



MEMBERS UPDATE

November 2019

HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF AGAINST CHEMICAL IRRITANTS DURING CIVIL UNREST

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES THAT ARE DOOMED TO FAIL

THE BEST MILITARY SURPLUS ITEMS TO BUY (AND SKIP)

When this single most vulnerable resource you use every single day is taken out,
Life for everyone will fall apart and chaos will reign.



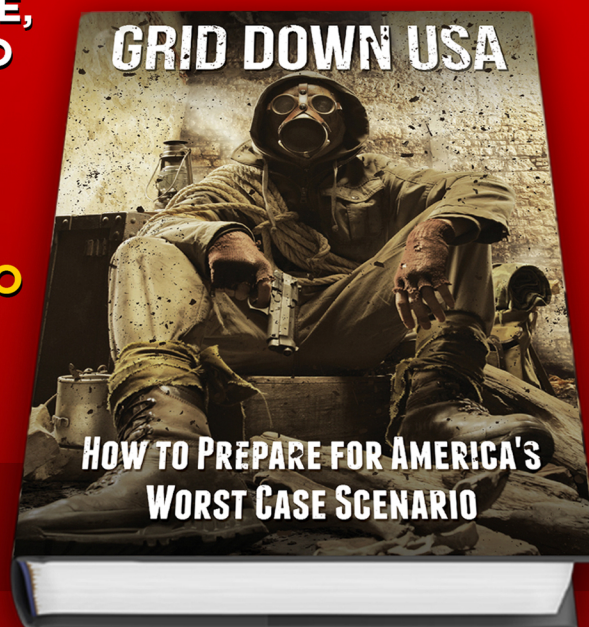
**ECONOMIC MELTDOWN, SYSTEMIC COLLAPSE,
PANDEMICS, FOOD SHORTAGES, WATER AND
SANITATION BREAKDOWNS, VIOLENCE AND
RIOTS WILL ALL HAPPEN AT THE SAME TIME**

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How to Protect Yourself from Chemical Attacks

As instances of civil unrest continue to rise in both the US and Europe, so does the likelihood you could end up downwind of tear gas, homemade stink bombs, or even large-scale chemical attacks. In this article, we've identified the 7 most likely chemical irritants and how to protect yourself against their nasty symptoms.



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10 Survival Strategies Doomed to Fail

While it's true that nobody definitively knows how to be prepared for an Armageddon-like event, there are far more bad survival ideas lurking around on the internet than good ones. These ideas, despite their popularity on survival message boards, are all doomed by shortsighted and often wishful thinking.



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Best Military Surplus Gear

We frequently get questions about military surplus gear here at the NSRA. And, typically, the underlying assumption is that this gear is clearly better than the stuff at the local sporting goods store. Well, is it? We've made a list of which items to buy at the military surplus store and which ones to skip.

DEALING WITH CHEMICAL IRRITANTS DURING CIVIL UNREST



When many people think about civil unrest, they envision news scenes from other countries. The reality, though, is that instances of civil unrest have been on the rise in the U.S. (and throughout Europe) during the past two decades. That's part of the reason so many police departments have adopted military-style weapons and tactics.

Now, imagine the type of civil unrest that could arise nationwide during a catastrophic SHTF event – especially if it was tied to the government. Of course, whether you're preparing for a SHTF scenario or just a small outbreak of civil unrest in your hometown, many of the guidelines for protecting yourself and your health remain the same.

We're going to take a close look at some of the chemical irritants you could be exposed to if you get stuck inside a civil protest that has escalated to civil unrest. Remember: it doesn't take much for a peaceful gathering of concerned citizens to turn into a battle against the police. As previous incidents have shown us, one person being foolhardy enough to throw a bottle at the police can turn into a widespread riot.

1. TEAR GAS

2 Police departments often use tear gas to break up civil unrest. The official word is that this chemical

irritant is just that – an irritant. The truth, though, is that tear gas can, and has, led to permanent injuries and even death. In most cases, this has been the result of a protestor getting hit in the head by a tear gas canister.



The single best way to protect yourself from tear gas is by wearing a properly fitted gas mask that covers your entire head. Alternatively, you can wear a respirator that covers your mouth and nose, along with form-fitting, thick safety glasses.

What you shouldn't rely on is a bandana or other type of cloth that's soaked in water, apple cider vinegar, lime, lemon juice, charcoal, or any other substance. It's a myth that this will prevent tear gas exposure. It's best to stay away from putting toothpaste under your eyes or inhaling onion, too.

If you're exposed to tear gas, there are a few ways to reduce the harsh irritation. First, be aware that symptoms can start within 30 seconds of exposure and last up to 15 minutes. You may experience:

- Severe burning of the eyes, mouth, throat, and skin.
- Coughing, choking, and retching.
- Uncontrollable flow of tears and mucous from eyes, throat, and nose.

To reduce and stop these symptoms, take the following actions:

- Close your eyes and hold your breath if you see tear gas canisters headed your way.
- Leave the scene immediately. It's best to head to higher ground and face into the wind, if possible.
- Remove any contact lenses or glasses immediately.
- Don't remove any clothing right away. Air it out on your body instead.
- Don't touch your face (or anyone else's) with your hands.
- Use a ton of cold water to flush out your eyes.
- All exposed skin should be rinsed with cold water and soap.
- Wrap an ice pack in a towel and place it over your eyes and face.

Some people swear by cold milk as another helpful way to rinse their eyes and bodies. However, experts caution this could be dangerous because milk isn't sterile. Water and saline are always the best options.

2. PEPPER SPRAY

Although pepper spray is technically a form of tear gas, it's important to know that it can be much more dangerous. In fact, at least 61 people died in the U.S. during a five-year period due to police usage of pepper spray. Per the ACLU, at least 27 people died in police custody in the mid-1990s after being exposed to pepper spray.

Again, a gas mask is the absolute best way to protect yourself. And, as previously noted, soaking a bandana

or towel in any substance isn't going to be strong enough to prevent exposure. In some cases, going this route can actually make your symptoms worse.

Exposure can lead to many issues, including:

- Temporary blindness for 15-30 minutes.
- A burning sensation across your skin for up to 60 minutes.
- Upper body spasms.
- Uncontrollable coughing for up to 15 minutes.
- Difficulty breathing or speaking.

Unlike tear gas, pepper spray's primary agent (capsaicin) isn't water soluble. In other words, no amount of water will be enough to wash it off your skin or to clear out your eyes. Instead, do the following:

- Give it time, as that's the only proven method for reducing the pain associated with exposure.
- Don't touch any affected areas on your body (or anyone else's).
- Use Sudecon decontamination wipes.
- Wash the affected areas with baby shampoo. Be careful not to get any in your eyes.

Being hit by pepper spray will make you feel like your body has been lit on fire. It can also cause the sensation of bubbling or burning eyes. Try to remember that your odds of death or permanent injury are low. If you can remind yourself that your eyes and skin aren't actually on fire, this may help you get through the hour of symptoms with less fear and emotional trauma.

3. SKUNK STINK BOMB

One of the newest crowd control methods to come to the U.S. is a stink bomb dubbed Skunk. If you're thinking "how bad could a stink bomb be," then you've clearly never been exposed to this noxious assault on your nose.

Anyone who is exposed to Skunk is going to be extremely unhappy. That's because, as Reuters described it, the vile odor is like taking "a chunk of rotting corpse from a stagnant sewer, placing it in a

blender, and spraying the filthy liquid in your face.” Others have described it as a mixture of rotting flesh and human excrement, or a mixture of rotting meat, an open sewer, and very dirty unwashed socks. In other words, this stuff is beyond nasty.



Side effects of exposure include:

- Nausea, retching, or vomiting due to the smell.
- Skin that will reek like a Skunk stink bomb for days.
- Social/relationship issues due to the duration of the stench.
- Risk of incarceration even days after the event due to the telltale stink.

So, how do you protect yourself or become decontaminated? It's practically impossible, but there are a few options.

- Cover every last bit of your skin and hair with something thick and impenetrable before exposure (like we said, it's practically impossible).
- Get your hands on the secret removal soap. Unfortunately, this can only be ordered by approved law enforcement customers of Mistral Security. It's so secret, in fact, that they don't even have it on their website's product list. So, yeah...good luck with that.
- Wait several days for the stink to wear off. The more you were exposed, the longer this process will take.

You can try the typical odor-busting techniques that are used after an actual skunk sprays someone, but we doubt that a tomato juice bath is going to bust through

Skunk. The manufacturer says that it adheres to skin like a glue, which is supposed to make it impossible to wash off without the special decontamination soap.

Skunk may not make your eyes and skin feel like they're burning, nor does it have any risk of death (well, aside from people deciding they simply can't take the smell anymore...). However, it's such a horrific experience that many people would probably prefer the temporary effects of tear gas over the long-term effects of Skunk.

4. SONIC WEAPONS

Okay, okay; a sonic weapon isn't a chemical irritant. But it has the ability to cause so much damage that we'd be remiss if we didn't mention it in an article about civil unrest.

For the uninitiated, a sonic weapon (AKA a sound cannon) can be so weak that it's only irritating or so strong that it can actually kill. Believe it or not, the entire concept for this weapon came from a paranormal researcher almost 30 years ago. Since then, military and police departments have utilized sonic weapons in a wide variety of ways.

The side effects of a sound cannon will depend on what type is used. The most common issues associated with police-level sonic weapons include:

- Nausea.
- Physical discomfort.
- May drop you to the ground.

If a more severe sonic weapon is utilized, side effects get much worse and may include:

- Severe pain
- Disorientation.
- Busted eardrums.
- Incapacitation.
- Death.

Studies have shown that exposure to sound cannons can cause intestinal and lung damage in mice. Researchers aren't sure yet if the same is true of humans.

How can you protect yourself against a sonic assault? Much like with Skunk, there's not a lot of proven options.

- Sonic sound-blocking technology is available for windows. If you happen to live near an area where civil unrest is highly likely, you may want to look into this option.
- Wear the best possible noise-canceling headphones. These may not eliminate all symptoms, but they should be able to reduce the overall impact of a sonic cannon.

PREPARING FOR CHEMICAL WARFARE



Many law enforcement agencies are interested in the development of a so-called knock-out gas. This has become so prevalent that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) spoke out against the idea in 2013. Despite the ICRC's concerns, interest in this type of advanced crowd control continues to grow.

What would knock-out gas do? If it works as expected, law enforcement could cause mass anesthesia and unconsciousness. And, of course, the risk of serious injuries and even death would be much higher than it is with current crowd control chemicals. Unless you could prevent exposure altogether, you'd be helpless to protect yourself from the side effects.

We also need to consider the possibility that terrorists could target large protests. In this scenario, you could find yourself up against some of the world's most harmful agents of chemical warfare.

Please note that the CDC recommends that you don't induce vomiting if you ingest any of the following chemical agents.

1. SARIN

This nasty, human-made nerve agent has been around since 1938. Sarin has been used as recently as 2017 during a terrorist attack. Therefore, it's entirely possible that it could be used at some point on U.S. soil.

Sarin has no odor, so it can be released without initially causing a panic. This is very dangerous because even a single drop can cause serious issues. The longer you're exposed to sarin, the higher the risk of death becomes. Other potential side effects include:

- Blurred vision and eye pain.
- Runny nose and watery eyes.
- Excessive sweating and/or drooling.
- Chest tightness, cough, and rapid breathing.
- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea.
- Confusion, drowsiness, and weakness.
- Headache.
- Increased urination.
- Increase or decrease in blood pressure and/or heart rate.
- Muscle twitching.
- Convulsions.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Paralysis.
- Respiratory failure.

Unless you're going to keep a gas mask on and your skin covered at all times, there's not much you can do to proactively protect yourself. It can take seconds to hours for the symptoms to begin, making the process of detection harder. Even worse, sarin can be released in the air, in water, in food, or even just on your clothing.

If you begin to exhibit the symptoms of sarin exposure, you can reduce your risk of death by taking several steps:

- Leave the area where sarin was released. It's best to head to higher ground outside.
- Remove your clothing immediately. If possible, cut off your shirt or any other item that would need to be pulled off over your head. Place the clothes inside a plastic bag, and then put another plastic bag over it.
- Immediately wash your skin with soap and water. Rinse your eyes with water for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Get medical help.

2. CHLORINE BOMBS



From 2006 to 2007, chlorine bombs were one of Al Qaeda's preferred forms of chemical warfare. They weren't the first to do this, though, with chlorine bombs dating back to World War I.

The good news about chlorine bombs is that they tend to cause more panic and emotional trauma than long-term physical injuries and deaths. Of course, widespread panic can cause many injuries on its own, and people could also be trampled to death.

If you're in the area where a chlorine bomb goes off, you may experience:

- Burning sensation in the nose, eyes, and throat.
- Dizziness.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Skin redness, pain, and/or blisters.
- Wheezing.
- Watery eyes.
- Coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness.

In some rare cases, chlorine bombs can cause lung failure.

Like with Sarin, you're unlikely to be able to protect yourself proactively. But you can reduce the damage of chlorine exposure by acting quickly.

- Move to higher ground. Any low-lying areas within five miles of the chlorine bomb should be evacuated.
- Don't return to the scene until after it has been fully decontaminated.
- Seek immediate medical assistance.

3. SULFUR MUSTARD

Also known as mustard gas, this chemical warfare agent is named after its characteristic smell. You can't assume you'll smell mustard, onions, or garlic, though, as some canisters of sulfur mustard have no odor at all.

Sulfur mustard became weaponized in World War I. Oddly, it was later used temporarily to treat cancer and the skin condition psoriasis. Today, the sole purpose of mustard gas is chemical warfare.

The side effects of sulfur mustard are rough, but the good news is that only 5 percent of people exposed to it will die. You may be exposed via air contact, skin contact, and contaminated water or food.

Unlike many chemical warfare agents that quickly lose their effectiveness once they go airborne, mustard gas typically lasts up to two days. If it happens to be a cold winter, though, it can hang around the air for weeks or even months. Therefore, you should avoid the contaminated area for a long period of time.

Side effects can take up to 24 hours to appear and include:

- Itchy, red skin that make eventually turn into blisters.
- Eye pain, swelling, irritation, and tearing.
- In some cases, exposure can cause temporary blindness lasting up to 10 days.
- Runny or bloody nose, hoarseness, sneezing, sinus pain, cough, and shortness of breath.

- Fever.
- Nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and vomiting.
- Bleeding, weakness, or infections caused by the decreased formation of blood cells and platelets.

There is no antidote for sulfur mustard. Proactive protection would require a full gas mask and no exposed skin. If you're exposed to mustard gas, experts recommend that you:

- Leave the area immediately and head for higher ground.
- Immediately remove your clothes and, if possible, double bag them in plastic.
- Immediately wash all exposed skin with plain, clear water.
- Flush eyes for five to 10 minutes with water.
- Protect eyes with sunglasses, but don't bandage them.
- Get immediate medical help.

FUTURE CHEMICAL DEVELOPMENTS

As previously mentioned, many police departments are clamoring for a stronger chemical agent to use during times of civil unrest. Additionally, you can be guaranteed that domestic and foreign terrorists are always looking for new, effective ways to harm as many people as possible. Remaining vigilant is vital, as is staying up-to-date with the latest news regarding chemical warfare.

In almost all cases, your best bet for survival hinges on a few specific actions:

- Cover your mouth, nose, and eyes, preferably with a gas mask.
- Rinse the agent off of your body and skin immediately.
- Rinse your eyes with clear water immediately.
- Always use cold water, never hot.
- Remove your clothes and double bag them in plastic.
- Head to higher ground.
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

If you plan to partake in a civil demonstration or protest that has even the slightest chance of turning into civil unrest, you must take proactive steps. Have the right supplies with you. Ensure that you're carrying your ID and insurance card. Keep a charged cellphone on hand for emergency calls. When helping others (and yourself), avoid letting your hands or any exposed skin touch anyone's face.

By following these guidelines and studying the specific tips listed above for each type of chemical irritant, you can greatly increase your odds of not only surviving but getting through the experience without suffering from any serious, life-altering injuries.





SURVIVAL STRATEGIES THAT ARE DOOMED TO FAIL

WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN THE SHTF

Even a cursory glance into the online “self-reliance” or “survival” movement and there’s no mistaking it: There’s a surprisingly large and very active online community interested in these concepts. Truth be told, the best way to survive an Apocalypse is anybody’s guess.

Still, when you get people on the internet thinking about solutions to even a very simply problem (let alone a problem as complicated as surviving a catastrophic event), the only result that’s basically guaranteed is bad ideas. But whereas bad ideas have never been in short supply throughout history, the speed at which these ideas can take hold these days is truly mind-blowing.

8 Part of this comes from the quirky little internet phenomenon that dictates: “Those least qualified on

a subject tend to speak the loudest and with the most authority.”

Seems to us, the underlying problem is that people who really know their stuff usually have better things to do with their time than post on internet message boards and forums, and the people who do spend several hours each day dishing out online advice are most often not worth listening to.

Think about this in your own field of expertise and you’ll quickly see that it’s true. While internet trolls want to argue their points ceaselessly, you already know the facts and have formed an expert opinion on the subject. It goes without saying that you’re less than motivated to argue with a bunch of people who know much less than you do...

Helmuth von Moltke famously said that no plan ever survives contact with the enemy, and you would be wise to bear these words in mind as you develop your SHTF strategy. Expect lady luck to desert you and things to go wrong, and don’t assume that something will work for you because it worked for an A-lister in a movie. This article will cover some of the most popular prepper strategies that simply won’t work. In fact, following them will likely get you killed or drive you crazy.

THE DEER HUNTER

THE MYTH: The woods are teeming with deer and other game, so finding food will not be a problem for preppers with a quality rifle and a sharp eye.

THE REALITY: People who think this way will be easy to spot when the SHTF by their gaunt faces and emaciated bodies. You may be a crack shot on the range, but when did you last fire at a moving target? You can deadlift 200 pounds with ease, but when did you last drag a 200-pound deer carcass over rough terrain and through slippery mud?

Not to mention, it’s highly likely that all of your local game species will be hunted to near extinction pretty quickly when the day comes because just about everybody with a rifle will have the same idea. And let’s not forget the possibility that many of the deer will be inedible due to chronic wasting disease (AKA the zombie deer disease).

If you spend a lot of time in the woods and live far away from urban sprawl, you may be able to feed yourself and your family by hunting and trapping. If you do not, you would be better off abandoning your Robert De Niro fantasies and basing your strategy on locating food sources, storing food, and growing crops instead.

THE ROAD

THE MYTH: Another popular SHTF strategy is to remain at home until things die down and food stores have been depleted before taking to the road.

THE REALITY: The problem is that roads are likely to be death traps with every bend a potential ambush site. Covering any kind of distance will, therefore, involve traveling on foot over rough terrain, and that requires an extraordinary level of fitness. Go on a 20-mile hike carrying a 50-pound backpack, and then imagine doing it every day for months on end. Then think about how you are going to get the 5,000 calories per day that you will need to fuel such an undertaking, and what you would do if you sprained an ankle or fell and cracked a few ribs.

Your strategy should be realistic and based on your skills and capabilities. Starving, cold, and miles from home is not the position you want to be in when you realize that you just can't hack it, so build your strategy around pragmatism and survival rather than adventure.

LONE SURVIVOR



THE MYTH: Many preppers see themselves as rugged individuals who will survive while those around them perish.

THE REALITY: Humans are not really equipped to go it alone. Early humans were surrounded by animals that were larger, stronger, and faster than they were, and they only survived and thrived because they formed tightly knit groups.

Lions and hyenas will not be a problem when the SHTF, but armed groups of survivors looking to part you from everything you hold dear will be. Post-apocalyptic life will not be all that different from the existence our distant ancestors endured on the plains of Africa. And, just as it was then, the group will survive while the lone wolf dies. Being part of a group means that tasks can be delegated, and the emotional support of companions could save your life when the nights are long and cold and hope gives way to despair.

THE WILD BUNCH

THE MYTH: Some survivalists think that all they will need when the SHTF is a shotgun, some shells, and body armor. Their plan is to feed themselves by robbing and killing, if necessary, preppers who have built shelters and stored food.

THE REALITY: This is a plan that will be very short-lived. Anybody considering this strategy should bear in mind that their intended victims will know they are coming and will have spent months or even years preparing a deadly welcome for them. Even if you could get the drop on a prepper's storage facility, you'd still face some serious disadvantages. For instance, your victims will have the homefield advantage. Meanwhile, you'll have no idea what's waiting for you around every corner.

BUNKER HILL

THE MYTH: Dozens of movies have been made about individuals or groups who retreat to well-stocked bunkers when nuclear bombs start falling, aliens invade, or the dead rise from their graves. A defensible bunker or fortified basement filled with food, fuel, and water may seem like a good place to ride out the storm.

THE REALITY: The truth, though, is that this type of bunker will likely be a very dangerous spot to be in, especially if others know about it.

After all, if your basement is filled with dried and canned food, there is a good chance that some of your neighbors will already be planning on robbing you when the SHTF. Hunkering down when the lights start to go out can be a valid short-term strategy, but only if your preparations have been made in secret. Build and stock your stronghold the way prisoners of war built their escape tunnels. Slowly and with great care. Otherwise, you'll fall prey to yet another popular survivalist strategy that won't work in the real world.

SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION



THE MYTH: All you need to keep your family fed is a stockpile of seeds.

THE REALITY: Stockpiling seeds is a smart move for preppers who intend to stay put. However, placing all of one's faith in this strategy could lead to disaster. Crops can be a reliable source of food, but they can also be ravaged by storms, drought, pestilence, and the local fauna. Raising crops is also a hit-and-miss affair, and very few strike gold on their first attempt.

If you plan to grow your own food yet don't have much in the way of horticultural experience, it will probably take you two or three harvests to figure everything out. Seeds and cultivation should be viewed as an investment that will pay off over time but provide few, if any, short-term benefits.

STIR CRAZY

THE MYTH: Preppers often amass an impressive array of gear and gadgets to help them prepare food, purify water, and protect themselves should the

SHTF. With all of this on hand, survivalists believe they have everything they need to survive.

THE REALITY: Sadly, preppers often pay scant attention to keeping their minds occupied. Go without reading materials, television, movies, and the internet for just a few hours and see how crazy you get. Now imagine that is your life. Your mind needs to be fed just like your body, and it has a rapacious appetite.

For every sack of rice you bring in or case of canned beans you put in the basement, get yourself a book or magazine to read. Crossword or Sudoku puzzles and board games like Monopoly or chess are another way to distract the mind from the grim realities of life after the fall.

This is especially important if you will be taking care of children. Youngsters become disheartened quickly when their normal routines are interrupted and they realize that their lives will never be the same. Books about first aid, survival skills, or gardening could provide valuable information as well as a great way to pass the time.

THE BLIND SIDE

THE MYTH: Preppers are often convinced that they know exactly what calamity will make the SHTF.

THE REALITY: Getting stuck on only one SHTF scenario this can leave survivalists vulnerable to the unexpected. After all, a basement packed full of dried food may be a good thing to have if the economy collapses and supermarket shelves are bare, but a surge of floodwater could spell disaster. Careful planning involves accounting for all possible scenarios and having at least rudimentary strategies in place to cope with them.

Instead of focusing only on what you consider to be the primary threat, plan also for possibilities like earthquakes or severe weather events. You should also avoid putting all of your eggs in one basket by placing at least some of your survival supplies in a secondary location. Storage facilities are a good choice as they are generally easily accessible, fairly secure, and solidly built.

HELL OR HIGH WATER

THE MYTH: Some preppers believe that they'll be able to easily find a purifiable source of water when their stored supply of H₂O runs out.

THE REALITY: The human body can live for up to three weeks without food but will die in just a few days when deprived of water. All self-respecting preppers know this and will generally have a sizeable stockpile of potable water on hand. However, even seemingly impressive water supplies can be depleted with alarming speed when they are used for cooking as well as drinking.

Rivers and streams are a reliable source of fresh water, but they may be alive with bacteria and parasites that could have even the most rugged prepper begging for the grim reaper within a matter of days. The best way to avoid this unpleasant fate is to stock up on water purification tablets. These potential life-savers are relatively inexpensive, easy to use, and relied upon by militaries around the world.

Keep in mind that finding rivers and streams isn't always as easy as you'd expect. And even if there is one nearby, that doesn't mean you'll be able to safely travel there on a regular basis. This is another reason for you to stockpile even more water than you already have. It's also smart to consider rain collection barrels.

SURVIVALISTS FITNESS 101



THE MYTH: Many preppers can barely walk half-a-mile without getting winded, yet they let themselves believe that they're in decent shape. Others are aware that they should start working out more frequently, but they figure they'll get up to speed when the SHTF.

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THE REALITY: If you have a heart attack while running around and carrying things that are essential to survival, congratulations: you just lost at playing doomsday, my friend. To be fair, since we've listed all the survivalist strategies that won't work, we should inform you about one that will help you out in crisis. And that's going to be boosting your endurance by improving your physical fitness.

There are many preppers who have all the bases covered when it comes to survival in every area, except for physical fitness. Please don't assume that maintaining a healthy body weight is all it takes to be physically fit. The truth is that some of the skinniest people are in terrible shape, while those who are considered overweight are physically prepared to survive when the SHTF.

So, how can you improve your fitness? Here's a few tips that will make you much more prepared for any type of doomsday scenario.

1. WALK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

No, you don't have to carve hours out of your day to go walking. Instead, you could start skipping elevators and choosing parking spots at the back of each lot. You could also take a walk around the office during your break. To get the best out of this healthy exercise, it's wise to walk for a total of at least 150 minutes per week.

2. START STRETCHING

A simple, low-impact stretching routine will help your body become more limber and in better overall shape.

3. WORK ON YOUR CORE

If your core is in bad shape, you most likely won't survive when the SHTF. Fortunately, sit-ups, crunches, planking, leg raises, and several other basic core exercises don't require any special equipment.

4. STRENGTH TRAINING

Your entire body needs to be strong, but this doesn't mean you need to Hulk out. Developing a lean body mass can be done in the privacy of your home. There are thousands of helpful videos on YouTube that

will show you how to target your arms, shoulders, legs, chest, and back.

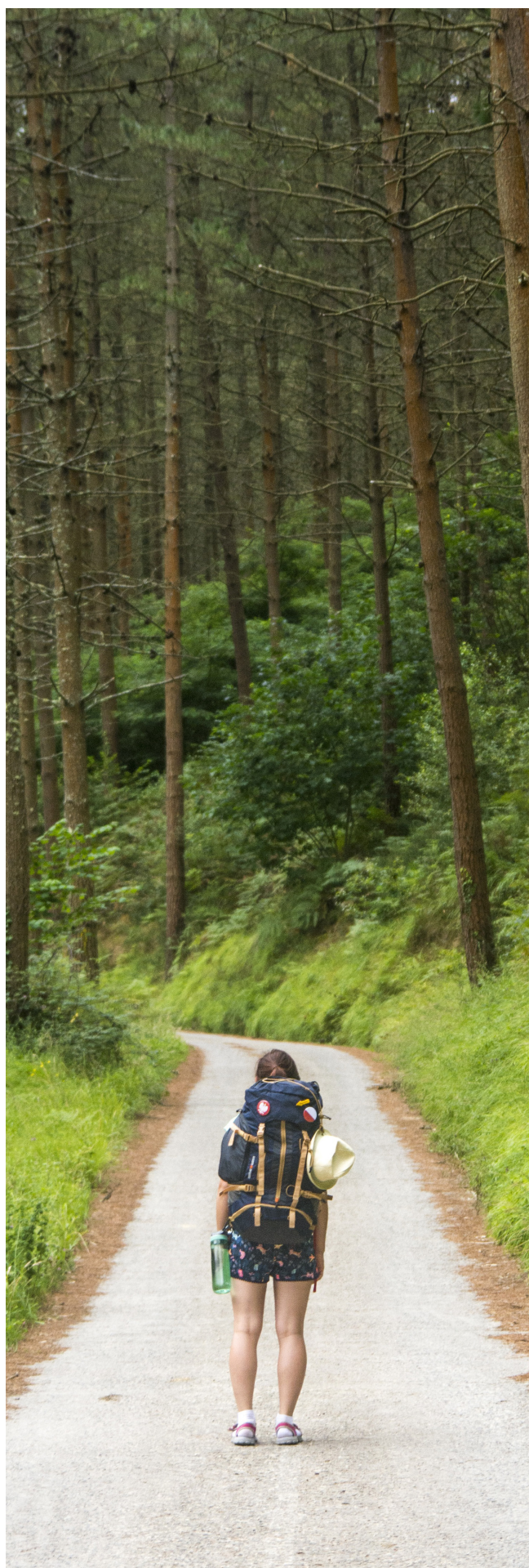
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL



The good news is the world isn't likely to end tomorrow, so you still have time to adjust your survival plans to avoid all of the pitfalls mentioned above. Work on improving your endurance and physical fitness by walking more, driving less, and taking the stairs instead of an elevator. Take those survival gadgets you bought on Amazon out of their boxes and learn how to use them. It may also be wise to pencil in a few hours of range time each month to hone your shooting skills.

Plans are wonderful things to have, but they should not become our masters. Being able to adapt to changing situations is the key to survival in a dog-eat-dog world. However, rolling with the punches is difficult to do when too much has been invested in a single course of action.

You can improve your adaptability skills by trying new things or placing yourself in unusual situations, even if they have nothing to do with prepping or survival. Build something, take a machine apart and then put it back together, or drive to a strange town and then find your way home without using your navigation system. Encountering obstacles and then overcoming them helps you learn new skills and builds confidence. And confidence can give us the strength we need to face an uncertain and unforgiving future.





Best Military Surplus Items to Buy (And Skip)

Is military surplus equipment really superior to similar products designed for the consumer marketplace? If we had a nickel for every time we've been asked that question here at the NSRA, well... we may not be rich, but we'd have one ridiculous collection of nickels. That much is for sure.

And if you're a student of economics, you might say that the free market functions to deliver the best product with the best features at the most desirable price for consumers; case closed. In certain aspects, this may be true. However, reality is always a bit more complicated than cut and dry economic theory.

When it comes to the supposed superiority of gear designed for military use, you're bound to bump into several pieces of conventional wisdom that are suspect at best. As we've discussed before in these pages, the fact is that there's quite a bit to unpack regarding so-called military-grade gear.

First off, there's an assumption that all gear used by a military organizations (clearly, not all militaries are equally equipped) is high-quality to begin with. History is littered with examples of armies marching to their doom with defective weapons, unreliable transportation, army boots that simply fall apart, etc. It's not just foreign armies either; there are plenty of examples of this right here in the US.

Second, of course, is exactly what constitutes "military" equipment. Many products are advertised with imagery and terms that seem to suggest the item is used in military service. It's a good idea to take such claims with a grain of salt. A good question to start with, assuming the item was actually under military use, is: Whose military? Latvia's military, maybe? Costa Rica's?

Third, and this is a big one, not everything sold at every "military surplus store" is military surplus

at all. Sure, some of the bomber jackets and flak helmets are genuine. Much of what is for sale is simply reproduction stuff that's made to look like the genuine hardware, replicas essentially. Perhaps you might see the term "military-grade" in the marketing of a product. The truth is, the term military-grade is an intentionally vague marketing buzzword.

Again, we're not trying to run down the military surplus industry here, or even to dismiss products advertised as military-grade. These products might be excellent, or they might be junk. The fact that they are "military-grade" tells you absolutely nothing, however.

So, as we address this question on a comprehensive level, it's important that we not gloss over these glaring examples of conventional thinking gone wrong. Military-grade gear is most likely never used by any military, anywhere. Likewise, even the fact that an item was used by a military doesn't mean it's better than or equal to a consumer version.

We have a free market system in the US and that dictates a "buyer beware" mentality. And unfortunately, things are not always exactly as they seem.

What Makes Military Surplus Worth Buying



Let's face it; consumers today have tons of choices in nearly every category when it comes to retail products. It's no different when you're buy gear for your self-reliance needs. That's a great thing.

Furthermore, there are lots of instances where consumer items better suit your needs than the military equivalent. If you're planting a garden, is a heavier and more expensive military surplus shovel going to dig any better than a cheaper, lighter model from your local hardware store? Sometimes military-spec hardware is designed to withstand certain scenarios that are completely irrelevant for the ordinary gearhead, even in a SHTF scenario.

The very simple scale that determines whether military surplus items are superior to something at the sporting goods store is this simple, two-part questionnaire:

A.) Is this item superior to consumer models available at a similar price?

B.) Is this item inexpensive relative to the value it provides?

If the answer to either question is "Yes," it's probably a good buy. If the answer to both is "Yes," grab it before it disappears. It's really that simple.



The military surplus items we've selected in this article fall somewhere on the spectrum where either the price is a bargain relative to performance, and/or that performance simply exceeds the type of consumer grade equipment available for a similar price.

With that said, let's take a look at the types of military surplus items that really stand out. This is where the military (US or otherwise) really has the competition beat in terms of quality, price, and long-term reliability.

Gas Cans



Military surplus fuel cans are just cool. That may seem like an unusual place to start from, given the exceedingly pragmatic mandate of the NSRA. But the fact is, military surplus Jerry cans are simply vastly superior in quality to the bulky plastic equivalent gas cans available at the local hardware store...

in durability, looks, functionality, etc.

Let's start with functionality. While it's not really a fair comparison to pit a NATO Jerry can against a plastic, EPA-approved gas can from Home Depot, they are competing for the same job.

The cold hard fact is that modern gas cans, even the more expensive versions, are subject to EPA regulations that prevent evaporative emissions. Translation: They totally suck when it comes to the whole "human being trying to pour gasoline" factor. These gas cans store, but don't pour gasoline worth a damn. With a military surplus can, this can be sidestepped.

Second, let's talk about storage. Another point of weakness with the typical 5-gallon plastic can is that it takes up a lot of space, yet it doesn't stack well. The footprint of a military surplus Jerry can is minimal, since the design is tall and slender. This makes storage a lot less cumbersome, especially if you're considering storing 20 gallons or more.

Last, of course, is durability. You can drive a pickup over a Jerry can and, while it may be dinged up, it will still store and pour gasoline. In fact, an improperly secured Jerry can will survive a fall off the back of a pickup at highway speeds. It goes without saying that your average plastic can has no hope of surviving that fall. When you consider all this, a surplus Jerry can for \$30 seems like a bargain.

Bags and Packs



Backpacks and duffle bags are another area where military surplus items really whoop up on the consumer-grade options, in both quality and even more so on price. What they don't compete on is fashion; probably about 75% of the cost of pretty much every backpack, overnight bag, and rucksack in the world of retail goes toward the way it looks.

Military designers don't spend any extra to make their bags look tougher or more rugged; their concern is actually making the bag stronger and more rugged. They don't have to worry over what color or pattern to go with, it's OD, FDE, or camo all the way! Material selection is all about durability.

Throughout history, successful militaries around the world have appreciated the true importance of logistics. Soldiers need to haul around lots of stuff, on the battlefield and off, which is why military surplus "baggage" is some of the sturdiest stuff around. Split seams and torn fabric are seemingly small things that can actually be life or death in the middle of a firefight.



Suffice it to say, these backpacks may not be the perfect expression of who you are as a person, incredible snowflakes as we all are. Instead, an external frame military pack (like the one in the nearby photo) shows that you need a hiking backpack that's practical, rugged as hell, and, on a practical note, costs less than \$60. Good luck beating that level of value at Dick's Sporting Goods.

When it comes to duffel bags, which are among the simplest bags to produce, military surplus bags tend to distinguish themselves on price and quality. There are plenty of consumer grade duffels on the market for under \$50. The problems tend to manifest when you fill them up near capacity; they split at the seams or the straps eventually come apart. Let's face it, the most inconvenient time for your bag to disintegrate is when it's fully loaded.

For under \$20, you can get an olive drab surplus duffel that's not only reasonably priced but can actually stand up to the weight of its cargo. Some of these are large enough to hold your entire wardrobe and stout enough to lug it around. Those features could come in very handy in an evacuation scenario.

Firearms



One arena in which “military surplus gear” is truly Mil-Spec is firearms. These particular weapons were produced for and even perhaps used on a battlefield.

Now, many military surplus rifles fall into the “collectibles” category, despite being perfectly operational and not truly limited in supply. While they may be great rifles, the cost of purchasing these collectibles tends to disqualify them based on our simple formula.

As we laid out earlier, the main criteria you should be conscious of when it comes to any “military surplus” gear is competitive quality and price. The models that stand out in terms of bang-for-your-buck are the Norinco SKS, Star Model BM, and the

16 Turkish Mauser.



When it comes to handguns, there are still a few actual “surplus” situations active in 2019. The Spanish-made 1911 (not actually a clone, but heavily inspired) known as the Star Model BM 9mm is still being unloaded at very reasonable sub \$200 prices. Most users appreciate how much this weapon feels like and operates like Colt M1911, a favorable comparison for a weapon this inexpensive.



Another high-value military surplus weapon is the Romanian TTC, the standard issue sidearm for Soviet era soldiers. Many have flooded onto the market in recent years, keeping the prices around \$200. These weapons, like the Model BM, appear to be heavily influenced by the work of John Browning. The interesting thing with this pistol is the round it fires: The 7.62X25mm Tokarev. This is a fairly small round in diameter for a handgun, but with a very high muzzle velocity it's also highly effective. Plus, the recoil is relatively light.



The iconic WWI Gewehr 98 or M98 is known to be a simple, highly accurate and durable bolt-action rifle. It is, however, quite hot on the collector's market and thus too pricey to be practical. The Turkish version (AKA the "Turkish Mauser"), made using equipment licensed from the Germans, remains a good deal on the military surplus market.

The sturdy bolt-action, 5-round stripper clip, and flip-up sights are actually just as functional as they are iconic. At around \$350-400, you'd be hard pressed to find a better shooting rifle.

One nice thing about the Mauser is ammo is easily available. The 8mm rounds, 7.92X57mm to be exact, are still widely used by militaries, and thus it is possible to find military surplus ammo for this rifle every now and again. This rifle has been adapted for hunting and sporting use for over 100 years, thanks to its reliability and user-friendly design. If you're in the market for a rock-solid rifle with some serious street cred, keep an eye out for the Turkish Mauser Model 1938.

Boots



Boots are literally where the rubber meets the road, especially critical when the going gets tough. Military boots are not built to look good with jeans; their purpose is entirely utilitarian.

That's why we're big fans of Mil-Spec boots like these military issue hot weather boots. These can be found at Army Navy Surplus stores or on eBay for \$50-70, and we do recommend you go with true military surplus or mil-spec boots versions, rather than one

17

of the many consumer versions.

The nice thing about the desert combat boots is that they're lightweight, extremely durable, and they breath well enough to wear year-round in most climates. An awful lot of research and development has gone into these boots, and you get to benefit as a result.

Surplus desert boots are mildew resistant, they've got ventilating insoles, and their duck uppers are fairly good at keeping moisture out. Perhaps best of all, you can pick these up cheap. As long-lasting as these tend to be, they allow you to really stretch your hard earned dollars year after year.



For those who live in areas with extreme winters, a pair of military surplus "Mickey Mouse" boots is an excellent investment. These waterproof Army issue rubber boots are rated to -20°F, so sitting still in cold weather for long hours is no problem. As for comfort, they are middle of the road. Now, keep in mind that these boots were "state of the art" during WWII, i.e. they're heavy by today's standards, yet they're a steal in a situation where keeping your feet warm and dry is paramount.

If you want to have your waterproof, cold weather boots checked off the list for \$50, look no further. “Mickey Mouse” boots pass the test with flying colors. When facing down some very harsh winter weather, you’ll gladly trade the weight for the warmth.

Ammo Cans



Obviously, surplus ammo cans are purpose-built to store ammunition in a long-term capacity. If you’re a gun nut, and as an NSRA reader chances are high you are, then it’s hard to beat ammo cans for storing and protecting your ammo from the elements. Ammo cans were designed to protect a critical military resource against some very rugged and harsh conditions. Dust storms, humidity, torrential rains, and blizzard conditions are exactly what these cans are designed to withstand.

Are they actually waterproof? Water-resistant is probably a more accurate term, but military surplus ammo cans are more than capable of keeping your dry items dry (unless the can is fully submerged for a period of time). The fact that ammo boxes are stackable and, much like Jerry cans, virtually indestructible means that whatever you choose to store inside of them won’t be crushed or damaged, even when fairly serious mishaps occur.

The wider view of ammo cans is that they’re an excellent container to protect all sorts of sensitive items. First aid items, documents, and even fragile tech items are well protected by this type of container.

18 In a mobile situation, such as an evacuation or

an overlanding adventure, you might want more than a backpack or carry bag to protect your most important gear.

At around \$20, these cans will last a lifetime, no matter how much you abuse them. That’s a feature in itself, in fact; not having to worry about scratching or dinging up the cases protecting your gear.

Jackets and Outerwear

Olive drab may or may not line up with your fashion sense, but if you’ve ever been truly, miserably... desperately cold, then you know that style matters zero when you’re staring straight into the cold dead eyes of frostbite. As we’ve discussed on these pages before, hypothermia is a much more insidious condition than most people are aware. By the same token, most retail outerwear is 100% designed for looks.

A serious, military surplus jacket is designed for only one purpose: To insulate humans against cold conditions. Genuine surplus jackets and coats are not only warm, but they’re often flame retardant, made of super durable materials, and tested for extreme conditions.



One jacket we highly recommend is the US Army CVC Flyer’s Jacket (see nearby photo). It’s essentially a bomber jacket, 100% Aramid fibers, flame resistant, etc. There are a lot of these still available from the 1980s runs, designed for flight crews. These are surprisingly warm, but still allow a lot of movement, which is great if you’re working outdoors.

True surplus jackets, often made from synthetic fibers such as Aramid, provide excellent insulation values and are also high temperature resistant (something obviously more important in a military context, but still valuable in a prepper context).

When shopping for these jackets, you'll notice there are many replicas and reproductions in the marketplace; i.e. not true surplus gear. While some of it may be high-quality, we recommend sticking with genuine military gear in order to get the genuine military performance.



When shopping online, it's important to look for terms like CVC (combat vehicle crewman), Nomex, or Aramid in the descriptions, as well as information on the country of manufacture. Even in Army Surplus stores, you'll come across these lookalikes more frequently as genuine surplus from the Cold War era dwindles. Jackets and coats made for the US Armed Forces and NATO will feature tags with unfamiliar NATO sizes, MIL-SPEC identification numbers, etc. Knock-offs will feature your typical fare: Small, Medium, or Large.

Army Blankets

When it comes to superior military items you didn't see coming... enter the army surplus wool blankie? Cozying up with a piece of surplus gear might seem a bit strange, but after owning one of these you'll quickly realize these things beat a Snuggie by a landslide. Yes, they're comfortable blankets, particularly if you like wool, but they're in many ways the swiss army knife of the bedding world.

We received a US Army blanket as a gift roughly a decade ago. At the time, we said "Thank you," and mentally shrugged it off. At the time, we thought: What the heck am I gonna do with this?

Fast forward about 6 months and we had used the blanket for sleeping, picnicking, and used it in place of a tarp for making repairs on the underside of a truck when stranded on a ranch road. Since then, it's been a seat cover, outdoor area rug, and a warm dry surface to lie on while long distance hunting in the backcountry.

Obviously, being a military-spec design, these are durable as can be and machine washable for convenience sake. One-part saddle blanket, one-part area rug, military blankets are also generously large, over 5' X 7' in size. Bottom line, these blankets are ridiculously durable and versatile, useful at home or out camping.

What to Skip

So, what about the stuff that's really not worth the hype? As we stated in the beginning, not all militaries are created equal and not all military gear is superior to the civilian stuff. Heck, even when it comes to weapons, it's not that uncommon that the consumer stuff has features and options that are more desirable.

Just as prevalent, however, is the idea that you should pay extra for military surplus items, simply because they're MIL-SPEC. While that does mean something, let's face it; many of these items were MIL-SPEC and cutting edge... during the Korean War era.

If you're looking for practical items to use, not to "collect," here are a few items to skip entirely.

Gas Masks

Any experience in which you need to wear a gas mask is going to be high stakes. But if you're going to trust a safety item with your life, better to choose one that doesn't feature suffocation as a side effect.

More likely than suffocation from a clogged filter, however, is simply the likelihood that an older mask has worn rubber components and doesn't seal well. Thus, the air flows in through the path of least resistance, that path being a hole, and you breathe in the toxic chemicals you are trying to keep out.



Surplus masks that are in very good condition can be totally functional; the issue lies in the condition of the filter. Filters should be completely sealed until use or else they degrade over time. Again, the older the mask, the greater the likelihood of it having some type of problem that renders it ineffective.

If you are so inclined to purchase a gas mask (as you might if you participate in protests or civil disobedience), it's probably best to pony up for a brand-new model. Otherwise, you're putting a lot of faith in an aging piece of technology you got "cheap" at the surplus store. We'll save the discussion of whether or not gas masks are actually practical or effective for a different article.

Knives



This one's a bit tricky, since the dirty little secret hiding at most Army Surplus stores is that the knife case is usually 90-100% retail items, not surplus at all.

20 With that said, shop around and you might find that your local surplus store actually has great deals on

military-inspired, or even MIL-SPEC knives made by Ka-Bar and Ontario. Both of these companies produce very high-quality full-tang knives that have been in use for decades in the US Armed Forces.

Whether or not the knife is truly military surplus or not is pretty much irrelevant; the quality is the same or better. The thing to keep in mind is these knives are widely available, by no means are they in short supply.

When it comes to EDC knives, we'd skip the surplus angle entirely. The selection of excellent EDC knives available in today's marketplace is an embarrassment of riches. Limiting yourself to what's available on the surplus market will severely reduce your options and won't save you a dime.

MREs



There's an odd fascination with these 1,200-calorie rations that's hard to explain, and even more perplexing for those who've actually tasted the "food" contained within these mylar pouches.

Look, when you're starving, this type of readymade food-like material will get the job done. You'll get no argument from us on that fact. Still, there's no reason to fixate on military surplus MREs when building an emergency food cache.

There are quite a few alternatives out there to choose from, all shelf-stable and possibly more nutritious than surplus MREs. The way we see it, if you're stuck eating "just add water" food from a pouch, then you might as well choose the menu options.

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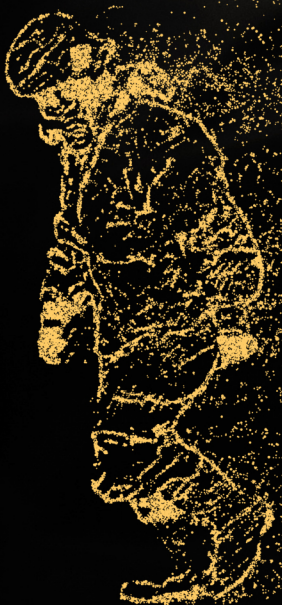
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