

Chapter 4: PLANNING

“We have a lot of prep work to do. Bicycles, backpacks, and weapons are first priority. The rescue group needs two packs. One BOLT bag and a smaller assault kit—”

“What’s an assault kit?” asked Ed. “I don’t have stuff like that.”

“It’s just a smaller backpack, like this,” said Alex, lifting up the dark green, nylon backpack from the side of his chair.

“We’ll use these when we leave the car to get the kids. Nothing but the basics. Ammo, water, limited food, first aid kit...it’s all here on the sheets.”

“Why pack two bags?” asked Linda.

“The BOLT bags are for situations requiring us to permanently abandon the Jeep. We’ll be able to continue on foot with enough supplies to get us to our destination,” Alex explained.

“What if that happens before you reach Boston?”

“The mission remains the same. Get the kids and get back to Limerick. The only parameter that changes is the length of time it takes to accomplish the mission. Could be twelve hours, could be twelve days.”

“Are you sure you’re up for this, Charlie?” Linda asked her husband.

“Of course I’m up for this! What the hell are you talking about?”

“If the car dies in Sanford, Maine, you’re looking at what,” she made a quick calculation using the map, “a hundred and fifty mile round trip on foot?”

“Then I’ll finally lose that last ten pounds!”

“What about your knee—and your back?”

“I’ll bring my knee wrap and back brace, along with plenty of pain meds. I hike through the woods for days and end up in the county looking for deer. I’ll be fine. It’s these two beach strollers I’m worried about—gotcha there, guys,” said Charlie.

—From *The Perseid Collapse*

Steven

Now that you’ve come clean and admitted that you need a few more laps around the track (I’ll be right behind you)—it’s time to buy all the gear you’ll need to survive the apocalypse! Finger off the “buy” button! Sorry to do that to you again. I promise there will come a point in this book where you can mouse-click a button that will send your spouse or significant other through their first Buy-In crisis. Patience. We have a few more First Steps to take in the planning process—like come up with a plan.

I joke about buying gear in each chapter for a reason—to *prepare you for a mind-blowing piece of wisdom*. When you hear the words “mind-blowing” in one of these essays, it usually means Randy introduced me to it. Are you sitting down? Here it comes. **Develop your plan before deciding what gear you need to.** I hear crickets—probably because this messes up your plan to get a National Firearms Act (NFA) tax stamp to buy that fully automatic AR-15 you’ve been eyeballing on Gunbroker.com. I know it stings. Stings for me too. While Randy didn’t invent the concept of planning from the ground up, he did bring the phrase “Kit to Fit” to the readiness game. It’s catchy and it embodies

nearly everything I have to say about the planning process. You build a ***Kit to Fit*** your plan.

But that's not fun, Steven! What if my plan only requires me to add 20 cans of food and a basic first aid kit to my basement storage shelves? How does that get me any closer to the AR-15 with EOTech holographic sight that I NEED? It doesn't, but if a few cans of food and a first aid kit are truly all you need to endure the most likely disaster scenario threatening your family, you can buy the rifle—after you shell out \$50 at the grocery store. See, I told you we'd be friends again!

This may seem like a rudimentary, almost silly example of ***Kit to Fit***, but I guarantee your town is filled with folks sporting full gun safes and empty pantry shelves. They didn't fail the ***Kit to Fit*** test. They never showed up to take the test. Most of these people haven't seriously considered a disaster preparedness plan, which would better balance the contents of the safe and pantry. Frankly, this group scares me the most. Twenty days into a crisis that cripples our nation's food delivery system, these folks are going to reverse Randy's catch phrase. Fit the Kit will define their new survival strategy. When your Kit consists solely of an AR-15, hunting is your only option. Let's hope they go hunting outside of your neighborhood.

Once again, I hit you with a slightly over-dramatized example of the concept. Roving bands of hungry, firearms toting citizens—with no plan. I just scared myself into buying another case of ammunition, and made a good case for purchasing a firearm as part of your disaster readiness plan. We'll talk about that in more detail later. We'll be even better friends!

Let's talk about the less obvious problem with putting the “cart before the horse,” and buying up all of that fancy survival gear before you figure out what you truly need to execute your personal readiness plan. ASSUMPTION. Fill your basement with survival and preparedness gear right now, before you develop a plan, and I guarantee you will make one of two dangerous assumptions about readiness.

The most common assumption will be an excited and proud “I'm ready!” Ready for what? The assumption crumbles as you stutter through a list off scenarios, none of which match up to your SURVIVE WHAT disaster. This is easy to remedy. You pretend the pile of gear doesn't exist and create a plan, ultimately comparing what you need to what you have. Make the adjustments and you're back on the Kit to Fit path.

The less common, more insidious assumption will be a subconscious version of Fit the Kit, where the “prepper” thinks they've followed the process, but have let the Kit cloud their judgment. This comes in a few forms like:

Overconfidence in your abilities based on the quality and quantity of equipment. An expensive rifle and night vision goggles doesn't make you a candidate for Delta Force. In most cases, it turns you into one more guy stepping on branches at night, while trying to move your family through sketchy territory.

Developing the wrong plan based on what you have. It worked for MacGyver! And the dozen or so writers on the set ensuring the MacGyver's plan succeeded. I understand that we're not talking about you opening an unfamiliar tool shed as the coastal tsunami sirens sound, but the concept is the same. Given a set of equipment, human nature ensures that your plan will reflect the contents of your readiness “bunker,” and not the other way around. You aren't MacGyver, and you don't have Steven Konkoly making sure that your character survives.

I feel like I've beaten this one to death. You get the picture. "Kit to Fit." "Plan from the ground up." "Plan first, gear later." "Hear me now, listen to me later." What? Just checking to make sure your eyes haven't completely glazed over. However you want to say it, DO IT.

Randy

When it comes to personal preparedness there is much to consider. Everything from figuring out what you're preparing for and why to what you're going to do and what you need to get it done. It can be overwhelming. With all of the variables involved with disaster preparedness, it is very easy to get sidetracked from your original goal and that can lead to frustration, thereby slowing your progress. To our way of thinking, the key to unlocking a successful preparedness strategy is to keep things rational, informed and in order. You need to bring organization to a process associated with chaos. In other words, you need a plan!

Before you spend one penny on gear, start forming a survival group or break ground on that new back yard bunker, you should start at the beginning and focus on you...your situation, your options and your needs. This is not a deal where keeping up with the Jones' will do you any good. In fact, it might get you killed. The color of their grass does not matter. Your disaster preparedness plan should be personalized, tailored to fit what's going on in your world right now. How many people are in your family or group? Are there any special diet, health or age considerations? Does anyone bring a specialized skill set to your group? Any consideration to what your situation will be six months from now is not your immediate concern and should not be your focus. You cannot afford to develop a plan based on where you hope you will be six months from now or what you would like to have. A miscalculation like this could prove fatal. You must be honest with yourself and construct your plan based on the facts as you know them today. You can always adjust any plan as new information or assets become available. Part of that consideration is identifying the hazards that currently pose the biggest threat to you and your area. This information will help you scale your response to the appropriate level. As you think through your planning, you will begin to identify the best options for you and your family or group. Answers to such questions as "What situations would force us to leave our home or our city?" or "Where will we go if we're forced to evacuate and how will we get there?" will begin to come into focus. Once you've identified the questions that need to be answered you can start to work out the answers, as well as what exactly it will take to make those answers a reality.

We have a phrase for this bottom up, pyramid approach to the planning process. At Practical Tactical, we like to *Kit to Fit*. This refers to part of the Practical Tactical Cycle, which we will discuss in more detail later. In short, it is a process of education and assessment, developing a personalized preparedness plan and then building your kit to fit your plan as opposed to working things the other way around, followed up with training and evaluation. Many times, people get so caught up in all of the flashy and "tacti-cool" gear associated with preparedness that they lose focus. A common mistake someone new to preparedness will make is to go out and buy a bunch of expensive gear because they

saw it on some website or television show, conveniently overlooking the fact that in most cases they don't know how to use said gear, stack it in a big pile when they get home and proceed to haphazardly make a plan to suit the gear they have on hand. Of course, that's assuming they understand the need to give any thought to planning at all. This is a recipe for disaster based on the comforting marketing promise that if you have all the neat stuff, somehow that will make you invincible to the realities of survival. We disagree. We believe that developing a personalized plan based on your situation before you give any thought to outfitting yourself and your family or group will save you time, money and more than one headache down the road. In the end, you will be left with a more flexible and functional plan. A plan that you have an intimate knowledge of and a comfortable confidence in that will make your odds of success exponentially better. Plus, you will most likely still have plenty of really cool gear at your disposal. That's just one of the perks of preparedness. Regardless of whether you are focused on the overall disaster plan, or just one part of your plan like getting back home if you are away when a disaster strikes the same process will always apply.

As an example, let's take a look at a situation we had to deal with in developing our family disaster plan. After we did the research, developed a disaster plan for our home complete with evacuation plans and got ourselves squared away with the gear necessary to execute our plan, my wife and I started thinking about what we would do if we were away from home when a disaster strikes. You can have the best plan in the world and all the preps to execute it perfectly at your home, but if you cannot get back to your "insurance policy" it will be worth about as much as a whistle in the wind. We knew we had a new challenge to tackle.

We both work away from home and commute to work every day. Not only do we travel in polar opposite directions to go to work, I have to travel more than twice the distance one way that my wife does just to get there. It was clear. Should we find ourselves in an emergency situation while on the job, we would each be on our own to get home. Once we knew the score, we applied the concepts of the Practical Tactical Cycle and proceeded to build our kits to get home to fit each of our individual plans.

This is just one example of a circumstance that requires a little extra planning. Just looking within my family, I can see other examples that are just as demanding as ours, if not more. My mom has physical limitations and my brother has two very young children to consider when developing his preparedness plan. These are very real challenges, but they can be overcome. The key is to educate yourself about the factors impacting your situation, recognize the challenges in your preparedness plan early on and address them head on before they cost you something infinitely more valuable than a few dollars, like your life or the life of a friend or loved one.

