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When to Bug Out: Knowing the Signs

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Disasters such as hurricanes, floods, chemical leaks and for some, societal breakdowns and terrorist attacks can cause some of the largest evacuation complications. One of the largest concerns during a disaster situation is *when* to leave.

While it is important to listen and keep up to date on the current status of a disaster, as well as actively acquiring information regarding the disaster, the action of packing up and evacuating rests in the evacuees hands; not the governments or the businesses telling the person they have to work until the last minute. Relying solely on the government's ability to manage a crisis, takes the power out of a person's hands and places into a stranger's hands (who may not have your best interests in mind). Many have forgotten this and rely only on a governmental body to tell them when they can leave. It is important to emphasize that the *needs and agendas of a local government are different than the citizens*.

Don't Be Another Statistic: Be Ready

In a situation where people are facing an evacuation order, time is precious. Typically, people are not ready or prepared to bug out. When the individuals are unprepared and is combined with the city's unpreparedness, it does not make a good scenario. There is no better example of the governments incompetence to handle these massive evacuation orders than with what happened during the evacuations of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. Many state and local governments wait until the very last moment to issue an evacuation order. Planning to evacuate thousands, if not millions of individuals in a 2-3 day time span, will cause nothing but mass chaos and unnecessary conflict.

If one lives in an area where they could be prone to disasters, it is always the best bet to have the following ready:

- **A well defined [preparedness plan](#) ^[1] with maps and alternative routes in place.** Don't leave unless there is a plan in place. A person who is prepared to leave and has a set destination in mind is more prepared than the person who is scrambling around their home trying to find items and not even thinking about what their emergency plan will be.
- **A [72 hour bag](#) ^[2] that is ready to go for the family as well as a bag for any pets.**
- **Leave as soon as possible.** Do not wait until they have opened up the contraflow lanes to evacuate.
- **Have some money set aside for an emergency.** Prepare for some ATM machines and banks to be closed. Example: You finally get on the road and realize you are low on gas. All the banks and ATMs are closed. In this scenario, once the gas runs out, you will be stuck with no money for food, shelter or transportation.
- **Make sure the [Bug Out Vehicle](#) ^[3] (BOV) is well maintained.** Having the proper items to keep it going can be of great value in a disaster situation. Items such as an oil, extra tire, fix-a-flat, collapsible shovel, etc.

Knowledge is Critical

Knowledge is essential in any type of emergency evacuation scenario. Imagine how important it would be if someone had the advantage of having the information to leave 3 hours before everyone else did. If they were already prepared and ready to go, it would be a *huge* advantage.

- **Awareness of the different advisory forms to get the most information.** A person does not have to listen to the TV to get information. There are many types of emergency advisories: radio, police scanners, Internet, twitter, and even a cell phone [disaster alert](#) ^[4] system to alert a person at the earliest time possible. This will give someone a heads up of what it to come.
- **Know which station on the radio has [Emergency Broadcast Stations](#)** ^[5].

Every minute is critical when bugging out. If a person is not prepared, then they are losing valuable time. Using all known communication resources to get information and staying clued in will put a person at a greater advantage than those only listening to one type of communication form. Gathering information ahead of time of what the possible threat is (flood preparation, hurricane preparation, tornado, societal uprising, etc), and finding ways to avoid them will put a person in a better mind frame when they actually have to come head to head with the threat.

Know The Signs

Waiting until an evacuation order is issued is considered too late for many people who consider themselves prepared. Knowing the signs and acting on them is the key to bugging out at the best time. If a person knows what to look for, they can prepare to leave ahead of the hoard of evacuees.

Some signs include:

- **When people begin buying emergency food and water supplies.**
- **Hearing the news sources talking about a possible threat is the time to begin preparing to leave.**
- **Seeing long lines at the bank where people are withdrawing money is a sign that something is up.**
- **Long gas lines is also an indicator of people beginning to prepare for a possible evacuation.**
- **Increased military and police presence in the streets and the community.**
- **Long lines at home improvement stores from people trying to buy supplies to prepare homes for disasters, buying generator needs, etc.**

If a person is already prepared for such a disaster, they will not have to wait in lines full of stressed out people, not have to fight their way through a grocery store or get into a possible altercation trying to fill their cars with gas. In times of crises, many are not prepared, and the stress levels are increased exorbitantly. Everyone has one thing on their mind – getting supplies and getting out. If a person already has their supplies in order, getting out ahead of everyone will put them at a greater advantage.

Consider the Dangers and Know the Threats

Knowing when to bug out solely depends upon the person and what they are trying to avoid. It is better to be safe than sorry. Obviously, evacuating in a high stress situation is absolutely the worst case scenario. Yet, this tends to be the norm for many. Many believe that bad things cannot happen to them, so why bothering in planning for it? This mind frame is what leads to dangerous situations.

Many who wait until the government suggests it is necessary to evacuate will have more of a chance of getting caught in mass chaos, be amongst unprepared and stressed out drivers, and possibly face bouts of crime. Leaving at the wrong time can put a person and their family into jeopardy. Seeing the signs and knowing when to bug out will play a pivotal role in evacuating safely. Not to mention giving a person the advantage of having the right mind set, leaving quickly, and more importantly – *safely*.

The information provided is intended to give suggestions of what one may do in an evacuation situation as well as to suggest that people use the information provided by media sources and use their own sound judgement to make a decision to evacuate a city. This post in no way advises people not to listen to their local governments or relative news sources. It only suggests that people use the information provided by media sources and to leave when they believe it is pertinent.

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[1] preparedness plan: http://readynutrition.com/resources/disaster-its-not-a-case-of-if-but-when_02102009/

[2] 72 hour bag: http://readynutrition.com/resources/are-you-ready-series-72-hour-kits_04122009/

[3] Bug Out Vehicle: http://readynutrition.com/resources/vehicle-72-hour-kits_04122009/

[4] disaster alert: http://www.firstalerttext.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

[5] Emergency Broadcast Stations: <http://www.theradiosource.com/articles-news-ears-across-america.htm>

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