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MEMBERS UPDATE

September 2020

How To stay connected When
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Create a Bulletproof Ammo Plan

Top 10 Prepper Pitfalls

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Off Grid Communications

As much we talk about “the grid,” it can be a bit unclear what exactly “the grid” really entails. While the electrical grid is certainly the centerpiece, the communications grid, from servers to cellular networks, depends on the electrical grid to function. In this article, we walk you through how to stay connected in the event of an extended grid failure.



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Bulletproof Ammo Plan

Did you know that almost all SHTF ammo plans have the same fatal flaw? Most of us envision ourselves with a well-appointed arsenal in the event of a societal collapse, but what good are those guns if you don't have enough ammo? We've created a bulletproof ammo plan that's robust, economical, and most importantly accessible when you need it most.



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10 Prepper Pitfalls

Yes indeed, even the most thoughtful minds in the self-reliance community will often fall victim to some very simple “rookie mistakes.” And just as life is filled with blind spots and oversights, disaster prep is no exception. Here are the most common unforced errors to guard against as you build out your family's emergency plan.

Communication Essentials: How To Stay Connected When The Grid Goes Down



Now more than ever, survivalists are looking around the virus-plagued earth and wondering what part of our critical infrastructure will suffer a significant hit next. We've already experienced issues with the economy and finding supplies at the grocery store. What happens if the grid goes down too?

Rather than launch into an extensive piece about every aspect of a grid failure, we're going to focus on something that everyone who has spent time self-isolating can relate to -- the need to stay connected with others. A grid failure will make this more difficult, but it doesn't have to be the end of your communication with family and friends. In fact, there are many ways to do so, but you'll need to get your backup options set up now.

Best Options for Communicating Without Electricity

2 The reality is that some type of power source is needed for pretty much any communications device (unless you're going to learn how to send messages via smoke signals, that is). However, if

you've got a stockpile of batteries, a solar charger, or a generator, you'll be able to keep your preferred device operational. We'll start with the option that's shown almost every week on the zombie drama *The Walking Dead*, and that's walkie-talkies. The subject has recently become one of the most discussed resources by all apocalyptic writers and directors.

Walkie-Talkies: An Easily Portable Solution



Communication via walkie-talkies, AKA two-way radios, is a simple way to keep in touch with people who are in your immediate local area. You can also get longer-range walkie-talkies such as the Arcshell Rechargeable Long Range Two-Way Radios pictured. These particular radios retail in a two-pack on Amazon for \$25.99, making them a great value. On the downside, their “long-range” capabilities max out at about five miles. As a result, you’ll want to put great consideration into how much coverage you’re likely to need. Like most walkie-talkies, the option for Arcshell requires the usage of a charging port. Because the grid could go down at any time, it’s wise to keep walkie-talkies charged. You’ll also need to invest in an excellent solar-powered charger if you don’t want to have your entire home hooked up to solar energy.

Walkie-talkies equipped with a more extensive range are also available at an affordable price. For instance, you can get a pair of 25-mile walkies from Craftsman for less than \$45. One of the benefits of this option is that the handheld units (pictured below) can be powered via a USB cable or three AA alkaline batteries.



The farther you want to communicate, the more it’s going to cost you. Keep in mind that the extra money isn’t always worth it. Besides, one set that maxes out at 25 miles may be just as effective as a set that claims to reach 36 miles if there’s too much topographical interference in your area.

Of course, we haven’t found any affordable walkie-talkies that can reach hundreds of miles out like the fictional ones do on *The Walking Dead*. What we have seen, however, are other communications

3 options that can keep you in touch with someone if

they decide to follow Michonne’s lead and journey to a remote island with a madman.

Portable Ham Radio



Having a ham radio set up in your home with a long-range antenna is your best bet for reaching people in other states. If you want the convenience of a long reach without all the equipment, though, you can grab a set of portable amateur ham radios. The set pictured above, Baofeng Radios UV-5R MK5, offers the portability of walkie-talkies with the power of ham radio.

A nice perk of choosing a set like the Baofeng Radios is that their battery life tends to be very good. Therefore, you won’t need to spend nearly as much time recharging them via a solar charger as you would with a walkie-talkie set.

One con associated with ham radios is that they are more complex to use and require a lot of specialized knowledge. Additionally, you cannot legally practice with a ham radio unless you get licensed to do so. Hopefully, after the grid goes down, the authorities will train their focus on things that are way more important than whether or not your ham radio broadcasts are entirely legal.

A set like the one pictured above will set you back about \$135. Being able to connect with people from outside a 5 to 36-mile range, makes the upgrade worthwhile for those who have loved ones spread throughout the state and country, though.

CB Radio (Handheld or Installed in a Vehicle)

A CB radio can give you long-range communication without the need for a ham radio license. The type



pictured above is designed for installation into any vehicle type. On its own, the Uniden PRO505XL 40-Channel CB Radio is also a great value on Amazon (currently priced at \$25.99). To get a full setup with either a CB Antenna Kit, Cigarette Lighter Plug, or a Coaxial Cable, you'll be looking at a price range of \$35 to \$50.

Those who choose a CB radio for their vehicle can also get more range and crisper sound by buying an upgraded antenna with a 3 to 5-foot height. This option makes the most sense if you're trying to reach people who are very far away.

Do you prefer the walkie-talkie style but still want the expanded performance of ham radio? Then a model like the Cobra HH50WXST Handheld CB Radio is a great choice!



These radios give you 40 channels to choose from, just like a standard CB. One of the most useful features of the Cobra model is that it has two power settings. Slip it into low power mode when you're chatting with someone in your general area. To receive longer range, put it in high power mode and you'll be able to reach people who are very far away. This action will conserve your battery life.

You can also use the 12V port in your vehicle to recharge this unit if a solar-powered charger isn't handy.

There are many other popular options in the handheld CB radio world, including the Uniden Bearcat BC125AT, BaoFeng UV-82HP and the Midland Radio 75-822. You can find each of these units on Amazon, and you should expect to pay between \$60 and \$100 for a quality handheld CB.

Satellite Phone



A satellite phone is your absolute best bet for getting a message out to others, even from the middle of nowhere. Unlike a standard cellphone that relies on cell towers to get a signal, these phones work no matter where you are since they get their signal from satellites. Because of this feature, they won't go offline unless we suddenly start fighting satellite battles in space. On that note, the US and the UK reported that Russia does have

weapon-like projectile capable of targeting satellites in orbit (The BBC, 2020).

The unit pictured above, the Garmin inReach SE+, is one of the most affordable options at less than \$300 on Amazon. It's not quite as fancy as some of its Garmin siblings such as the Explorer+, but it will allow you to send out an SOS distress call, along with two-way text messaging and Garmin's GPS mapping features.

You'll also be able to track and share your location with others, which is a very useful safety tool for wildlife enthusiasts and long-range hikers even when the grid is still up. Be aware that all satellite phones require a service plan, much like a regular cellphone. There are usually prepaid options that will serve you well during an emergency.

Additionally, if you want a phone that comes with all the bells and whistles, you may want to consider upgrading to the BlueCosmo Inmarsat IsatPhone 2.1 (just under \$600 on Amazon). Alternatively, you can get the much more impressive – but also

much more expensive - SatPhoneStore's kit for the Inmarsat IsatPhone 2.1. This version comes with a solar charger, an extra battery, and the Emergency Responder Package for \$1,145.

General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS)



A GMRS radio looks very similar to a walkie-talkie or handheld ham radio. The difference is that you need a license to operate these radios (which is cheaper and easier to get than a ham radio license). They also tend to transmit only about 1.5 to 3 miles, but this can be greatly increased with a repeater. In fact, many people who set up their GMRS with a repeater can achieve

distances of around 30 miles. The example above is the BTECH GMRS-V1, and it is repeater capable. Depending on where you buy it, you'll pay between \$66 (Amazon) and \$100 (the MSRP).

GMRS radios also come in a variety of styles and sizes. For example, the Midland MXT105 looks more like an in-vehicle ham radio and has a 40-mile range. The retail price of \$100 keeps it in line with other GMRS radio options. Like most off-grid communication units, these radios feature access to the NOAA weather scan feature for bad weather alerts.

Family Radio Service (FRS)



Family Radio Service (FRS) is very similar to GMRS, but it doesn't require a license. This feature means that the Radioddy FS-T1 FRS (pictured here) can be used right out of the box. All you need to do is ensure that you and the person on the other end are using the same channel.

Basic models do have distance limitations. However, it's easy to find FRS units that provide longer range capabilities. With the Radioddy FS-T1, you'll also get several other useful perks, including a built-in flashlight, the ability to listen to regular radio stations, private calling codes, and two power modes to conserve the rechargeable battery. All of this for a two-pack that Amazon sells for only \$34.99!

Another FRS that comes with much more than usual is the Midland X-Talker T77VP5. A two-pack of this impressive model will set you back less than \$100, and it offers a range of up to 38 miles.

Off-Grid Text Messaging Devices



When it comes to off-grid text messaging devices, the goTenna Mesh has become the gold standard. For it to work, though, you and the person you're trying to contact must both have a goTenna paired with each of your iOS or Android phones. Once you've gotten past that hurdle, the

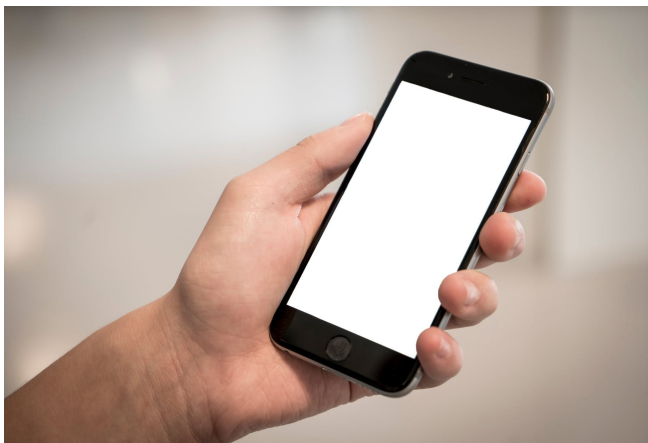
goTenna gives you a 4-mile range for communicating without needing a cell signal or even standard phone service! The basic and free goTenna service sends text messages between users and can also transmit a public emergency broadcast. With a paid plan, you'll have access to advanced maps as well.

Another well-liked option is the Radcat C1 Messenger. For approximately \$200 (that's \$20 more than the goTenna), you and other Radcat C1 users will be able to text message, share your real-time location, and send voice messages without needing any signal, cell service, or even a SIM card.



Depending on the topographical area, you'll be able to reach other users six miles away with the Radcat C1 Messenger. These units tend to work best in the suburbs, as opposed to a downtown area, and their battery life can reach as high as 36 hours. We love that this particular unit doesn't require a subscription to have access to maps. On the other hand, the goTenna has a more reliable range of approximately four miles, instead of a one-to-six-mile radius.

Cellphone



You're probably thinking: "A cellphone? Are you kidding me?" No, we're not, but this is a very temporary solution that should be used to help you during the first few hours of the grid failure. After this, you could use a device like the previously mentioned goTenna to continue getting text messages out via your phone for as long as it stays charged.

6 Here's the deal: when the grid goes down, cell towers will switch over to their backup power

supply. This failsafe will probably only last a few hours, but that may be precisely enough time to communicate with your loved ones about the plan moving forward.

Keep in mind that not everyone will be as prepared as you. Even if your family members and friends have walkie-talkies or other communication devices, you may need to remind them to get them online. With any luck, they'll have remembered to keep the essential items charged. If not, a solar or hand-crank charger will come in handy immediately.

Tips for Getting the Right Solar Charger



No communication method is going to last long without a power source. Even the ones you can charge inside your vehicle are going to run out of steam when your gas tank gets bone dry. That's the primary reason that every survivalist needs to get their hands on at least one good quality solar charger.

Solar-powered battery chargers are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Therefore, you need to do some research to make sure you invest in the right type (and quantity) of these chargers to suit your needs. There are several things to consider, therefore, you need to do some research to make sure you invest in the right type (and quantity) of these chargers to suit your needs. There are several things to consider, such as:

1. Portability – If you're worried about a SHTF situation where the grid has gone down, and society is crumbling, you're going to need a highly portable solar charger. Also, don't get something that's so

large, awkward, and/or heavy that you can't easily grab it and run.

2. Charging Power – Each unit has different charging capabilities. The solar charger pictured by Hiluckey includes a high capacity 25000mAh Li-polymer battery. This feature means you can reasonably expect to charge a cellphone at least eight times before the charger needs to be placed in the sunlight again.

3. Number of Ports – Do you have several devices you'd like to charge at once? Then you'd need to check out the total port capacity of each unit. Some can charge only one thing at a time, but others can handle four, and sometimes more, items at once.

4. Suitability – Each solar-powered battery charger was designed to take on a specific type of battery. You'll find chargers intended for usage only with iOS and Android phones, along with chargers that can work on automobile batteries. Always buy the right type for your devices.

5. Warranty – In the ideal scenario, you'll have time to select a charger and test it thoroughly before it becomes a critical necessity. We also suggest looking at the warranty or return policy because it will affect your ability to get a replacement. Once you receive the device, ensure that it works properly with a few test runs.

Solar Chargers for Communication Devices

Aside from a cellphone, most of the devices mentioned in this article have the option to use standard batteries. There is a very helpful device that will make it super easy to keep these batteries fully charged: C. Crane 11-in-1 Solar Battery Charger. We love this unit because it can charge 11 different battery sizes, including AAA, AA, C, and D.

Like anything else that's solar-powered, you may have to give this charger more time than you'd like to reach a full charge, especially if there's no direct sunlight. However, the fact that you can charge two rechargeable batteries at a time helps keep everything up and running at all times.



When it comes to cellphones and tablets, the previously mentioned Hiluckey model is a solid choice. It can charge two devices at once, thereby making it even more useful during a grid failure. Another suitable option for those who use Qi charging is the Blavor Solar Power Bank Qi Portable Charger. Both of these have a reasonable price point that's between \$25 and \$47 on Amazon.

Alternate Power Sources



As a survivalist preparing for a SHTF situation, you undoubtedly know the value of getting the most out of every item in your bug out bag. And the truth is that sometimes solar-powered battery chargers aren't the most effective usage of your limited space.

One of our favorite options is the BioLite Campstove 2. With this multi-purpose model, you can create a fire out of mere twigs. From there, you'll be able to cook a meal and charge a device via USB. Granted, that it's going to take a lot of twigs and time to get a cellphone or rechargeable battery to its fullest capacity, but what else are you going to be doing while cooking a meal? This option costs around \$150.



Another highly useful device that gives you multiple necessary items in one is the RunningSnail Emergency Hand Crank Radio. You'll gain the ability to charge one item via USB while also listening to the radio, using a flashlight, and checking the NOAA forecast. That's a lot of bang for your buck for a device that costs less than \$30!

You can keep the radio/charger powered up with batteries, solar power, or good old-fashioned hand cranking.

Final Thoughts

One vital lesson learned during COVID-19 quarantine is that remaining in contact with others is essential to our mental and emotional health. When the SHTF, it's going to be even more critical, as we'll need to rely on our most trusted family and friends if we ever want to increase our overall odds of survival.

Yes, it's great to have everything you need to go it alone, but that's a very lonely lifestyle that isn't maintainable long-term for most people. You'll probably be talking to "Wilson" before you know it if you go down that path. With communication essentials and a power source that doesn't require the grid, it's possible to stay in touch even during an apocalyptic scenario.





HOW TO BEAT THE NEXT AMMO STORAGE

As you've probably noticed, we're currently facing a disturbing nationwide shortage of one of the most critical prepper resources of all. It's not toilet paper, and it's not canned beans, either. Instead, it's the big one that strikes fear in the hearts of the prepper community: An ammunition shortage.

Meanwhile, suppose you're one of the millions of Americans who purchased a new firearm since the start of the pandemic. If you did, you're probably frustrated over the fact that you've got, "Guns, guns everywhere, but not a bullet to shoot" to misquote a famous phrase.

At the onset of the COVID-19 lockdowns, we saw a spike in demand for the unlikeliest items. Who could have predicted that toilet paper, hand sanitizer and hydrogen peroxide would fly off the shelves during the pandemic? Not us, and that burst of panic buying reverberated throughout America's retail market for months. What's worse, is that many of the largest retail chains still don't have their stock rooms back anywhere near normal levels. In short, it's a real-world lesson in just how easily a bit of panic can quickly and completely overwhelm the supply chain.

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Equally perplexing, however, was the fact that somehow the pandemic buying spree spilled over into firearms. In many ways, we applaud the surging interest in home defense and sport shooting. But all those new guns need bullets to function. And... well...you already know where this is heading.

RECENT EVENTS CAUSE AMMUNITION DROUGHT

Just as with paper products, the surging wave of panic buying emptied the ammo shelves at sporting goods stores nationwide. And, then there were the large-scale Black Lives Matter protests, some of which provided a cover for crooks to loot homes and businesses. Looting and unrest has historically been a huge driver of gun and ammo sales, and what happened recently has been true to form. Ultimately, when these two events combined forces and the smoke cleared, the result was an ammunition drought of epic proportions; the likes of which has never been seen before in modern times.

THE RAW DEAL



At this moment (if nothing else goes wrong), it's almost certain to be months before the ammunition supply chain can recover. The reason for that may surprise you, too, because it has nothing to do with the ATF or pressure from left-wing groups. Instead, it comes down to the law of supply & demand involving the simple raw materials that go into the making of ammunition.

To explain, the only lead mines in the US are located in Missouri, and they closed briefly during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The brass used in ammo manufacturing is mined primarily in Brazil, which is currently having major COVID-19 issues. Then, there's the actual ammunition manufacturing situation that is deteriorating more every day.

Here's the picture of current events painted by long-time gun retailer Roger Latsha in the Sentinel Record:

"I spend a lot of time on the phone begging and pleading for ammo... A lot of the manufacturers were closed for a few months, and then they opened up and had to social distance inside their plants, so maybe every other machine may work instead of all of them... So their capacity is down below half and demand is up 400% because there's a huge shortage."

When you mix these volatile factors in with a major uptick in demand, you get a situation that takes a very long time to shake out. Supply chains are only as strong as their weakest links, and combine it with the arrival of the disruptive pandemic, nearly all the links deteriorated at once. Even when businesses come back online, it's difficult to say with certainty when supplies of ammunition will return to their pre-COVID levels.

Rather than focusing on the supply of raw materials and distribution networks, which we admittedly have no control over, let's focus on something we do control: Our preparedness.

THE "NO-PLAN PLAN"



There are several ways to tackle the unprecedented scenario we are currently facing, but the most common problem we face, by far, is that many preppers have absolutely no contingency plan for such a shortage. In case you are wondering, the "No-Plan Plan" is 100% NOT recommended or endorsed by the NSRA.

If this were to be, in fact, "The Big One" (AKA the true breakdown of civilization) then anyone who chose to exercise the "No-Plan" option is totally screwed and will remain so for an indefinite amount of time.

If you're a longtime NSRA reader, you probably already know what burning issue we'll talk about next. The inescapable fact is that the only time to prepare for such a scenario is before a clear and present cause for concern arises in the collective consciousness. As soon as things begin to look dicey, millions of minds in our great country begin to think alike... and begin to stockpile ammo.

When this sort of crisis stockpiling begins, getting your hands on a large quantity of ammunition boils down to timing and luck. These are two factors you never want to gamble on when your family's safety is at stake.

That's why we've taken the initiative to create a guide that will help you build a reasonable, yet robust, emergency ammo plan that allows you to have the supplies you need on hand before the next calamity sets off the next nationwide ammo shortage.

YOUR BULLETPROOF AMMO PLAN



Ammunition is important, sure. But you can't eat ammo, nor does it make for very good shelter. To top it off, ammunition isn't especially lightweight to lug around either. The point we're making here is that your ammo plan is a subset; it must fit within the context of your comprehensive SHTF plan.

If you're like most of us, you own a number of firearms. Yet, most people only keep a partial box of ammunition for each weapon on hand. This approach is not sufficient from a self-reliance standpoint. Now, that doesn't mean you need thousands of rounds for each firearm you own.

We've discussed concepts such as "bugging-out" versus "shelter in place" on these pages before. In particular, we've discussed which types of firearms you might select for each approach.

In the context of your ammo plan, the key factor is that you have made a careful selection about which weapons you will depend on in the event of a major crisis. If you lose access to the rest of your arsenal, your plan is still mostly intact because those other guns weren't functionally part of the plan.



Simply put, you'll need to stockpile ammo for your primary sidearms and/or tactical rifles first. You can and should de-prioritize any other firearms you own until you've created your SHTF ammo cache.

BULK IS BEAUTIFUL



While you could certainly argue that reloading, i.e., assembling your ammo, is ultimately the most self-reliant way to ensure your ammo supply, that's not the recommendation we're making here at the NSRA.

Yes, reloading is a fantastic skill to know, especially when there are shortages of ammo. However, there are plenty of ingredients such as primers, brass, etc. that you must keep on hand to produce ammo. If you have a ton of bullets and brass, but no primers, then you're really up the same creek as those who don't have enough ammunition stored to begin with.

Instead, we recommend buying your ammo in bulk. While there are many benefits to this method, the first and foremost strength is one of our favorites: Simplicity. Many manufacturers such as Winchester sell metal ammo cans filled with 500 rounds, which are very economical and convenient – under "normal" circumstances (i.e. not easy to purchase currently).

As you might expect, another benefit of buying in bulk is cost. It's very plausible that you can pay 35 cents per round for handgun ammo, often less, if you're willing to buy in quantities of 500 or more. Cost is, of course, always a concern because it determines how much of a resource you can stockpile for a future crisis. The less you pay per round, the more rounds you can afford to file away, outside of your standard practice and hunting supply.

In addition to BassPro and Academy, many online sellers specialize in selling bulk ammo directly to the consumer. Here are our Top 5:

- **BulkAmmo.com**
- **Cabelas.com**
- **PalmettoStateArmory.com**
- **LuckyGunner.com**
- **Sportsmansguide.com**

Some of these sellers will occasionally offer “remanufactured” ammunition in large quantities. It’s a “buyer beware” world out there, as you know. Nonetheless, we’ve had reasonably good luck with this type of un-branded ammo.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?



So, just how much ammo is enough? Clearly, this is a question with many subjective answers, and many of them can be correct. The best answer, in our view, comes down to how much ammo is enough for YOU.

Let us explain; many of regulars at the local shooting range will ordinarily buy in large quantities and keep 1,000 rounds on hand. That’s not considered stockpiling for Armageddon, and these passionate folks are merely engaging in supplying ammo for their hobby. Buying in bulk is simply more cost-effective and convenient for those who shoot regularly.

To many people outside of America’s gun culture, with visions of miles of belted ammo in their heads, a thousand rounds can sound like a lot. In reality, though, 1,000 rounds of even rifle ammo can easily fit in a desk drawer. That being said, what constitutes

a “whole lotta ammo” is a relative term.

While some apocalypse preppers may argue that you need 10,000 rounds of .223 at least to survive the apocalypse, that is simply not an affordable option for most. Then again, in a world so violent that you need 10,000 rounds to survive, the chances are good you wouldn’t live long enough to use them anyway.

Unless you plan to barter by using .223/5.56 or 9mm ammo, which is probably a good idea, then a stockpile of 10,000 rounds seems outlandish at best. In a post-apocalyptic world, it’s highly likely that weapons training and/or target shooting may no longer be a safe option, as you may not want to attract attention to yourself or the fact that you have excess ammo.

With all these qualifiers taken into account, we feel that 200 rounds per dedicated SHTF weapon are adequate, while 500 is even better. Again, when it comes to buying ammo in bulk, the 500-round mark is often the point at which you really get a nice price break. Additionally, a block of 500 rounds is an easily portable quantity of ammo. An important aspect to consider should your SHTF plans unexpectedly change, which is highly likely.



Here are the approximate weights of many popular rounds:

9MM LUGER

Hornady 115gr JHP/XTP

Rounds per pound: 38.10

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 2.63

.40S&W

Rounds per pound: 28.07

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 3.56

.45ACP

230gr Winchester Ballistic

Rounds per pound: 21.33

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 4.69

.22 LR

Remington Golden 36gr PHP

Rounds per pound: 133.33

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 0.75

.223/5.56X45

(Milsurp) SS109 63gr

Rounds per pound: 37.21

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 2.69

.308 WINCHESTER

Remington UMC 150gr FMJ

Rounds per pound: 19.05

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 5.25

7.62X39MM

Wolf Steel Case 122gr FMJ

Rounds per pound: 27.59

Weight per 100 rounds (lbs): 3.63

PROPER AMMO STORAGE



No matter how much ammo you've stored away for a rainy day or target practice, the last thing you want is to open your stash to find a bunch of green, crusty rounds coated with all kinds of oxidation and damage. If you've ever shot with -- or tried to shoot with -- ammo like this, let's just say it's a fun-filled grab bag of both confusion and frustration. Even if it fires the way it should, chances are its flight path will be highly inconsistent.

So how can you avoid such a horrific experience? The answer is to mitigate the factors that spoil ammo over time. With this in mind, it's counterproductive to keep your guns in pristine condition, only to load them full of lousy, decomposing ammunition.

Two primary culprits that erode your ammo are excessive heat and moisture. Extreme cold temperatures can cause malfunctions, but typically that doesn't stem from an ammo problem. In fact, it's the contraction of the steel components within the firearm, not the ammo, that causes sub-freezing malfunctions.

ATTICS, SHEDS, AND HOT CARS...

Ammunition is made to be hardy, allowing it to withstand conditions such as those found in the blazing hot theaters of battle in the Middle East. Comparatively, storing it at temperatures above 150°F will quickly turn some high-velocity loads into a box of duds.

Now, the hottest day ever recorded reached 134°F in Death Valley on April 10th, 1934. So, luckily, loads most likely won't bake in excessive temps very often. And while temps may sometimes top 95°F outside, the insides of storage spaces around your property may be a different story.

Any ammo stored in an attic over a long, hot summer is highly suspect. The same goes for hot glove boxes, trunks, storage sheds, and other places where you might store ammo, even for a short time. The extreme heat combined with the swings in temperature can wreak havoc on your ammo, sometimes physically warping it.

Since our concern in this article is for storing ammo long-term, you must be even more conscientious than is commonly recommended. Also important, even hot temperatures that are below the maximum recommendation for storage can cause damage over time. According to SAAMI (Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute), the general rule of thumb for storing ammunition is between 55°F and 85°F.

AVOID MOISTURE, NOT JUST WATER

Another major threat to your ammo stockpile is moisture, especially in the form of damaging humidity, which builds up and takes a toll after a while. Perhaps the best way to think about storing ammo is to think of it the same way as you do batteries since they both store energy. Like batteries, you want to keep ammo in a cool, dry storage location.

Humid conditions, such as can be found in a shed or cellar, will cause your ammo to rust and corrode. This can actually warp the ammo, making it unsafe to shoot. To fight deterioration such as this, you'll need to acquire climate-controlled space for your SHTF ammo cache. By doing so, it ensures that your well-tended weapons will always be loaded with ammo that is in prime condition.

ADOPT A CAN-DO MINDSET



Lucky for us, there is a solution developed by the military for these long-term ammo storage challenges. When you really want your ammo to function when you need it most, the best place to store it is in a protective, watertight container. Enter the ammo can, a device that fights munition-destroying moisture.

Metal ammo cans, sometimes included with bulk ammo purchases, are designed to seal up tightly, preventing humidity from messing with your ammo. The only limitation being that the inside of your ammo can must be completely dry before you seal it up.

Metal ammo cans protect well against heat too. Ammo cans have handles for the ease of lifting and carrying, and they're also stackable for efficient storage. If camouflaging your stash is a concern, you can simply drape a blanket over them. While they're far from "covert," ammo cans are good enough for the Armed Forces. The NSRA recommends them as a top pick as well.

For a DIY solution, you can protect your ammo in plastic containers, such as Nalgene bottles or super-sized cashew containers. These will keep humidity out indefinitely, provided both your container/ ammo is 100% dry to begin with. A side benefit is that these containers make storing mass quantities of ammo as easy as placing it on a shelf.

If you're not sure your storage container is 100% free of moisture, try adding a couple of small silica packs to it. They will draw out the moisture, and you can remove them after a couple of weeks.

To a very similar degree, large glass pickle jars offer excellent protection from both heat and moisture. Transporting these jars takes a bit more care to avoid shattering them in transit. One nice thing about transparent containers is that you can see what caliber of ammo is inside.

CONCLUSION

While the time to prepare for the Great COVID-19 Ammo Shortage has already passed, there is still time to prepare for the next one. If you gleaned nothing else from these pages, we hope you've come away convinced of this one key point: Any reasonable ammo storage plan beats the heck out of no plan at all.

The quantity of ammo you choose to keep in your SHTF stockpile may vary from 200-2,000 rounds per weapon. But even if you've amassed 20,000 rounds, improper storage can render it useless, or even worse... dangerous. Thus, it's critical that you put significant thought into storing ammo in addition to stockpiling it.

If you've taken the time to build out a SHTF arsenal of incredible weapons you plan to rely on in cases of societal collapse, then it stands to reason you need to ensure those firearms will be combined with a supply of ammo that's both sufficient and functional. Otherwise, your precious carbines and handguns will function as nothing more than paper weights or trade bait when you need them most.



10 COMMON PREPPER PITFALLS TO AVOID



The world may not be ending, per se, but many smart preppers are preparing for the end of the world 'as we know it.' This particular type of disaster preparedness is a good thing, too, because with better readiness, a SHTF event can't cause as much damage to society.

However, as more people hop on the survival bus during these uncertain times, it is crucial to make sure you do it correctly and not make some serious mistakes. In light of that, the NSRA has put together ten common prepper pitfalls to avoid.

1. FOOD STORAGE MISTAKES



Food is going to be the number one thing you need to survive, so proper storage of it should be your driving mission. Storing foodstuffs that don't require refrigeration will, of course, be preferable. A few staples you'll want to stock up on are canned liquids, dehydrated, powdered milk, wax-encased hard cheese, powdered eggs, whey powder, protein bars, bulk rice and oats, canned and dehydrated meats, and MREs.

You'll also want to have a suitable method of rotating your food to keep spoilage to a minimum. Rotation works to ensure inventory is used on a first in first out (FIFO) basis. Doing so will save money, use up food with an older shelf life first and cut down on the spoilage factor.

Make sure that produce is stored in a cool, dark area with plenty of air circulation. This safeguard is especially important for potatoes since they can turn green if they aren't stored properly. Alarmingly, green potatoes are poisonous, and small green spots or sprouts should be removed before food preparation. If you see more than a few small green spots, throw the potato away. Do not serve children any green potatoes, whether they are trimmed or not, because children are more susceptible to their poison than adults. If potatoes have a bitter taste, throw them away as well.

2. POOR INVENTORY TRACKING



Not keeping track of your inventory is a mistake that can be costly in so many ways. Imagine going out and spending money on staples with a shelf life and losing them due to poor inventory control and thievery. Never mind that's food you spent money on and lost, it's also nutrition that will be hard to replace in your cupboard when the SHTF.

Managing out of control inventory is necessary for survival, and you need measures in place to make sure that staples and supplies are in good condition when they are required. Experienced preppers achieve this by putting an inventory system in place. Using the system for as little as a couple of times a year gets you organized and helps manage and maintain the cherished food supplies you'll need in an emergency.

The FIFO method should definitely be a part of managing your inventory correctly, too. As mentioned previously, the method works to cut down on spoiled goods by ensuring that the oldest stock is consumed first.

Activities such as inventory counting can also allow you to keep track of your other valuable prepper possessions. And, in disaster situations, rationing and related theft may be involved. Diligently keeping track of your inventory lets you know if there is some pilfering going on, allowing you to brainstorm ways to stop it.

3. ONLY PREPPING FOOD



If you were to read Matthew 4:4 in the Bible, you could see the passage relates closely to some important prepping ideals. In it, Jesus told the Devil, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Many of Jesus’s teachings in the Gospel are parables, but preppers can definitely relate to the context of this one. In short, the passage means food alone is not enough, and faith is severely needed in times of adversity.

Having faith is always good, but solely prepping food is a cardinal sin seen too often in beginners. While food is a high priority, don’t forget to stock up on clothes, first aid and trauma kits, medicine, vitamins, water, beauty supplies, cooking utensils, weapons, and other essential survival items.

4. WEAK FORAGING SKILLS



You should always have some decent foraging skills to back up the food stores in your prepper’s pantry. To that end, nature puts out a big bounty that works to replenish barren shelves you’ve emptied.

17 Foraging has its pitfalls if you don’t know what you are doing, though. Eating the wrong plants

can be fatal, and you can harm the environment by nonchalantly traversing through sensitive habitats. You can also destroy plant populations by over-harvesting. Ramps, long considered a forager’s delicacy, are a prime example of people decimating plant populations by being too greedy and over-harvesting. Because of this, the number of ramps in the wild is severely diminished.

However, if you know how to forage the correct way, then the world is your oyster fungus. Take extreme caution when it comes to foraging mushrooms and fungi, however. Most foraging horror stories come from people harvesting wild mushrooms and fungi when they weren’t 100% certain what type they were. Make no mistake; many mushrooms you find out in nature are extremely poisonous. Never consume wild mushrooms or fungi unless you are absolutely certain that they are of the non-poisonous variety. Chanterelles, morels, oyster fungus, and hen of the woods are usually safe bets if you know how to identify them correctly.

5. FALLING INTO THE WATER TRAP



One trap even preppers with experience fall into is not having enough water. For instance, they prep months’ worth of food but only prep a few weeks’ worth of water.

You may not know it, but you can survive without food a lot longer than you can without water. In fact, after about three days without H₂O, you’ll most likely end up horizontal.

Novice preppers may think that water will be more readily available than food if the SHTF. For the most part, that’s true; there will be lots of water come doomsday. How much of it will be safe enough to drink, though? Depending on the level of disaster, that can mean a little to none at all. In brief, there are no guarantees you’ll have access to clean drinking in cases of societal collapse.

Also, if you do not have a lot of room in your prepper pantry, make sure that you have the skill and supplies needed to gather and purify water. It’s essential to have a contingency plan in place if

water from the tap becomes contaminated or stops altogether.

In that case, do you know where you can find alternative sources of it? Do you have filters? Are the conditions right for storing bottles of water in the pantry? These are all good questions to start asking yourself. If you did think ahead and stocked enough water to survive for a while, it's important to know that it has a shelf life, too. If stored properly, the shelf life is two years for regular bottled water and one year for the sparkling kind.

6. SHARING TOO MUCH



The late Rod Serling once said, “For civilization to survive, the human race has to remain civilized.” Serling uttered that quote at the end of an old black and white Twilight Zone episode titled, “The Shelter.” “The Shelter,” is about a man named Bill that built a nuclear fallout shelter that only has enough supplies for him and his family to survive. During the episode, someone casually mentions details about the shelter to Bill’s neighbors. Later, when these same neighbors hear there might be a nuclear bombing nearby, they storm the shelter and render it useless against a nuclear attack.

The lesson of that episode is that oversharing details about your well-stocked shelter is almost always a bad idea. Putting it another way, ‘loose lips sink ships.’ In cases of sharing too much, your neighbors will most likely devolve into an uncivilized pack of hungry dogs in a desperate bid to survive when the SHTF. In that case, the prepper shelter that you worked so hard on will be in their crosshairs and plundered before you know it. Everyone wants to help their fellow neighbor, but be smart about it. Practice operational security, and keep discussion of supplies and your shelter vague or non-existent if you can.

7. POOR GARDENING SKILLS

18 If disaster strikes, you are going to run out of your prepper food stores eventually. For preppers



learning how to grow their food, the first lesson should be that lackluster gardening skills can harm you and others. For instance, all newbie gardeners need look no further than the Salem witch trials of 1692 to see how things can go utterly and terribly wrong when you grow something as simple as rye.

The prevailing theory is that the sightings of witches during that event could be chalked up to hallucinations and hysteria resulting from rye ergot poisoning. It’s plausible because it causes hallucinations and the psychedelic LSD was synthesized from ergot. Even if ergot doesn’t make you chase witches, its effects when ingested can lead to gangrene and loss of extremities because of restricted blood circulation.

Some argue that contaminated bread didn’t cause the Salem witch trials, but the takeaway for preppers should be that some really gnarly stuff can result from both bad gardening and poor crop maintenance.

Ergot on rye, wheat, and other plants is easily recognized and controlled if you know what to look for, and there are worse things than bad trips that can happen if you don’t keep contamination out of your produce. Other gardening pitfalls you should steer clear of include poor care of seedlings, poor timing (it helps to know about the weather in your area), or putting all your eggs in one basket by planting large swathes of a particular crop at one time.

7. SKIMPING ON FOOD VARIETY



Don’t make the mistake of stocking food that isn’t diverse enough in your prepper’s pantry. If you have only stocked the bare-bones minimum of beans, rice, salt and sugar in your prepper’s pantry, the pickings will be slim when it comes time to eat. Even worse, your body is going to have difficulty adjusting to

food that isn't diverse enough, and food fatigue will set in. Food fatigue makes your survival food unappetizing even when you are famished.

Besides boring your taste buds when you skimp on food variety, there is malnutrition to think about, too. Malnutrition and survival don't mix well. To stay well-nourished and healthy, you need to store and eat a variety of foods.

Food choices might be limited after a disaster, so be sure to buy an array of ingredients to make several versions of meals you'll be serving. If you do, you'll feel satisfied each time you eat. Also, supplement your staples with some of the skills listed here, such as foraging and gardening. You would be amazed at how something as simple as eating peaches fresh from the tree, or even from the can, will spice up your life after eating MREs for weeks.

8. NO SURVIVAL LIBRARY



Speaking of boredom, having no survival library, or no real one to speak of, is a bad idea in several ways. The digital age has led to us doing much of our reading on computers and tablets. While it never hurts

to learn and plan before the SHTF, if the grid goes down, printed books, especially collections detailing how to prepare and survive, will be the only real way to obtain valuable knowledge. Don't let cost get in the way of building a library of books, either. You can put one together starting now that is both affordable and practical. Not taking on too much debt is another prepper pitfall that you should steer clear of, so don't make the library too high end.

The library you put together should contain all sorts of guides to help you get through all kinds of survival scenarios. For instance, the books you get should provide instructions on how to build a fire, purify water, stitch a wound, and more. In essence, all the skills that might save your life in times of crisis should be in print for you to reference when needed. Additionally, an extensive library of printed books can give you something interesting to read

19 and kill boredom during down times.

9. NOT STAYING ACTIVE



One novel that should be part of your survival library is "The Shining" by Stephen King. Besides keeping you entertained, the book teaches you about worst-case scenarios that can be brought on by cabin fever. In other words, "idle hands are the devil's workshop (Proverbs 16:27)". For the uninitiated, cabin fever is feelings of irritability and extreme restlessness that often come about after a person is confined in the same place for an extended period.

Not staying active can lead to cabin fever, too, and any experienced prepper will tell you that keeping items that make you feel good is almost as important as keeping tasty food around to fill your belly. Imagine foraging to get a good wild lunch together and drinking it with wine you've reserved for special occasions. Or, pampering yourself with some homemade and fragrant soap while soaking in a tub of warm water. Experiences such as these curb tension and make you wax nostalgic for the good old days before doomsday.

When you aren't doing survival activities that have you moving around and exercising, you might be tempted to lay around for some time. However, it's best to keep the blood moving with some exercises learned from workout books and videos. Likewise, a workout station set up with free weights, a medicine ball, and elastic bands will provide you a nice pastime that keeps your body in tip-top shape, while also staving off cabin fever by keeping your mind occupied.

10. TAKING ON TOO MUCH DEBT



Doomsday is a double-edged sword when it comes to taking on too much debt. If the end never comes, and you treat your credit card like a piggy bank, you face issues down the line that leave you less prepared. If doomsday does actually swing around

and you took on too much debt, then maybe... just maybe...your creditors didn't fare as well as you did. Neither of these 'what if' scenes lead to the right approach you should take when managing your debt.

It is best to establish a good prepping foundation and develop a sensible budget. Being smart about your purchases is a good place to start too. There is nothing wrong with visiting thrift stores or clipping coupons to help buy survival gear and outfits. Stocking up on survival knowledge is free for everyone when you visit the public library to read. There are literally all kinds of money-saving ideas you can use that won't break the bank. Remember, slow and steady wins the race, and you can achieve more if you live within your means.

BONUS: PHONING PREPPING IN



Experienced preppers are accustomed to anticipating and readying themselves for doomsday scenarios. A

part of this preparedness involves proper skill-building. This consists of acquiring things such as gear and using it, becoming a master if you will. If you don't do this, you run the risk of just phoning it in.

Purchasing quality survival gear, only to let it sit and collect dust on a shelf is a perfect example of phoning your prepping efforts in. While equipment and supplies must be put somewhere, you have to learn about their use. Reading about your gear is a start, but you have to learn to skillfully use it for it to do you any good.

Procrastination is at the root of wasting time, and preppers that just sit around and talk about the approaching apocalypse without doing anything about it is another example of phoning it in. If you are someone that's lounging around cracking a beer and leisurely watching videos about different

doomsday scenarios and pondering the meaning of it all, stop. Not taking action to make things better for you and your family is wrong on so many levels. Take the time and be committed to make the world a better place today.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Avoiding the common pitfalls listed here is essential for preppers that come from all levels of experience. While there are certainly more pitfalls to consider, we believe the ones we laid out for you will give you a great head start. One vital thing to keep in mind is that learning correct ways to survive catastrophic events have small beginnings that grow into huge achievements as you learn more. In other words, the proactive learning approach you apply today will build the knowledge and skills you need to keep you and your family safe tomorrow.



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