can learn from Katrina is the importance of timing. Regardless of the disaster, if you decide to bug out, you must make sure that it is still a practical option before you actually leave the driveway.

People who left New Orleans early had no problems at all. The roads were clear, gas stations had gas, food, and drinks, and hotel rooms were available a few hours away.

As an example, in the days before Katrina made landfall, the travel time from New Orleans East across the Twin Span Bridge was only 15 minutes.

As more "last minute" evacuees started leaving town, the travel time increased to 17 HOURS. The problems weren't "linear," but rather compounded as time went on as a result of cars running out of gas, accidents, and a lack of available fuel. From talking with people who were there, it was like someone slammed a door shut.

There were several factors that compounded the problem, but one of them was that many evacuees started out with near-empty gas tanks and were prepared for a 15-20 minute drive across the bridge. They were not prepared for 17 hours with their engines idling. As their cars ran out of gas, they blocked the cars that DID have gas.

One of the biggest factors came into play between T-24 hours and T-12 hours. It was during this time that almost every gas station within 100 miles of New Orleans ran out of gas (and stopped getting resupplied). One man reportedly paid \$1,000 for a tank of gas during this time. In addition to running out of gas, convenience store supplies were wiped out (including toilet paper for the bathrooms).

If you are ever in a mass evacuation like this, it will be important to keep your food/water close to you and hidden. Also, eat/drink discretely so that you don't get wiped out by people around you who are in need and see that you have food and water. If your vehicle permits, it would be smart to have multiple small bags/containers of food/water so that, if necessary or advantageous, you can show people a single small bag/cooler and appear to have very little.

If you have a problem with the mentality of not sharing your survival provisions with other people who are in need, that is fine. Just make sure to game it out in your mind in advance. You need to decide whether it would be easier for you to watch your loved ones or strangers complain that they are hungry/thirsty. Don't wait until you are in the middle of a disaster situation to address these questions. Predetermining your decisions for these kinds of moral dilemmas when you are well fed and rested will allow you act decisively and efficiently when you're operating under stress.

As an example, imagine being stuck on the Twin Span Bridge for 17 hours. People will not live or die of dehydration based on whether or not you share your water during a 17-hour situation. They may "suffer", but they will not die if they keep their heads screwed on.

On the other hand, YOUR strength, YOUR ability to see, YOUR brain's ability to communicate with YOUR muscles, and YOUR brain performance will start dropping noticeably when you are dehydrated by as little as 2 quarts (or liters) if you weigh 100 pounds or 4 quarts (or liters) if you weigh 200 pounds. Keep in mind that you will lose this amount of fluid to sweat and bodily functions in as fast as 1-3 hours if you are hot and under stress.

The same rule applies to food. People around you may "suffer" some if you don't share your energy bars with them, but they've got weeks before they are in danger of dying of starvation. On the other hand, if you run out of food because you shared too much of it, you are going to start experiencing an increase in irritability and a loss of mental and physical function due to low blood sugar.

The loss of "high speed" functioning due to either dehydration or low blood sugar is not something that you want to have happen in a survival situation...especially if you're surrounded by hungry, thirsty, irritable people.

Just remember that the people around you made a conscious or unconscious decision to NOT be prepared, just like you made a proactive decision to be prepared. Unless you are a few days into a disaster, giving away your survival provisions won't make the difference between life and death for someone else, but it will hinder your ability to operate at 100% if you run out of food or water.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't share anything with anyone. If you have your provisions split up, you can easily show someone a small cooler with a few bottles of water, fruit, sandwiches, bars, etc., and tell them, "I don't have much, and I don't know how long we'll be here, but you can have some." You can still be a "good guy"—just do it smartly.

### **Don't Believe Everything That You See/Hear On TV**

Many of the breakdowns of post-Katrina were related to communications, and one of the biggest problems was misinformation spread by the media.

TV, radio, blog, and newspaper reporters were all too happy to publish any horrible story that they were told. HORRIBLE things happened after Katrina, but nothing like what was reported in the news. There were reports of horrendous crimes at the Superdome, including babies with slit throats, but they were never found.

There were also reports of "thousands" of bodies floating in the streets, "snipers" shooting at helicopters, and cannibalism.

There WERE bodies floating in the streets, and I have a link on the resource page to pictures, but there weren't "thousands." There were stupid thugs shooting at helicopters because they were stupid thugs, but they weren't "snipers." And there were no substantiated reports of cannibalism.

Unfortunately, there was a real consequence to this irresponsible reporting. Steve Sailor from iSteve.com said it best with this observation,

"Sure, rumors outrun the reality, but think about what it would be like to be a cop or fireman who is supposed to go out in a boat and rescue people. You're putting your life vest on because there's a chance that some desperate survivor in the water might pull you in. But then your wife rushes in and says there are reports of ~~snipers~~ (thugs) shooting at rescuers, and she insists you put on your bullet-proof vest instead. But that's heavy and would drag you right down to the bottom. So, you say, screw it, I'm calling in sick." – Steve Sailor

*(changing "snipers" to "thugs" was done by me out of respect for true snipers.)*

If you were a police officer and you knew that this kind of activity was going on, would you stay home and protect your family and your neighborhood, or would you go out and try to protect people who might thank you by shooting you?

Compound this with the fact that 80% of New Orleans Police Officers reportedly lost their houses to the storm and subsequent flooding and 2/3 of them basically quit the department after the levees broke, and you've got a serious staffing problem.

These news reports had consequences. They emboldened criminals, they broke the already fragile will of much of the New Orleans Police Department, and they made ordinary citizens more scared than they needed to be.

The takeaway here is that you need to have a good mental filter in place when you listen to the news after a disaster. Don't believe everything that you hear, and don't let news that you don't have any control over affect you.

Remember that it is the job of TV and radio stations to keep you tuned in for as long as possible, by whatever means necessary. It's not their job to help you survive or to give you accurate, actionable information that you can use to survive. It's a bonus when they do this, but their primary purpose is to keep eyes and ears tuned to their station and watching/listening to their ads.

It's important to realize that all of this mis-reporting was most likely the result of simple sensational journalism and a thirst for ratings rather than a coordinated, malicious effort of putting out mis-information. We'll discuss this more when we cover the mental aspect of survival, but if you don't have control of how your mind deals with news, it will react to sensational journalism as if it is true, regardless of whether it is or not.

### **Adapt and Overcome**

Seventeen television stations and 79 radio stations were forced off the air by Hurricane Katrina. In an example of adapting and overcoming, FEMA still managed to get pertinent information out to residents telling them about dangers to be aware of, locations of shelters & aid stations, and how to deal with waste/water issues. How'd they do it? By printing up flyers and delivering them door to door.

Unfortunately, in what looks like a rare success for FEMA, they screwed this up as well. You see, firemen from across the country volunteered to go to New Orleans and Mississippi to help out in the wake of Katrina. FEMA decided that they all needed to get "trained up" in Atlanta before being "deployed" to their assignments.

Their training in Atlanta included 2 days of training on workplace sexual harassment issues and when they did get deployed, these firemen were tasked with handing out flyers rather than rescuing people or providing medical care.

### **Don't Expect Help If Communications Are Down**

While some of the communication problems involving the media actively made the aftermath of Katrina worse, there were many other communications issues that caused problems as well and served to emphasize the point that you need to be able to take care of yourself after a disaster.

Starting at the local level, 52 emergency (911) communication centers were disrupted. Some had to be evacuated due to flooding and some simply did not have adequate backup power. This was the result of not having generators, having too small/few generators, not having enough fuel, or having the generators in locations susceptible to flooding.

Even in the areas that DID have operable 911 centers, many radio repeaters were inoperable, crippling police, fire, and EMS communication.

Quick clarification: Radio repeaters repeat radio transmissions. Police, fire, and EMS use repeaters so that a responder can use a relatively weak radio to communicate with a dispatch center that may be several miles away. When they start transmitting, their signal is picked up by the repeater and rebroadcast from a higher elevation and with more power.

Cross band repeaters do the same thing, but they allow agencies on different frequencies to communicate (fire/EMS/police/feds/different jurisdictions).

With 911 centers, repeaters, cross band repeaters inoperable, and many vehicle mounted radios flooded, interagency communication stopped as well.

In the days between when most regular emergency communications were down, four of the most reliable forms of communication used were courier, shortwave radio, satellite telephones, and plain old family radios. Many agencies did not have enough shortwave radios, satellite telephones, family radios, or batteries on hand.

As State, National Guard, FEMA, Coast Guard, private security, and outside first responders started to arrive, and shelters started to be set up, the communications problems intensified. Not only were the different agencies operating on different frequencies, they used different jargon when communicating. Among other

problems, local people used landmarks when giving directions that had no meaning to outsiders.

I'm telling you about these problems for a couple of reasons:

1. After a disaster, assume that you're on your own, even if the city is full of police, fire, and EMS.
2. If someone (police, fire, EMS) tells you they're going to contact someone to help you, don't believe it until you see it. The intent may be there, but in reality they may not be able to guarantee help with so many constantly changing variables.
3. If you have the tools and skills and choose to volunteer, you could be of tremendous value as a radio specialist who can bridge the communication gap between agencies.

In addition, outside first responders and private security will likely need local communication help, and relief shelters will need assistance reaching EMS & police if they don't have the appropriate equipment. A good parallel to this is the relationship between private security forces and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in war zones. The NGOs typically want to come in and "help," but they need/want a local to help them with local knowledge, communications, and security.

### **Good Luck Getting Medical/Trauma Help**

For several days after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, only one hospital, Ochsner Medical Center, was able to take new patients. Other hospitals were used as evacuation points, but weren't able to accept new patients due to staffing, water, food, and electricity issues.

Built in 1951, the founders of Ochsner Hospital knew that it was only a matter of time before the levees would fail, water would be compromised, and the city would NEED a working hospital. As a result, Ochsner drilled its own redundant wells, installed redundant generators that were higher than the levee, and built up food stores. Most importantly, the entire structure was built up high enough so that flooding from the levees would not be an issue.

(If you work with a company or organization that needs to keep working effectively after disasters, Ochsner is a great case study. They supplied food, & lodging for employees and some families. Not to mention that they figured out how to handle regular payroll for those working in advance as well. They ramped up staffing for multiple shifts before the storm so that they could stay operational through the storm, after the levee broke, and until order was restored. It also is a great study

into the cost of doing the right thing after a disaster. Ochsner provided over \$80 million in un-reimbursed medical care after hurricane Katrina, even though other parish hospitals that were not operational got reimbursed by FEMA.

Most other hospitals in New Orleans and Mississippi were not so well prepared.

One of the big problems that they faced was recordkeeping. Some hospitals in Mississippi lost ALL electronic and paper record keeping capacity. What this meant is that 49% of the patients entering the EMS system were not able to be tracked by family members and there was no record of their prior care/treatment/diagnosis as they moved through the EMS system. Many were moved by the busload to other states without tracking or without notifying family.

One close protection specialist from New Orleans told me about one of his friends who got hurt (in a coma). His girlfriend of 7 years took him to a parish hospital for help, but wasn't able to get any updates on his condition after he was admitted. Even though they owned a house together, the hospital refused to tell her the condition of her (for all intents and purposes) husband, or even where he was. It turned out, they transported him to another state almost immediately without telling her. It took her over a week to find someone who could (illegally) tell her how he was, where he was and how to see him again.

Once patients got to "evacuation hospitals," fuel shortages caused waits of several hours to a few days for transportation to a hospital out of the damaged area that had the space and manpower to actually admit them.

In all cases, whether operating as a hospital or as an evacuation point, hospitals had severe security problems dealing with the "walking worried" who were looking for friends and loved ones. Lack of accurate records meant that the only way to know whether or not the person you were looking for was at a particular hospital was to go looking for them.

In most cases, these walking worried were honestly looking for family and friends. In other cases, they were thugs who used the opportunity to steal drugs and supplies. In all cases, the sheer number of people passing through caused patients to have a lower level of care and increased their chances of catching secondary infections.

Hospitals had as many as 20 times more patients as normal and with their normal supply channels cut; they quickly ran out of drugs and supplies. With the help of local law enforcement, some hospital employees improvised and overcame the problem by scavenging local pharmacies until shipments from outside sources started arriving.



Why am I telling you about breakdowns in the medical system? Because in addition to serving as another warning not to depend on others after an emergency, I want to stress the importance of avoiding activities that could put you in the hospital, such as physical conflict, driving in areas without traffic signals, running out of needed medication, and physically exerting yourself if you normally live a sedentary life.

By practicing conflict de-escalation, slowing down/stopping at intersections, pre-planning your medication, and staying physically fit, you can avoid many of the most common reasons that caused people to need EMS care after Katrina.

### **Stay Away From Shelters**

I am going to start out by saying that I'm not going to be critical of the people who ran shelters, worked at them, or volunteered at them after Katrina. They were in a no-win situation and, for the most part, did a great job under terrible circumstances.

That being said, post-Katrina shelters suffered from being under-staffed and lacking necessary security, food, water, bedding, medical supplies, hygiene supplies, and toilet facilities. Add to that an incredible lack of support from local government.

Churches offering shelter after Katrina were overrun with refugees that were "unloaded" at their door by city officials. After taking in the refugees, the shelters were on their own. They didn't have radios or any way to contact police or EMS other than sending a runner, and their emergencies had to be prioritized with all of the other emergencies coming in at the time. This meant that shelters had to provide their own security, medical, counseling, food, cooking, water purification, and janitorial services.

As with any population, there were refugees at the shelter who were alcoholics, smokers, illegal drug users, and people who took drugs to control mental illness. I'm not grouping these people together for any reason other than the fact that they all shared the common link of increased irritability when the substances that their bodies were dependant on were no longer available.

The result was fighting, people throwing chairs through stained glass windows at churches, toppling statues, defecating on floors and walls, and a general lack of control.

In one case in Mississippi, SWAT teams had to be called in to restore order because people who ran out of medications required to keep their condition under control began to be a threat to themselves and others.

Another serious problem with the shelters is universal. Any time you put a large group of people in close proximity, add stress, lack of sleep, and inadequate bathroom facilities, you're going to have an increase in sickness. This only compounds the existing problems.

If you are in a disaster situation where shelters have been set up, try to avoid them at all costs, unless you are choosing to help at one.

Once you enter a shelter as a refugee, you will lose your belongings, weapons, and any tools that the shelter workers think you could use to defend yourself (or hurt them). The sick irony is that you may not get any more food or water than if you stayed away from the shelter and fended for yourself. You'll also have to put up with HORRIBLE attitudes, whining, people with entitlement mentalities, and your sleep will likely be interrupted by snoring, arguing, kids blasting music, crying, the threat of violence, and other interruptions that you wouldn't have if you simply holed up on the street somewhere with others you trust and took turns sleeping.

After Katrina, shelters were so overrun that many didn't have any record of who was there or who had been there. Families who were split up for intake sometimes got bussed to completely different shelters, with no record of where their child/spouse/elderly parent was sent. The lesson here is that whatever you do; don't put yourself in a position where you voluntarily get separated from your family or group.

The areas surrounding the shelters were also very dangerous. This is where a certain contingent gathered, including criminals who refused to give up their weapons, people who got kicked out, and drug dealers looking for customers. In a survey of 100 drug users who were in shelters after Katrina, most said that they had no trouble finding their drug of choice within one block of the shelter.

Ironically, most pot smokers said that they stopped using after the storm so that their thinking wouldn't be impaired.

If you live close to a structure that has been declared a shelter area after a disaster, you should seriously consider relocating to a safer location as soon as possible...preferably to the home of someone else on your mutual-aid team.

### **I'm From The Government. I'm Here To Help.**

Centralized approaches to disaster relief failed miserably after Katrina. As an example, there were over 100 helicopters flying over New Orleans within 48 hours of landfall. They were flying 24/7 saving people, but FEMA still hadn't given agencies the green light to start flying and was actually telling first responders to stay away. The 100 helicopters were the result of Coast Guard, National Guard,

and other helicopter owners completely ignoring FEMA and deciding to just take care of business.

More insidious was Mayor Nagan's order to disarm citizens and force residents to leave their homes. These next couple of paragraphs are very difficult for me to write, as most of my close friends are either military or LEO.

For the most part, the Army, and various National Guards respected people's rights to stay in their homes. News reports and videos on YouTube reported that the National Guard DID force people from their houses, but the actual videos that are labeled as "National Guard" show local police entering the houses.

At least one National Guard officer appears to have told his troops to use intimidation, including drawn weapons, to "encourage" people to leave their homes. However, they weren't authorized to actually force people out. I don't agree with this stance, and it troubles me that the officers in charge appear to have blatantly ignored the Constitution, but for the most part National Guard units did a good job of restoring order.

With the prevalence of "hack job" reporting and video editing, this may or may not have occurred. Again, videos of Guard soldiers and police were often spliced together in Michael Moore fashion to create stories in the viewers' minds that may or may not have actually happened.

There are videos online that take comments out of context that make Guard troops look very bad. I encourage you to dig a little bit every time you see a video like this. After watching about 6 hours of YouTube videos on Katrina, I was able to quickly recognize sound bites that were taken out of longer interviews. In one case, a soldier was asked about shooting fellow US citizens. In the sound bite version, his response was set to music and they make it appear as if he was looking forward to shooting Americans. In the full interview, he was lamenting about how he'd rather be in Iraq where the threat was insurgents and how much the thought of being forced to shoot another American troubled him.

I AM defending the Guard troops. It is an emotional, visceral stance that I take and I want to be clear about it. If anyone sends me substantiated, verifiable information about Guard troops, I will update the lesson and include it for future students.

Unfortunately, law enforcement was another story. There is much dispute about how widespread law enforcement abuse was, but there is no doubt that it happened. There is one widespread story of a frail lady named Patricia Konie who was assaulted, forcibly removed from her dry, stocked home, sent to South Carolina and not allowed back to her home for a month. While the officers who

assaulted her were California Highway Patrol officers, local law enforcement was complicit in covering up the offense and sending her out of state.

Local law enforcement also entered homes and disarmed residents, stopped cars and disarmed occupants, and stopped boats and disarmed passengers. In some cases the firearms were returned undamaged, some cases they were returned damaged or destroyed, and in other cases they were not returned at all. In at least one case, the firearms were beaten against the pavement until the guns were inoperable. I've got a link to a video interview with some of the people who had their guns taken on the resource page.

I encourage you to watch it yourself so that you when you talk with people who doubt that anything really happened like this after Katrina, you can tell them with conviction that gun confiscation DID happen, that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment was violated, the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment (search & seizure) was violated, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment was violated (due process). People weren't arrested and taken to a prison where they were guarded and fed...they were simply detained and disarmed. Watching the interviews will also give you real life situations that you can use to game your response in case you are in the same situation.

If you want to keep your guns in a post-disaster situation, here are three of the actions you can take if you are confronted by anti-self defense/anti-constitutional law enforcement that don't involve conflict:

1. Live in a state that prohibits gun confiscation when a state of emergency has been declared or push for the legislation to be passed in your area.
2. Lie, hide your guns, and/or give one (a decoy) to the police and hide others, etc. This may or may not be illegal.
3. Get on the other side of the law by joining your local Sherriff's auxiliary, search and rescue, joining your local CERT (Civilian Emergency Response Team), or getting licensed for Armed Private Security in your state. None of these are guaranteed to give you a pass when you're dealing with an Orwellian law enforcement official, but they will improve your odds considerably.

Another strategy in this vein is to team up with the family of a law enforcement officer so that you can claim that you have your weapons to protect the family of a fellow officer. Again, there is no guarantee that it will work, but you will want to exploit as many emotional triggers as possible to find the one(s) that will allow you to stay armed.

## **Thank God For Bubbas And Red Necks**

Shortly after word got out about the levee failing, New Orleans was quickly swarmed by people from the bayous and swamp country in shallow bottomed boats. It wasn't a coordinated effort, they just all knew that people would be in need in the city and they wanted to help. Some of these Cajuns barely spoke English and most people from the coasts would call them "Bubbas," "Red Necks," or "Hillbillies" out of contempt. I'd call them that too, but I'd call them that out of respect and shared values.

These guys were heroes. They rescued people who were stuck in trees, stranded on rooftops, and trapped in attics. They didn't need anyone to tell them what to do...they just went out and took care of business.

After any disaster, you'll likely see the "Bubbas" and "Red Necks" coming out of the woodwork to help those around them. They're good people to befriend, both before and after a disaster. Ironically, these good Samaritans had a hard time finding shelter, food, water, and fuel. Most of the hotels that were operable in New Orleans had a policy of not letting ANYONE in after the storm. It made sense, because they would have been overwhelmed if they'd started letting people in, but it is still unfortunate because they turned away volunteer rescue workers as well.

If there is a local disaster in your area and Bubbas and Red Necks start showing up to help, do what you can to help them, whether it's giving them a safe place to sleep on your back porch, food, water, gas, or anything else you can spare without sacrificing Operational Security.

### **Criminals Will Come Out Of The Woodwork**

Books, TV shows, YouTube videos, and independent films have been made about the horrible crimes that happened after Katrina. I'm not going to detail them here. There were car-jackings, boat-jackings, murders, racial attacks (in all directions), robberies, smash and grabs, rapes, beatings, etc. Unfortunately, none of those were uncommon for New Orleans before Katrina, and they're still quite common today. Basically, thugs did what thugs do when they think they can get away with it...they steal things and hurt people.

### **Withdrawal Sucks**

One way to capitalize on this is to stock up on cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and/or Nicorette to barter with after a disaster. Keep in mind that the average smoker smokes 15 cigarettes a day and that withdrawal symptoms are worst during the first week and are exacerbated by stressful situations. After Katrina, 52% of smokers increased their smoking by more than half a pack a day on average.

If you're a smoker and you think this is cruel, go stock up on cigarettes or stop smoking now so you don't have to go through withdrawal in a disaster situation. I don't mean it to be cruel...it is what it is...a legal way to stock up on something that will likely go up in value after a disaster that has an illogical, emotional component to it. As a bonus, cigarettes can't be used as a weapon on you (like bullets,) make the person violent (like alcohol), or take away from your family (like food). Cigarettes will also always have barter value where dollars, silver, or gold may not be practical.

Keep in mind that as high as 15% of the general population is on anti-psychotic drugs. That means that several people taking this course will either be on anti-psychotic medication or live with people who do. To you, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to have as much medication on hand as possible. You know how you are off of your medication and a disaster is not a good time to be at anything less than 100%.

If you are able to eliminate any drugs that you're currently taking without serious negative effect, you will be better off. I want to strongly encourage you to consider going to the Mercola Clinic in Chicago to see if they can help you control your condition without prescription medication. The URL for the clinic is: <http://naturalhealthcenter.mercola.com> . If you can't get off of your medications, than have a talk with your doctor and try to get "ahead" on your prescriptions, even if it means paying out of pocket.

## **Riding Out The Disaster**

This is, in part, the theme of the entire course, but there are a few quick lessons that were made particularly clear after Katrina.

- Scavenging is not looting. Some people may disagree with me on this, but I consider "looting" to be an act of personal enrichment or taking someone else's survival provisions. I have created a two-question test that I will use in urban survival situations: 1. Is there any chance that the owner will return and need this item for survival? If no: 2. Do I need this item for survival? So, the only case when I would take something that wasn't mine would be if the owner had obviously abandoned the item and I needed it for survival. Otherwise, I would not take someone else's belongings.

I spoke with two private security contractors whose daily routine included finding abandoned cars and siphoning the gas from them to power the generator at the hotel they were protecting. It was relatively easy to do without harming anyone...they simply found a car that had been destroyed by

a tree, knock on the door of the house that it was in front of (if it still had a door) to make sure that there weren't people still living there, and take the gas.

This is much different than stealing food from a house where people are living, taking wide screen TVs from appliance stores, or stealing gas from drivable cars that people are using.

- Regardless of the disaster, if you retreat to your attic, have a way to cut through your roof if exiting through the house may not be possible. Several dozen people were trapped in their attics after Katrina for 2-3 days. Others died, and one man survived 18 days trapped in his attic. I have a link on the resource page for a roof hatch called the "Katrina Hatch" that may be a good solution for you if you live in a hurricane-prone area (or it may inspire you to create something similar).
- Generators attract looters. UrbanSurvivalStories.com tells about one thief who stole 36 generators after Katrina. He would take a lawnmower on low idle in the middle of the night, put it by a home generator, idle it up over the course of 10 minutes or so, and then take the generator without the homeowner knowing what happened. There are a few solutions to this problem, including chaining your generator, using dogs as a sentry, running the generator in your garage and venting the exhaust to the outside, installing or fabricating a muffler, buying/fabricating a generator cabinet that is secured and helps muffle the noise, or improvising an alarm system.
- Adults with special needs, children, and the elderly all got transported to general shelters without identification, medical information, contact information for relatives, or required medications. This happened to hundreds of people and was not isolated to a particular city, race, age, or organization.

In some cases, the medications were seriously needed. When the patients' drug levels started dropping and they began showing signs, the personnel at the shelters had no idea what they were dealing with. Violent encounters occurred, including at least one where SWAT needed to be called in to restore order, and the situation could have easily been prevented with Medic Alert bracelets or dog tags.

If you, an adult relative, or someone you take care of becomes dangerous to themselves or others or non-communicative when they are off of their

medications, consider getting them to start wearing either a medic alert bracelet or necklace, if they aren't already. In addition to their name and condition, it should have your name and emergency contact information. Try to have both a primary and secondary means of contact on the tag(s), if possible.

## **Protect Your First Responders**

One of the biggest problems that we've seen after recent hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, the 9/11 attacks, and the Oklahoma City bombing is that first responders may accomplish superhero feats, but they are still human and subject to sleep, food, and water requirements. In addition, they have families that they worry about during any downtime that they get.

If you're not currently a first responder, there are a few things that you can do to help the people who are:

1. Get medical training. CPR/First Aid at a minimum and EMT/OEC/WFR training if possible. Any treatments that you can provide to yourself, your family, your team, and your neighbors will take the load off of centralized treatment areas.
2. Get CERT training. This will give you a broad base of post-disaster skills that, again, you can use to help yourself, your family, your team, and your neighborhood.
3. If you have or intend to get firearms, take formal training to learn how to use them. The more you can do to be able to take care of yourself and your family, the better. Said another way, the more self-reliant people there are in a city, the lighter the load will be on first responders.
4. As you get to know first responders who live close to you, ask them if they would like you to look after their family/pets/house in the event of an emergency. Most families who have addressed survival issues have only one key person. In first responder families, this one key person will likely be taking care of others rather than being able to take care of their own family. Your help will allow them to mentally "check off that box" until they get the rest of their family up to speed and could be a welcome relief.

There is an assumption that neighbors will take care of each other, but having something definite in place will allow their sub conscious mind to relax. While they are risking their life to help others, they'll be thinking, "Why am I here...my family needs me."

5. If first responders are operating in your area after a disaster and you can't actively help them, offer them food/water and ask them if there is anything



else you can do for them. You could even go door to door in your neighborhood asking for people to pitch in. This would build a sense of community as well as possibly give you good intelligence on how your neighbors are doing and what supplies they have.

Get to know the disaster protocol for first responders in your area. One smaller jurisdiction near a large city that I spoke with has the following plan in place.

*When a state of emergency is declared, ALL first responders are to report to work and are expected to hot-bunk until the state of emergency is over. They are expected to have their families trained and able to take care of themselves. A local school will be available for all first responder families to go to, should they wish. Shelter, cooking supplies, water, fire, security, and basic medical care will all be provided for first responder families so that the first responders won't have to worry about them.*

*Police, fire, & EMS are expected to have the same attitude as if they were in the Guard/Reserve, got activated, and got deployed for an unknown period of time.*

More common is the following, especially in larger jurisdictions: *Anyone who is working will continue working for the duration of the emergency. Anyone who is not working will first get their family squared away and then report for duty for the duration of the emergency. Families are on their own.*

If you live in an area that is small enough to go with the first plan, you may want to see if local authorities would be open to you helping them put such a plan in place in return for being able to take part in it during a disaster situation.

If you are serious about implementing a plan like this in your area, please contact me. The jurisdictions that have taken this approach are pretty tight-lipped about it and I may or may not be able to put you in contact with them. The decision is not up to me, but I will help you to the extent that I am able.

That wraps it up for this week. We've got two more weeks for the "formal" course, but you've got several more lessons coming. I'm not going to spill the beans right now, but I will tell you that you are going to get significantly more than what you bargained for ☺

This week, start identifying first responders in your neighborhood and talking with them as time/opportunity permits. When you feel that it is appropriate, mention how you were reading about police, fire and EMS after Katrina, how many of them were worried about their families while they were working. Ask if they have a plan in place for taking care of their family while they are working during/after a

disaster. If they don't have one, tell them that you would be more than happy to help them out if it is ever necessary.

Make sure to head over to the resource page for this lesson at <http://urbansurvivalplan.com/483/katrina> , take a look at the resources for this lesson, and comment on what you thought about it.

See you in 7 days!

God Bless,

David Morris  
Publisher, SurviveInPlace.com