

READINESS CHECKLIST: 20-QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU EVALUATE YOUR EMERGENCY PREPARATIONS



If an emergency situation develops today, are you ready for it? If circumstances require it, are you ready to be self-sufficient for two weeks? Will you be able to get home from wherever you are, and survive for 14-days without shopping, without electricity, Internet or telephones, and without any outside help or government assistance? If not, you are in a precarious position. Responsible people are self-reliant and prepared.

When disaster strikes and assistance is available, that's great. You're fortunate.

But if circumstances are more typical, we need to be ready to solve our own problems. This questionnaire will help you evaluate your readiness, as well as identify areas of weakness so that you can improve your preparations.

Basics: We need to be able to get home and stay home if circumstances require it. And, we need to be able to do it without going to the store, without cars or public transportation, and without electricity, running water, and the many other conveniences we currently enjoy.

FEMA and Red Cross campaigns often recommend that we have provisions sufficient for 3-days of grid-down living, but in our experience, which is also backed by research into modern disasters, this isn't nearly enough. Today, at an absolute minimum, we need to be entirely self-reliant for 14-days. This is the real-world minimum.

Once this preparedness milestone is achieved, then we need to move forward with long-term preparations. However, emergency-situation preparations start with a [GO-Bag](#) for every person in your household, an [evacuation plan](#), and supplies for two weeks of independent self-reliant living.

The following questionnaire is a summary of the core topics. It is not comprehensive, but it will help you evaluate your level of readiness. For those who consider themselves prepared, it will help you evaluate your state of readiness. And, for those who are new to this topic, it will help you identify what you need to do to get ready.

There is an assortment of articles here at 36READY.com which expand on these topics, but for a more thorough treatment of the subject, get the book, "[PREPARED, Ready to Roll: Evacuation, Safe-Haven Selection, and Shelter-in-Place Guidebook](#)" by SIG Swanstrom.

20-QUESTIONS / 8-TOPICS

TOPIC #1: WATER

Most people can live without food for nearly a month, but only three days without water. With this in mind, a supply of pure water is a top priority.

1. [**Do you have an alternate source of pure water?**](#) During an emergency situation, what will you do if your water faucets stop running or the pump on your water well stops working, or your water supply becomes contaminated?

Have you stored a two week supply of pure water? How much do you need? Just for drinking and food preparation, you will need a minimum of 1-gallon of water per day for each person in your household.

Is your water supply immediately accessible, and is your stored water fresh? (If bottled water is stored in a cool, darkened place, it still needs to be replaced annually.) [Click Here](#) for more on bottled water and safe water storage.

Does your emergency kit also contain [**water purification supplies**](#) (filter or chemicals), and containers sufficient to hold 10-gallons of purified water per person? Do you have a large container suitable for gathering water to be purified?

2. [**Do you have additional water for sanitation?**](#)

TOPIC #2: FOOD

3. [**Do you have sufficient food for 14 days?**](#) Is it food you and your family will want to eat? Is it reasonably nutritious? To save water, do you have paper plates, disposable eating utensils, and plastic garbage sacks?

4. Do you have a camping stove or a way to cook/heat your food without grid-supplied electricity or natural gas? Do you have a 2-week supply of fuel for your stove, plus extra?

TOPIC #3: EVACUATION

5. Do you have [**emergency-kit containers**](#) which hold your pre-packed, transportable, 2-week supply of water and food, just in case you need to evacuate to a friend's house or the boondocks? Have you loaded these into your vehicle to confirm that everything fits into your car/truck?

If you don't have a vehicle, do you have access to other transportation? Or, have you stockpiled these items (and more) at a safe-haven retreat location?

6. Are there other family members or friends who might come to you if they need to evacuate from their home? Do you have sufficient water and food to take care of their needs if they arrive empty-handed? If not, are you prepared to turn them away?

7. Do you have a **GO-Bag stored in each vehicle**? Is it fully equipped? Does it include all the gear you will need? Does it include cash, so that you can buy what you need during a time that credit cards and cash registers don't work?

8. Do you always keep a ½ tank of fuel in each vehicle? Do you have easy, quick access to **additional fuel that is transportable**? Can you safely carry gas cans in your vehicle along with your other important emergency evacuation gear? How many miles can you drive on this fuel? Is this quantity sufficient?

TOPIC #4: COMMUNICATIONS

9. Do you have a way to communicate with your spouse and children if you, or they, are away from home when disaster strikes and your mobile phones stop working? If you don't have a family, who are the friends or family members you would want to contact during an emergency situation? Do you have a way to reach them when your phones stop working? **Do you, and they, have 2-way radios?** Do you know how to use these radios, and have you agreed on what frequencies to use?

10. If you need help and 9-1-1 isn't available, who are you going to call? When you call them, do they know what to do? Have you established a Mutual Aid Pact, committing to come to each other's aid? Are you sufficiently trained? Do you, and they, know what to do if called upon? If your phone doesn't work, do you have suitable **2-way radios and a communications plan?**

11. **Do you have a battery-operated radio** capable of receiving commercial AM/FM radio stations and NOAA Weather Band frequencies? (In the U.S., during an emergency situation, the government uses these WB frequencies to communicate with the citizenry. How will you collect information on what is happening in your areas?) Does your emergency radio include shortwave bands? Do you know where to look for emergency radio stations and "news" information?

12. Do you have sufficient batteries to run your AM/FM emergency radio and your 2-way radios, continuously for two weeks? Do you have rechargeable batteries, a smart charger, and a solar panel capable of recharging all the batteries you might need to recharge? Have you tested your radios to make sure they work?

Redundancy: What if your primary battery-powered items break? Do you have backup gear? Do your spare radios and flashlights which use the same batteries? What if the weather is stormy or cloudy, and you experience several days without sufficient sunlight to power your solar panels? Do you have sufficient extra batteries?

TOPIC #5: LIGHTING

13. Do you have a quality **flashlight** and a **headlamp** for each person in your household? Do you have spares? Do they use the same type of batteries? (AA-batteries is the best choice as they are readily available.

14. Have you stockpiled all the batteries you might need? Disposable Lithium-ion batteries have the longest life but are expensive but are still a good value. However, the best value may be rechargeable Lithium-ion batteries combined with a smart charger as these can be reused more than a hundred times. Lithium-ion batteries last a long time, they put out a lot of power, and they can be used many times without the “memory” problems of other types of rechargeable batteries. Nevertheless, it’s still prudent to have a supply of inexpensive alkaline batteries on hand.)

15. Do you have emergency lighting and lanterns for your home, and sufficient batteries/fuel to keep them running all night for two weeks without grid power? Do you have motion-activated battery-powered floodlights suitable for illuminating the exterior of your home and important out-buildings? Do you have handheld spotlights you can use to sweep/search exterior areas? How long will the batteries last? Is this sufficient?

TOPIC #6: SAFETY AND SECURITY

It is not unusual for the crime rate to soar during an emergency situation. When the police are busy dealing with the emergency, opportunist criminals, gangs, and looters think they can operate with impunity. Even ordinarily “good” citizens often resort to crime, and even violence, when they are scared or hungry. Are you prepared for these developments?

16. Is your home and property theft resistant? Do your window and door locks work and do you use them? Are your provisions and other valuables secured? Do you have a battery operated alarm system (batteries must be recharged or replaced daily to keep the system operational)?

17. Are you prepared to defend yourself, your loved ones, and safeguard your irreplaceable provisions? Crime and violence almost always escalate during a disaster or emergency situation, so security and defense are important issues.

Security can sometimes be improved by building a fortified safe-room into your house and retreating to it. However, for most people, a more practical, diverse, and mobile solution is firearm defense. For some, this is an uncomfortable topic. Yet, it is often the best option if you are willing to obtain training from a firearm self-defense specialist.

If you can legally possess firearms, here is what you need:

Guns for Urban Neighborhoods: If you live in a house or apartment, you need a handgun in 9mm or larger caliber for each competent adult. In addition to the magazine (ammunition) kept in the loaded gun, a minimum of four additional magazines is needed.

Plus, extra ammunition (200-rounds per gun, minimum), a holster made for the specific gun, and magazine pouches to facilitate carrying extra ammunition and the rapid reloading of the handgun. Your ammunition should utilize hollow-point bullets to improve stopping power and to reduce the risk of ricochets and the penetration of walls. If you can carry a concealed handgun, do. If you need a license to carry a concealed handgun, get one even, even if you don’t intend to routinely carry.

Guns for Suburban Areas: If you live on less than 5-acres, you need a tactical rifle or tactical shotgun for both you and your spouse, and one for other competent adults and older children living in your household. Everyone needs to be prepared to defend themselves.

Each firearm should have 500-rounds of ammunition for that specific gun, plus 7-magazines, and ammo pouches or a [magazine chest rig suitable for carrying 6-magazines](#). For each tactical shotgun, stockpile 100 self-defense shells (00-Buck, #4 Buck, or lead slugs) and two tactical [25-shell pouches](#) or a [bandoleer](#) for each tactical shotgun.

Guns for Rural Areas: If you live on more than 5 acres, you need a tactical rifle for you and your spouse. In addition, for each rifle have at least 500-rounds of ammunition stored in a [steel ammo can](#), plus 7 magazines, and magazine pouches or a [chest rig](#). This is to keep the operator mobile and to facilitate quicker reloading.

Firearm Selection: For more on this subject, download the e-book, "[Family and Personal Protection: Selecting the Best Gun for Self-Defense at Home](#)."

Firearm Safety: Regardless of where you live, if you have firearms you also need secure storage, such as a [steel handgun safe bolted-to-something](#) or a [steel gun storage box for rifles and shotguns](#) secured to something solid. This is necessary not just to keep your guns out of the hands of children, but also unauthorized adults and to make sure they are theft-resistant if your home is burglarized. Remember, violent criminals don't get their firearms from stores or gun shows, they buy guns which were stolen in burglaries.

[Firearms Safety Rules](#) (PDF Document) and firearm self-defense training are necessary for anyone who might handle or use a firearm. Without [training](#), you are not prepared for firearm defense.

Other Methods of Defense: If firearms are not a viable solution for you, and even if they are, obtain a personal-size spray canister of [pepper spray](#). This is a non-lethal option that sometimes works. In the hands of a civilian during a disaster or state of emergency, stun guns and Tasers are generally insufficient for the task. If weapons are problematic, at the very least keep a baseball bat, cricket bat, or some other object that can be used for defense. If you are willing to become trained in a martial art, that can be helpful too, but it is not nearly as effective as a firearm in the hands of a trained user.

TOPIC #7: MEDICAL

18. Do you have a [medical kit](#) that is equipped with [stop-the-bleed](#) and other [emergency medical supplies](#)? Does it contain your prescription medications and over-the-counter meds, too? Does your family, and your children, know how to provide emergency medical care? Your life may depend on them being trained.

Are you trained in the use of these medical kit items? Do you have a neighbor who is an EMT or paramedic? Do you know what to do if you are unable to summon medical help? Most first-aid courses assume that the injured person will quickly be transported to a hospital, but what if that

isn't the case? During a disaster hospitals are often overwhelmed with patients, so once again, you need to be prepared to deal with the problem yourself. What if hospital care and clinics are unavailable? [What if medical care is unavailable](#) and you're on your own?

19. Do you have [sanitation and toilet supplies](#) which can be used to meet your needs when water isn't flowing? What if water isn't flowing in the pipes of your home, and your toilets don't flush? How will you handle it?

TOPIC #8: YOUR SAFE-HAVEN, AN EVACUATION RETREAT LOCATION

20. Do you have a place to go if you cannot remain in your home? Have you stored emergency supplies at that location?

Do you know the fastest and safest ways to get there if you need to travel by back roads or on foot? Do you have [suitable maps](#) and a [magnetic \(manual\) compass](#)? Do you know how to use these items for off-road navigation? Have you included hiking boots? (Example of durable [men's](#) and [women's](#) lightweight hiking boots.)

Do you keep a bag of seasonal, emergency clothing stored with your GO-Bag? This is an important addition, but these items should not be stored *in* your GO-Bag. They should be in a separate bag but stored *with* your GO-Bag. When disaster strikes, at the earliest convenience, change into your durable seasonal clothing, heavy socks, and stout shoes or hiking boots. If you will be traveling foot, leave your other clothing items behind.

The Call to Evacuate

While we appreciate the efforts of government agencies and private and public shelters, if you have the option, these should not be depended on as places of safety and refuge. Some of these locations will be a godsend, others will be inadequate, uncomfortable, or worse. Notwithstanding, when your area is subject to evacuation notice, we heartily recommend that you flee from the area if it is practical to do so.

If you have the ability to evacuate, and yet you are considering sheltering-in-place rather than leaving, only do so if you are wholly confident that your home is located in an area that is safe from both the emergency event itself as well as a crime wave aftermath, and that you have fully met each of the above 20-question criteria.

The prudent choice is to evacuate before the government institutes an evacuation order. This will get you out of the area in advance of the hoards, and it will afford you many options which are not available to those who wait. If you will need help to evacuate, secure that assistance before evacuation is ordered.

If you decide to wait or not evacuate, understand that it is inexcusably self-centered to fail to immediately evacuate or otherwise allow yourself to get into avoidable danger, and then expect First Responders to risk their lives to rescue you. These heroes have better things to do than bailout irresponsible people.

Don't choose to delay or stay behind unless you fully understand the situation and risks, and are 100% prepared to care for yourself for the duration of the emergency situation. And, you also have viable contingency plans which don't include outside assistance.

If you have a safe-haven retreat location and have prepared it in advance for this purpose, you are wise and very fortunate. But, if you have *not* prepared a safe-haven site in advance, simply fleeing the area without a specific destination in mind; a site that has been properly prepared in advance may result in the creation of additional and even more serious problems.

If you have not prepared a safe-haven retreat location in advance, it is unfortunate, but a church or government shelter may be your best option. Don't automatically avoid going to a shelter; pragmatically weigh your options.

If you have not prepared a safe-haven in advance but you do evacuate early, in advance of the crowds, and you can safely reach a distant city beyond the reach of the problem you are fleeing, plus you have the financial resources to support your needs for the duration of the emergency situation, this may be a viable option. However, if all three of these conditions are not met, a church or government-sponsored shelter may still be your best choice.

Prioritize Your Preparation Efforts

It's not uncommon for people to expend a lot of time and money on preparations which are non-essential. Comfort and convenience are desirable but don't get distracted by a desire to make yourself comfortable. Concentrate first on the essential topics mentioned here.

After these 20 readiness questions have been answered and fully implemented, at that point it is reasonable to prepare for "non-essential" conveniences and comforts. These nonessentials may be a worthy quest, but it is our core disaster preparations and getting ready for survival, *and our ability to help others during an emergency situation*, that is essential. This is what deserves our first, top-priority efforts.

Prioritized your efforts. Don't get distracted. Prepare now, while you can.

The first element of readiness is for each member of your household to have a fully stocked GO-Bag and to have the knowledge needed, and the ability, to get home or to your prearranged safe-haven retreat location. To do this, you need to have an evacuation/emergency plan, and every member of your household needs to know the plan. To round this out, you need a well-selected stockpile of water, food, and the other gear needed for two weeks of independent self-reliant living. Importantly, *readiness* isn't just a concept, nor is it a collection of supplies. It's a lifestyle.

For more on this topic, read the "[Prepared, Ready to Roll](#)" book series.