



SURVIVAL PAPER #SP92-10

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URBAN SURVIVAL – II

We have discussed air, water, water filtration, shelter, food, cooking and self-defense in our first urban survival topic. Now let's consider some more advanced concepts.

First of all, we did not discuss how much water or food to store. The biggest reason we didn't is because everyone's situation is a little different from other folks. Let us just leave it at advising you to get as much as you can afford to buy and store in the room you presently have.

Now let's talk about a real crappy subject – getting rid of urine and feces. Pee and Poop to most folks. How are you going to dispose of it? Surely you intend to take care of these necessities of life. Camp toilets and chemical toilets are a temporary measure, and if you have ever used one, you know it is not a very comfortable one at that. If you just leave your droppings outside your front door or behind your building, it is going to get mighty smelly very quickly, to say nothing of the health concerns these by-products bring up. Flies, bacteria, and worms can all cause a person to become mighty sick with little encouragement.

If city services are still working, then getting rid of this stuff is a simple matter of flushing. Even if water is not running, chances are good that the sewer system is working, (unless an earthquake has damaged the city sewer system or something equally cataclysmic), and getting rid of your sewage is still just a matter of flushing the toilet, you will have to carry or store water to do this. Most city sewers are connected to storm drains and every time it rains the flowing water helps flush out the sewer system. The sewage usually travels down to a treatment facility, is treated, and then released into the rivers or ocean from there. In the event of an emergency, this is one city service that will be repaired as soon as possible. But even if the treatment facility is not working, as long as the sewers are intact, then flushing (even with carried water) is one way to get rid of the sewage. When the treatment facilities do not work, the sewage is usually released untreated into the rivers or ocean. This is unsightly and polluting, but was done for centuries before sewage treatment and clean water standards were ever dreamed of. A 5-gallon plastic bucket like the kind used to store paint, is excellent to get water to flush your toilet with. Water can be obtained from swimming pools, rivers, fountains, ponds, even from gutters and overfilled storm drains. It takes about 5 gallons to flush most modern toilets. Some low-flow toilets take less. Some older toilets take more. So one or two buckets should do a person for one day. Water is heavy, and if you live on the 30th floor of a 50-story building, carrying water up a flight of 30 stories is going to wear you out. Having an apartment closer to the ground might be one consideration. Moving to a 1 or 5 or 10-story building is much more reasonable.

This method will get you around using the bathroom. It will allow an almost normal existence in these difficult conditions. It also allows a person or a couple of people to use the bathroom with little inconvenience and then dispose of the product with little mess.

FORAGING in the city can often be unexpectedly productive both for plants and animals.

PLANTS in the city are often abundant and for the most part are unrecognizable by the vast majority of city dwellers. Even parks that are carefully tended have lots of useful plants. Some that I have identified through several visits and stays, and have even used and picked on occasion, are:

LAMB'S QUARTERS – Spinach-like substitute. Boil roots, leaves can be eaten raw in salads, if young; otherwise steam, boil, sauté, dry and grind for flour. Seeds make good mushy cereal.

POKE SALAD – Young leaves in spring can be fried and/or boiled. A lot like spinach. High in vitamins. Older leaves should be boiled. Change water in this and other plants a couple of times to get bitter taste out of plant.

PLANTAIN – Broadleaf and narrow leaf and regular varieties. All are eatable. Young leaves can be eaten raw. Older leaves need to be steamed, boiled, or sautéed. Can be used in soups and stews.

THISTLES – also known as bull thistles. Roots can be boiled, dried or powdered. Leaves can be steamed or boiled. The pith can be eaten raw. The entire plant can be used in soups or stews.

CATTAILS – Roots, dry and grind for flour. Early shoots can be eaten raw. Stem pith can be peeled, eaten raw, pickled, froze. Early green heads can be eaten raw; cut and cook as with an ear of corn. Early brown heads grind for flour. Pollen can be used as a nutrient additive.

SHEEPSORREL – good for use in salads, soups and garnishes. Makes good seasoning for fish, rice, potatoes.

SUNFLOWER – seeds can be parched and the thin hulls eaten with the kernels or hulled with the seeds made into a meal to use in baking.

BLACKBERRY – even the most populated city in the U.S. has blackberries in its parks. Excellent wild fruit, makes good jams, and juices. Tender shoots can be eaten raw or in salads or cooked like asparagus.

COMMON DANDELION – eaten raw in salads or cooked as spinach-like greens. Water may need to be changed once or twice to keep bitter taste out of cooked portions. Roots can be sliced and cooked like carrots. If roasted slowly until dark brown, roots can be ground up and used as a substitute for coffee.

WATERCRESS – good for use in salads or flavoring for soups and meat dishes. Peppery taste is distinctive. Use only parts of plant that grow above water. Boil if you are uncertain of the pollution of the water.

These 10 wild plants are fairly common in most cities and in a lot of other urban or suburban environments.

I did not list nut trees, but in most cities there is an abundance of nuts available. Pecans, walnuts, acorns and many other nuts are available to the forager who knows what he or she is looking for.

Fruit trees are fairly common in some cities also - Apples, pears, plums, perhaps even some grape vines or even in some southern areas, coconut trees.

Another way to forage is to plant some crops – not in neat orderly rows in a garden, but throughout a park or a median strip or any other place that you can get to and plant and harvest your possible crops.

PLACES TO CONSIDER PLANTING CROPS

- Parks
- Grass strips along parking lots
- Grassy or bushy areas near where you live
- Exit and entrance ramps (be sure to get at least 25 to 50 feet from the edge of the road because most states and cities spray herbicide to kill unwanted plant growth in these areas.

- In front of office buildings, possibly where you work, if they have any landscaped area.
- On top of roofs – if you can have access to them and the owners will let you have small raised bed gardens.

CROPS TO CONSIDER PLANTING IN A CITY ENVIRONMENT

The first thing you want to do is to make sure your crops do not look like crops. This rules out corn and tomatoes, as these crops give themselves away. The next thing is to plant in a random manner, not in neat rows. The crops should be easy to grow and should require little effort other than planting and harvesting.

This leaves crops like:

Potatoes, onions, beets, carrots, radishes, sweet potatoes, garlic and spinach

If you have a place that is not traveled or visited a lot, you might go for more traditional type crops that are still difficult to identify unless you look closely at them.

These crops include: peas, cucumbers, sweet or hot peppers, regular lettuce, broccoli, squash, strawberries, beans, okra, leaf lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant and blueberries.

All these crops will give themselves away upon close examination. The ones above these should not give themselves away, unless the person looking knows what potato or carrot tops look like without digging into the ground. The crops above might be good on rooftops or worked into the landscaping at your place of work, where you can keep an eye on things and where they will be safe from random passersby.

FORAGING FOR ANIMALS in the city is a bit different. Pigeons, squirrels and other small animals can usually be found with little difficulty. Even rats can be eatable if you are hungry enough. And the Lord knows there are enough rats in a city for lots of folks. Some folks have advocated consuming pets or other folks' pets if the need arises. But most pets in the city are small cats or dogs and do not offer a lot of nutritious meat. Also some folks are outraged by the thought of consuming their pet or having their pet eaten by someone else. It is better all around to avoid this if you can to keep the scorn of your neighbors and the Humane Society from coming after you later on.

Trapping pigeons, squirrels and other wild small animals might be good for you if you have the "trap them alive" type of traps. This way if anyone caught you, the worst that could be done is that you release the animal. You might pose as being hired by the city or parks division. You need to know the head man/woman's name and have a city work order or similar form ready in the event you are challenged. You can then tell folks you are catching these pesky critters in these humane traps that are to be taken out of the city and disposed of or released. Wearing clothing similar to park workers or city workers should be a good idea. If caught, you should be released on minor bond and since no animal was killed, you should not face any long-term stigma. Having a work order and story of what you can do, and being just an employee of the firm hired to do the dirty work, should get you off with little prosecution. Depositing money into your account weekly or bi-weekly from this fictitious job will also help. So you were paid in cash, so what. You declare this money on your tax forms. Where does the money come from? Your savings on groceries from your being able to consume what you catch. Dispose of all unconsumed wild animal parts by putting in public trash cans or in trash cans at McDonalds or other fast food restaurants.

Growing food hydroponically in your apartment as discussed in Urban Survival I, is a good option to help supplement your food supply also. Do not forget window box planters or large pots to plant and grow things in. All this can be done in your apartment and can make major contributions to your food preparedness. Having the ability to can, dehydrate or freeze any surplus is an excellent way to increase your preparedness.

ELECTRICITY is vital in cities. For lighting, heat, cooling, entertainment, information, and work. If for some reason your building or part of the city is without electricity, you need to have plans to make it through these times. Alternate electricity needs could be met with windmills, solar cell panels, generators and batteries. Golf cart batteries are generally tough enough to be discharged and recharged repeatedly, and one or two in an apartment could be used for lighting, cooking and listening to the radio and keeping time. Windmills or solar cell panels could be placed on tops of building and wires run down to your apartment. These could keep the batteries charged while one or two were being used for your apartment use. A small generator could be used also if need arose. The noise of a generator is more than you might want and you might not have fuel for a generator long.

Unless you are going to use DC (direct current) appliances, you will need an inverter to convert the DC to AC (alternating current). This will allow you to use your regular appliances. With enough battery storage you could run your whole apartment. Realistically though, you would probably only want to run a radio and maybe a hotplate at the same time. This would allow you to run a Kooltron ice chest to keep things from spoiling and would allow you to store more food if you needed to, AM/FM radios to keep track of news, a small TV/VCR combination for entertainment, a hotplate to cook on, a Kooltron cooler/refrigerator to keep things cold in, possibly a computer to write or work on or to use for communication, a CB radio or a Ham (amateur) radio for communications, and a cellular phone for use in calling folks, might be all the electrical needs you have. Two batteries is enough for this load if used conservatively.

TOOLS are next. Of course hand tools are useful: Hammers, hand-powered saws (rip & crosscut), hand-powered drills, screwdrivers, socket wrenches, crescent wrenches, open socket box wrenches, pliers, lock pliers, channel lock pliers, wire stripper kits, hacksaw, nails, screws, etc. A good set of hand tools can, with time, do anything power tools can. Get good brand name tools and a good tool box. I like Craftsman or other tools of this type with lifetime warranties to replace any tool broken

Power tools have come a long way since they were first introduced. Rechargeable drills like the Makita or DeWalt types are very good tools. They are also reasonably priced. Plug-in power tools from saws to drills are also useful. Their construction incorporates a lot of lightweight strong plastics into them. The best brands are SKIL, DeWalt, Makita, and Bosch. I do have some Craftsman saws and some Black & Decker drills, but I do not use them like I use the Skil or DeWalt tools. Remember to get some extension cords for this. If you are using this with batteries, you definitely need an inverter with 800 watt or greater capacity, so the drill will work and not burn out the inverter or the drill trying to work.

Many power tools come with their own two-stroke engines. Examples of this are chain saws and weed eaters. Although you may not know it, a large jigsaw and a ½ inch drill also comes equipped from Makita with an engine for remote use. It is fairly expensive, but well worth the price if you need them. Regrettably, there is not a circular saw with this capacity yet, maybe soon.

Just buying hand tools and then buying the engine tools mentioned above might be one way to go. Having electrical power tools though, with battery packs or with plug-in cords, is probably not a bad idea. Chances are you will use them more and be ready to use them if you get the conventional types of tools.

Tools are necessary to fix or rebuild things after an emergency. Without the proper tools, you might not be able to survive a potentially bad situation.

SANITATION is our last topic in this paper. We have talked about getting rid of feces and urine. Now let's discuss basic human sanitation.

TEETH – You will need to brush your teeth after every meal or daily to keep good oral hygiene. Otherwise you will get a cavity or you will get infected teeth or other gum diseases or tooth diseases. Fluoride toothpaste is available and toothaches are preventable if you care for your teeth.

WASHING your body is important for general sanitation. At least once every 2 or 3 days in low-work environments or daily in hot, heavy-work environments. You may have to heat water and put the hot water in a solar shower bag. Then take a quick shower in your regular shower.

WASHING your clothing should be done whenever your clothes get dirty, or once every 2 or 3 times you wear them if you are not in a heavy-work environment. This can be done in cold water and can be done in the bathtub by hand if necessary. This, of course, necessitates having soap for washing with, soap for doing clothes with, shampoo and toothpaste and toothbrushes and dental floss.

One other measure of sanitation is pest control. This is another item you need to plan for. Mouse traps or poison, flypaper or flyswatters, mosquito netting for your bed, or a screen door and screens for your apartment windows, bug spray to kill fleas and other household pests, and bug repellent for your personal use. Stock up now as you will need this stuff all your life.