



Bunker Mentality: The booming business of Doomsday

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Surviving doomsday in style

A look inside the Vivos 8, a underground modular bunker filled with the amenities of a luxury yacht.

As the date the Mayans predicted the world will end nears, restless 'Occupy' hordes rise up and rogue regimes threaten the world with nuclear weapons, one thing is sure: The doomsday business is booming.

From the society's wealthiest and most powerful class to rural off-the-grid types, people are preparing for the worst, and sparing no expense on elaborate underground shelters, buying years' worth of non-perishable foods and stockpiling fuel and ammunition. Some have embraced the term "preppers," although precisely what they are preparing for varies.

"We realized that we were totally unprepared should something happen," said Jack Jobe, who was prompted to prep for a natural disaster after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Jobe, who will be featured on an upcoming episode of the NatGeo's "Doomsday Preppers," has invested about \$3,000 in a safe room in the cellar of his family's Colorado home. The basement bunker has reinforced steel doors, along with two 55-gallon drums of water, a four-month supply of food and a cache of guns and ammunition.

"Fleeing won't be an option," Jobe told FoxNews.com. "We are ready to survive in place."

In addition to "Doomsday Preppers," a Discovery show entitled "Doomsday Bunkers" also chronicles the growing trend of prepping for everything short of Armageddon. The popularity of these reality shows underscores the fascination with bunkers, freeze-dried food, guns, ammo and everything else people will need if and when society collapses.

It's the prospect of class warfare, not natural disasters, that drives some of the nation's wealthiest people to prep. Growing tension between the haves and the have-nots could boil over, with pitchfork and torch-bearing masses outside their gates, they fear. With that in mind, \$200,000 for the Vivos 8, an underground chamber with 24-inch thick concrete and steel walls, is no obstacle. Other luxury bunkers have stainless steel appliances, generators that can run for months and full plumbing.

"We are seeing an awareness among the more affluent community of scenarios that might happen, and these people have the money to address it," Roy Edwards, president and founder of All Secure Global, a preparedness consulting company that caters to higher-end clientele, told FoxNews.com.

Preparing for nuclear attack, societal breakdown or biblical disaster is nothing new in the U.S. In the 1950s, backyard bomb shelters were all the rage. They were typically no-frills – some bunkbeds, shelves full of canned goods and as much water as a fearful dad could carry through the hatch. These days, a big enough bankroll can buy subterranean dwellings with the amenities of a hotel suite.

Edwards says that he had a client spend as much as \$15 million on multiple shelters and supplies recently.

“The rhetoric has escalated,” Edwards said. “This past year with Occupy Wall Street has hit home and class warfare has become a real possibility. When these types of things happen, the level of awareness goes up.

“People are prepared to pay it,” he continued. “What is the safety and security of your family worth?”

Base bunkers start at \$40,000, although that doesn't include the cost of delivery, excavation and installation. The price can go as high as a customer's tastes demand. The Vivos 8 mentioned above can accommodate up to eight people and is outfitted like a luxury yacht. In addition to its electro-magnetic pulse-proof walls, it features a fully functional kitchen and bathroom, a living room outfitted with a TV and stereo system and even a hydroponic gardening system. Multiple Vivos 8s can even be connected by tunnel systems.

“We had a number of people who wanted their own setup,” said Robert Vicino, founder and CEO of California-based Vivos. “So we decided to provide a turnkey service. You can literally build an underground city with these bunkers.”

Vicino founded his company three years ago, setting up two such subterranean cities using shelters originally built during the height of the cold war. The two large, multi-story shelters, located in Indiana and Nebraska, can house hundreds of people and include medical facilities, gyms and common areas for meals and social activities. The shelters are set up much like a time share, with a \$50,000 fee buying “part ownership” in the facility.

Survival depends on more than simply shelter. Preppers also stock up on food with extremely long shelf life as well as weapons and ammunition.

“I've had many wealthy people approach me asking about firearms and how to build up food and water storage,” said Jason Hanson, a personal security specialist and former CIA officer. “I had one doctor who approached me at a dinner party recently who told me that he used to think that guns were the devil, but due to the financial unrest, he changed his mind. He asked me to teach him how to use them.”

“Many more wealthy types have been approaching me for help and they are generally well-educated people. It's all because they read the headlines are concerned that the dollar could disappear.”

Dr. Carole Lieberman, a psychologist with UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute and author of the book, “Coping with Terrorism: Dreams Interrupted,” said the need to

feel prepared for dire circumstances is hard-wired into all of us, although some go to greater extremes.

“There’s a great contrast between the prepping community and the rest of the world,” Lieberman said. “But most of us are living in the extreme of denial which is just as out of touch with reality.”

Some degree of preparing for calamity “is necessary, but it shouldn’t take over your life.”

As long as Jobe knows his family can survive anything, he is okay with being marginalized.

“A lot of people call us outlaws,” Jobe said. “But if you have health and auto insurance, what is wrong with insuring you and your family’s safety, too? Why does it make us outlaws?”
