



Chapter 2: Bug out or Batten Down?

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Should you Stay or Go?

Based on the previous section, you should have a good idea of the potential survival situations you might be facing. Now the question is whether to stay and face them or move to another -- hopefully safer -- location.

We all have a strong desire to protect what's ours. Regardless of whether you own the largest house in the neighborhood or rent a ramshackle shack, home is where the heart is, not to mention all the rest of your stuff! And Captain Dave knows you've worked long and hard to accumulate that stuff, so abandoning it and running for safety may stick in your craw.

Thankfully, there are times when saying at home makes the most sense. If you can wait out the storm, ignore the heavy snow, batten down the hatches against civil unrest or otherwise stay at home during an emergency situation without endangering yourself, it may be your best bet. There are many advantages to staying home in a survival situation, if you can safely do so:

- The food in your refrigerator and pantry can supplement your survival stash (see the next chapter).
- If you loose power, you can quickly cook much of your food and monitor the temperature of your freezer (frozen food will usually keep at least 24 hours).

- You'll have more time to improve your home's chances of survival (move items to high ground, put plywood over windows, etc.)
- It offers shelter against most elements.
- You'll have access to all your clothing, bedding and other comforts.
- You won't suffer from boredom as much as you might in a shelter.
- You can protect your stuff from looters.

Of course, there's a downside as well:

- You could be putting yourself in unnecessary, life-threatening danger. (The fire, flood, hurricane, riot, etc. might be worse than anticipated. We've all seen TV coverage of people clinging to their roofs as the house washes down stream.)
- If you decided to evacuate later, it may be too late.
- Without heat, electricity, hot water or other services, home just isn't the same.
- There is no sense of community, unless other neighbors or members of your local survival group stay home, too. You may feel cut off and alone.
- If a mandatory evacuation has been ordered, you may be prosecuted by local authorities (although this rarely happens).

No matter how much you wish to stay at home, there are times when evacuation is the only choice. These include a nuclear, chemical or biological event as well as any impending disaster that is likely to destroy your home. For example:

- If the warning sirens on that nearby chemical plant go off at 3 a.m., you have no choice but to don your gas masks, grab your bug out bag and drive the opposite direction as quickly as possible.
- If you're beach-front home is directly in the path of a Force 3 hurricane, staying put might show a surplus of guts, but deficit of brains.
- Likewise the time you spend, garden hose in hand, trying to fend off a raging fire that has already burnt out six neighbors might be better spent salvaging your valuables and items with sentimental value.

So, if the survival situations you outlined in the previous section shows several emergency situations requiring evacuation, you'll need to put together a plan:

The Evacuation Plan

There are several important elements to your evacuation plan:

- Where to go

- How to get there
- What to bring with you

Where to Go

Sure, you can head to the nearest shelter, but if sitting on cots at the local high school gymnasium or National Guard Armory was your first choice, you probably wouldn't be reading this.

You need a safe house or survival retreat in a location where the current crisis will not threaten you. The easiest way to set up a safe house is to coordinate with a friend or family member located between 100 and 150 miles away, preferably in a different setting. For example:

- If you're in the inner city, they should be in a rural area or at least a smaller town, preferably not the suburbs of your city
- If you're near the coast, they should be inland
- If you're near a flood plain, the safe house should be on higher ground.

Following these guidelines, you can be relatively sure of several things:

- Whatever disaster you are facing should *not* affect them, and vice versa. This allows you to trade off, so when they are facing a survival situation, your home can be their safe house.
- You'll be running towards something, not just away from danger.
- You can get there on one tank of gas, even if there is a great deal of traffic (During the Hurricane Opal evacuation in 1995, it was not unusual for a 100 mile trip on the interstate to take four hours).
- You won't be turned away at the inn (Hotel rooms are quickly filled, and often at inflated prices).

If you plan in advance, you can leave a few changes of old clothes, a toiletries kit, necessary prescription drugs, ammunition, some MREs or anything else you might need at the safe house. This will make your evacuation easier.



While many will find that a friend or relative's house is the easiest and most cost-effective safe house, the ultimate safe house or survival retreat would be a second residence located in a very rural location. During normal times, this survival retreat can double as your vacation home, hunting lodge or weekend getaway destination. But when the flag



goes up, you can evacuate to a safe house fully stocked with everything you need for self

sufficiency.

Captain Dave's **ultimate survival retreat** would be:

- Well off the beaten track, ideally reachable by a single dirt road. This seclusion will offer you a good bit of protection. For example, you can cut a large tree down across the road to help eliminate unwanted guests.
- Not too ostentatious, so that it doesn't draw a lot of talk from locals and become a target for vandalism. Nothing wrong with a solid one-room cabin with a sleeping loft.
- Near a spring, well, stream or other natural source of water.
- Equipped with at least one fireplace or wood stove for cooking and heat.
- Within 10 to 20 miles of a village or small town where you can go (by foot, if necessary) for additional supplies, news and other contact with the outside world, should the emergency stretch into months or longer.
- Have enough arable land for growing your own vegetables and other crops.
- Near a natural, easily harvestable food source (usually wildlife for hunting or fishing).
- Provisioned with enough food to keep your family safe for at least three months, preferably a year.
- Provisioned with tools necessary for long-term self sufficiency, should it become necessary.
- Stocked with enough weapons and ammunition to defend it from small groups of marauding invaders, should it come to that.

If you are worried about **caching goods** in a unattended house, where they could be stolen, you can [cache](#) a supply nearby. While most caches are buried in hidden locations, a simple solution to this dilemma is to rent a commercial storage unit in a town close to your retreat. This has several advantages:

- As long as you have access to the facility 24 hours a day (one of those outside storage areas where you use your own lock is best) you can get to your supplies when necessary.
- It will be much easier to make a few trips to and from the nearby storage facility and your safe house than carry everything with you from home.
- It's easier to check on the status and add materials to this type of cache than one buried in a secluded location.
- In a worst case scenario, you can hoof it to the storage area, spend the night inside and hike back the next day with a full backpack.

Of course, for the ultimate protection, a buried or other hidden cache is hard to beat. This is especially true for the long-term storage of ammunition and weapons that are or may one day be considered illegal. [Here are some specifics](#) on establishing this type of a cache.

How to Get to Your Safe House

Whichever option you've chosen for your safe house, the best way to get there is by car. It's convenient (most of us have them), offers some protection, is relatively fast and allows us to carry much more gear than on foot or bicycle.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with taking a train to a safe house in a nearby city. Captain Dave is partial to boats, and even a bus beats walking, but for most, the car is our escape vehicle of choice.

While everyone chooses a car that fits their lifestyle and budget, a large four-wheel drive vehicle is the best bet for evacuating to your safe house. The bigger, heavier the vehicle is, the better. Not only do larger vehicles have greater ground clearance and the ability to ford higher waterways, they offer the most protection and carry the most gear. They also offer you and your passengers better protection in a fender-bender. When the entire city seems to be running from an impending disaster, you don't want to be stuck on the side of the road because of a minor accident.



Four-wheel drive is critical if you need to go off-road to avoid accidents, road blocks or other evacuation-related snafus.

So, since an army surplus army truck is probably out of the question, a large four-wheel drive pick-up with a cap may be the best bug out vehicle available. But the fact is, whatever vehicle (or vehicles) you have at hand is the best bet.

And the old saw about never letting your car's gas tank get below half makes a lot of sense. Captain Dave also recommends keeping a couple of five gallon tanks of gas on hand "for emergencies." Even if you use it to fill your tank, carry it with you (strapped to the roof, perhaps) because you never know when you might find more. If you are very serious, you can have a second tank installed in your truck.

And while we're on the subject of cars, make sure your is is good mechanical condition.

Taking the High Road

One of the most critical factors is route planning. You should have memorized several routes to your safe house or survival retreat and have maps on hand so you can identify alternate routes around accidents or other problem areas. The routes should include:

The fastest, most direct route.

This will be your first choice when you are getting out early, before the crowds. If you're smart enough to beat the rush, predict an upcoming disruption, or just feel like being far away from any federal buildings on every April 19, you can take your main route.

A back road route.

This may be your best bet when the interstates are clogged with lines of cars all trying to leave "ground zero." Sure, it would normally take longer, but in this situation, it may be your best bet.

An indirect route.

There may be a time when you need to get away, but don't want anyone to know where you're going. There may come a day when it make sense to go north 200 miles out of your way to end up 150 miles east of your destination. This is also the route to choose if you have reason to believe you may be followed.

What to Bring With You

Captain Dave keeps a bug-out bag in the closet. A bug-out bag is the first -- and possibly only -- thing you grab when you're bailing out. When the fire alarm is going off, for example, grab the kids, the bug-out bags and get out.





Bags, you say? Yes, bags. Each member of the family should have his or her own bug out bag.

What should you include in your bug-out bag? Ask 100 people, and you'll get 100 answers, but here's what Captain Dave suggests:

Must Haves

At least \$500 in cash, including plenty of small bills for incidentals and change for phone calls. (When the power is out, many stores can't use their cash registers and insist on either exact change or to the closest dollar.)

Spare or duplicate credit cards with plenty of credit available.

A few spare checks and anything that could be used for ID if you do not have your wallet with you.

A spare set of keys, including car, house, safe-house/survival retreat, storage facility, safe deposit box, etc.

A change of clothes, preferably durable heavy-weight clothes that can stand up to abuse.

A pair of old, comfortable, already-broken-in shoes that still have some good miles left in them.

Nice to Have

Traveler checks. Gold or silver coins. Dimes, quarters and half-dollars minted before 1965 contain 90 percent silver. A gold Maple Leaf or other large coin may be too big for day-to-day transactions, but smaller gold coins are available.

A bank card for local and national ATMs. (This assumes the electricity is not out.)

A duplicate drivers license.

You can stash a spare set in your vehicle for emergencies.

A season-appropriate jacket and other outer gear, such as gloves and hat. Clothes suitable for layering (T-shirt, flannel shirt, etc.).

A couple pairs of extra socks and at least one change of underwear.

At least a quart of water per person. Juice boxes or pouches.

A few MREs or other easily transportable food items, including some quick snack foods.

Prescription or over-the-counter drugs you rely on.

Unfilled prescriptions you can take to a pharmacy anywhere to be filled.

A spare pair of eyeglasses (perhaps your old prescription) and/or contacts and solutions.

A duplicate of your standard ophthalmic eye-wear and/or a few pairs of daily or extended-wear contacts.

A basic first aid kit, including bandages, an ace-type bandage, aspirin or other analgesic, first-aid cream, alcohol pads, etc.

A more advanced first aid kit, including sutures, antibiotics, pain killers, etc.

A phone book listing all important numbers, including friends, family, neighbors, work, school, doctor, insurance, etc.

A cellular phone and/or CB radio.

A good work knife and/or Swiss army-type knife.

A Leatherman survival tool.

For those so inclined, a basic pistol, such as a revolver chambered for .357 or .38 special, and at least 50 rounds of ammunition.

Loaded speedloaders or magazines and a comfortable belt and holster.

Now that you know where to go, how to get there and what to bring when you leave in a hurry, you can take a look at long-term survival planning. The next chapter covers the three basics of any survival plan: Water, food and shelter.

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