

SURVIVAL *for* SENIORS

CRITICAL STEPS FOR SENIORS TO STAY SAFE IN A CRISIS



SURVIVAL FOR SENIORS

PAGE 1

Introduction

PAGE 4

Special Considerations for Seniors

PAGE 6

Seniors and Electronics

PAGE 8

Seniors and Survival Supplies

PAGE 11

Seniors and Bugging Out

PAGE 12

Seniors and Survival Groups

PAGE 14

Seniors and Self-Defense

Critical Steps For Seniors To Stay Safe In A Crisis

In any crisis situation, there are certain parts of our society which are naturally more vulnerable than others; such is the case with our senior citizens. As we age, we all lose mobility, strength, flexibility and the ability to move quickly. This makes us more vulnerable to disasters, whether they are man-made or naturally occurring ones. If someone has trouble moving in normal times, a disaster isn't going to make things any easier for them.

Due to their health, seniors have special needs, which younger members of society don't have to worry about. As they get older and their bodies start failing, they need increased medical attention, develop an increased dependency on prescription medications and find themselves unable to do things that they were used to doing before.

Sadly, many two-legged predators look at these seniors as potential prey, stealing whatever they can from them. Rather than treat them with the honor and respect that they deserve, they are often shoved aside and robbed; they might even find themselves physically



abused by these predators.

It is clear that seniors have special needs when it comes to survival. However, that doesn't mean that they can't survive. Just like for everyone else, with the proper preparations our seniors can make it through a crisis situation just as well as anyone else can. Many of those preparations are the same types that most others have to make. In this report, we are going to concentrate on dealing with the special preparations that seniors need to make, so that they can survive as well as anyone else.

Seniors also have a wealth of information and knowledge that younger survivalists might not have. As time goes on, each generation becomes more and more dependent upon the complex interaction of society. Not only are most of us dependent upon the infrastructure, but also on others to do work that we don't know how to do for ourselves. On the other hand, seniors are often accustomed to doing that work themselves, having grown up in a time when it was common to learn how to do a wider range of tasks and be more self-dependent.

I can see this change between my generation and that of my adult children. It becomes even more pronounced when I compare the generation of my parents to that of my children. In the generation of my parents, it was common for a man to learn how to do plumbing and carpentry work on his own home, as well as repair his own car. Although I've taught my children, most of their friends don't have the least bit of idea how to do even common repairs for themselves. They have to pay someone else.

In a crisis situation, the knowledge locked up in the minds of our senior citizens is invaluable. Any survival group would do good to find a few older members and add them to the group. While those older members may not have the strength and agility to perform all those tasks themselves, their true value will come forth as they teach the group's younger members how to do it.



At the same time, many of us mellow as we age. We begin to realize the true value of things, which helps us to not let unimportant things bother us. While there are some senior citizens who are no wiser today than they were thirty or forty years ago, there are many who have years of wisdom hidden by their grey hair. These old wise ones can help the group survive in ways that younger members can't, simply by bringing a voice of reason and experience into a tense situation.

A couple with years of experience in passing through the storms of life can often help younger couples make it through those storms themselves. Considering the high stress that goes along with any survival situation, the steadiness of these older, wiser heads can help keep couples and families working together, instead of letting the situation break them apart.

Seniors can even survive on their own, if they need to. Throughout history, there are cases of senior citizens who lived alone and survived alone, even in the worst of circumstances. It doesn't matter how old someone is, as much as it matters what kind of shape their body and mind is in.

For most of us, the vast majority of the deterioration that affects our bodies is our own fault. If we took better care of ourselves, eating the right sorts of foods and performing enough exercise to keep our bodies strong, we could remain healthy much, much longer. However, when you combine a sedentary lifestyle with a diet filled with all the things you shouldn't eat, you are just about asking your body to break down.

I can attest to this personally, even though I'm not quite old enough to be considered a senior. Four years ago I went to visit my doctor. Actually, I was taking my wife to the doctor, who happens to be a friend of ours. While we were there, he convinced me to get a blood workup done, as I hadn't had a general physical exam for a number of years.

When the lab tests came back, they couldn't have been much worse. All of the common health indicators were higher than they should have been, in some cases, much higher. I had high blood sugar, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and very high triglycerides. My friend the doctor said that I was a walking time bomb, waiting to see if a heart attack, stroke or some other problem would get me first.

The typical American reaction to that news is to tell the doctor to fix it. We expect our doctors to give us some pill, which will allow us to keep on living like we want and eating what we want, so that we can ignore our responsibility to take care of ourselves. That wasn't my reaction. I went home and made a decision to change everything I had to change, in order to bring my health under control. It wasn't that I was afraid of dying; it was

that I didn't want to spend my last years as an invalid.

Now, four years later, I have a clean bill of health.

Everything which was high is now normal. Although I have taken some medications to help, I did it mostly by diet and exercise. By making the necessary changes in my lifestyle, I was able to make myself healthier, without turning myself into a walking medicine cabinet. If I can do it, you can too.

The point I'm trying to make with this is that seniors who are serious about survival need to do whatever they can to take care of their health. That doesn't mean expecting the doctor to take care of their health for them, but rather doing those things which are within their power to maintain their health. Too often we expect the doctor to do it for us, without doing the part that we can and should do ourselves.

Why don't we do what we should? Because we're not comfortable doing it. Making changes to our lifestyle and eating habits isn't fun. Nor is starting an exercise regimen that is more strenuous than playing a round of golf. Yet in order to get our health to where it needs to be for survival, we need to put in that extra effort and get ourselves in shape. There's nothing that says that as we age we have to become decrepit. Most of us do, but that's because we don't do the things that we need to in order to take care of ourselves.

I realize that there are some seniors who have serious health problems, which can't be taken care of by diet and exercise. I'm not talking about them. If you have a serious underlying condition which prevents you from making these kinds of changes, that's understandable. But don't use that as an excuse to avoid doing what you can do.

That's the key; determine what it is that you can do and do it. Don't try and become an Olympic athlete or a health-food guru; just do what you can. The better your health, the easier it will be for you to survive in a crisis.

CHAPTER 1:

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SENIORS

There are really only a few major considerations that we have to look at when talking about most seniors in a survival situation. They are:

- Lack of mobility
- Special home medical equipment
- Need for medical services
- Special diets and medicines

Between these items, it becomes quickly clear that seniors can't really bug out very easily. Even if they could, they would have to go back to town regularly, in order to make contact with their doctors. About the only effective bug-out that seniors could be involved in is an early one to a prepared location that is close to medical services. So, a prepared bug-out location that is close to a small town with an excellent doctor would be a workable solution.

Most seniors won't want to bug out though. There's something about getting older which reduces people's desire to pick up and leave home. While there are some seniors who love to travel, the vast majority are homebodies who don't get out a whole lot. That means that you have to figure on them bugging in and make your plans accordingly.

Bugging in means turning your home into a survival retreat, right there in town. This is urban survival all the way. Although it brings along with it the disadvantage of having more people around to cause problems, it also carries the advantage of you having all the comforts of home, as well as all the supplies and equipment that you would normally have at home.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

One of the standard assumptions that are used in preparing to survive a disaster is that normal supply chains will probably become cut. The whole idea of



stockpiling is based upon that assumption. It would only follow that medical equipment and supplies will become limited during the emergency, just like other supplies will.

The obvious solution to this problem is to have the necessary equipment and supplies on-hand. Many seniors wait until the last possible moment to make these purchases, due to their high cost. However, a senior who is planning on surviving can't afford to wait. If there is a high probability that they will need a piece of medical equipment, such as a walker, they need to buy it before they need it, so that it will be available when the time comes.

This may require some help on the part of the family doctor. Most elderly are on Medicare, which requires a doctor's prescription for the purchase of what is known as durable medical equipment (DME). Without that prescription, Medicare won't pay for it. However, if your primary care physician is willing to work with you on this, you shouldn't have any problem.

Let me interject something here. Doctors have to be careful about this, or they could lose their contract with Medicare. If a doctor starts writing prescriptions for every piece of equipment available, they might come under scrutiny. There has to be justifiable cause for them to do so. If you are heading for needing it, they can probably get away with writing the prescription six months to a year early;

but they probably can't get away with writing it two to three years early.

Seniors face the same problem with medications. Most seniors are on a number of different medications to help overcome the gradual disintegration of their bodies. In most cases, these are long-term medications, which may even be prescribed on a yearly basis.

If you are on long-term medications, your doctor will probably be willing to work with you, providing you with the necessary prescriptions to buy enough medications to stockpile a year's worth. This is especially true for medications which you have been on for a long period of time and for which the doses that you are taking are stable. While you may not be able to buy that extra year's worth right away, you will probably be able to slowly buy extra, with your doctor's help, so that you can build up that year's supply.



Another option is to buy your medications in Mexico. The Mexican pharmaceutical industry is excellent and produces what are essentially generic versions of almost all medications. About the only ones they can't provide are some of the newer medications which still have an active patent.

Every year, thousands of elderly Americans travel to South Texas to winter. They are referred to as "Winter Texans." These people migrate south for the winter to avoid the colder weather up north. While they have a lot

of social activities with other senior citizens, they all make it across the border to Mexico at some time, in order to buy their year's prescriptions.

Unless you need something that is a narcotic or mood altering medicine, you can buy it in a Mexican pharmacy without a prescription. All you need to do is bring the medicine bottle with you, so that they can make sure that they are able to match what you are already using. The name will be different, but the contents will be the same. The Mexican pharmacists along the border are used to crossing American medicines over to their Mexican equivalents and will make sure that you will get the right thing.

Not only does this provide a way of stockpiling medicines, but it will probably be considerably cheaper than buying it in the United States. Generally speaking, medicines purchased in Mexico are less than half the cost of those purchased in the U.S. For some, the difference in price is enough to cover the cost of their trip.

By the way, if you decide to take advantage of Mexican pharmacies, you might want to consider taking advantage of Mexican dentists at the same time. Dental work in the United States is very expensive, but it is much, much cheaper in Mexico. The typical cost for fillings at the time of this writing is \$35, no matter how many surfaces. Root canals and crowns are running at \$200 each. A soft bridge costs \$200 per tooth as well. Compared to American prices, this is incredible.

SENIOR DIETS

Seniors often have special dietary needs, which don't necessarily match up with the normal "survival food" that we stockpile. Their dietary needs are driven by things like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar and high triglycerides. These are all dietary issues which can cause serious health problems if not followed. Much can be done to correct these ailments with proper diet and exercise. That makes having the right food on hand a priority for senior survival.

The first thing to consider in maintaining or even

CHAPTER 2: SENIORS AND ELECTRONICS

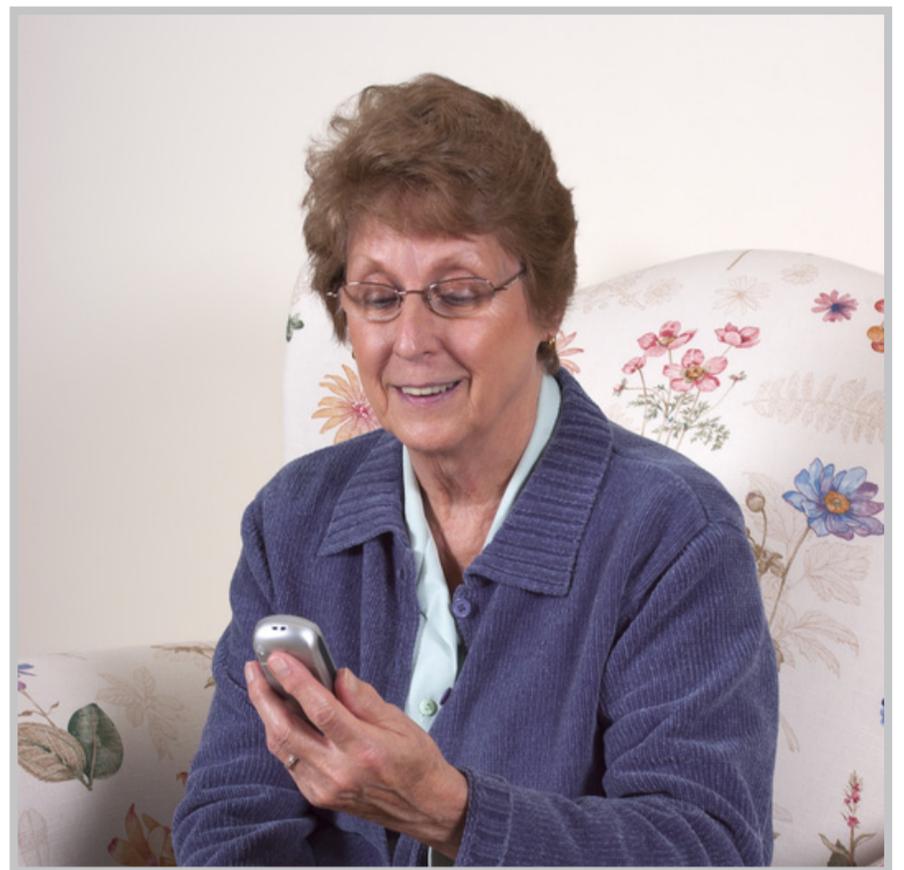
improving our health, even before diet, is exercise. Our bodies are designed to consume food and use that food for energy, as well as to provide us with the necessary building blocks for new cells. When we don't use the energy and nutrients that we consume, the body tries to store them. This can end up causing us to become obese, as well as having high cholesterol and high triglycerides.

An active lifestyle helps tremendously in dealing with these problems. In times past, the average person performed physical labor from sunup to sundown. They didn't stop when they reached 65 years old either. That could explain why they had less problems with some of today's health issues. Their bodies were using the nutrients that they consumed, rather than just storing them.

It has been medically proven that exercise will help all four of those common medical problems that I mentioned. As we exercise, the nutrients are consumed by our bodies in the normal course of the day. The same thing happens when we are involved in the normal physical activities of homesteading; gardening, taking care of the animals, cutting firewood, and all the other normal physical tasks that are necessary for survival. So, it's not exercise that's needed as much as a return to normal levels of physical activity. Fortunately, a survival situation provides those opportunities in abundance.

Along with the physical activity, it may be necessary to reduce the consumption of some types of foods. Most people eat too much salt, which can add to high blood pressure. A high carbohydrate diet can raise blood sugar levels and triglycerides. Some types of meats are very high in cholesterol.

It's really not hard to adjust a normal survival menu to meet the needs of seniors. The only real issue is planning the survival menu with those things in mind. In most cases, only minor adjustments will need to be made to the original diet in order to meet the special needs of any seniors in the group.



Most seniors aren't really all that comfortable with today's wireless electronic lifestyle. They grew up in a time when none of that existed and many of them have never bothered to learn how to use today's technology. While some have made the leap and are using modern electronics, most are not. Yet, those electronics that they are ignoring can help them survive a disaster, when used properly.

More than anything, the electronics that will help seniors survive are related to communications in some way or another. They are devices which either help the seniors to communicate with family members, communicate when they have health problems or learn what is happening around them so that they can prepare for it. I'd like to take a moment to look at a number of electronic devices which could conceivably increase the chances of seniors surviving emergency situations.

The trick here is going to be convincing granny or gramps that they really do need the new electronic marvel and

that it will be to their benefit. The saying about “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks is more because the old dog doesn’t want to learn those new tricks, being happy with things just as they are. Once they are convinced that these gadgets will help them, they can learn it fast enough.

CELL PHONES

Let’s start with the basics. A cell phone is a great survival tool for the elderly. Not only can they get in touch with their families when they need to, but they can also call for help from police, fire departments and others. These can all be set up on speed dial, making it quicker and easier to use.

Modern smart phones can be programmed to do a wide variety of things, including receiving emergency warnings of natural disasters and other major events. This can either be done through SMS or via apps that track the news. Many government agencies put out SMS warnings for dangerous events. One nice thing about this is that they keep repeating those messages. So if someone is suffering from senior memory loss, they will have a constant reminder of what is happening.

Another useful safety app which you can get for smart phones is one to warn you of crimes in progress. This can help the elderly stay out of dangerous areas, by making them aware of what is going on around them, specifically those things that could cause them problems.

ALL-HAZARDS RADIO

An all-hazards radio does essentially the same thing that we were talking about with the SMS emergency service on a cell phone, but it is done over radio broadcast. Just like the emergency warnings that all radio stations are required to practice, these emergency warnings are preceded by a tone which is designed to wake the dead.

More than anything, an all-hazards radio would make them aware of any potential weather disturbances that are eading



their way. Hurricanes, tornadoes and other serious weather events are broadcast over and over by the National Weather Service, so that people are aware of what is coming.

MEDICAL HELP BRACELETS AND NECKLACES

With the limited mobility that some seniors have, even falling down can have serious repercussions. Often, seniors run into problems and don’t have anyone available to help them out. A new type of medical radio bracelet and necklace solves this problem, by giving them a ready means to contact the 9-1-1 system to call for help. Pushing the button on the device connects them directly with the 9-1-1 dispatcher, so they can explain their problem and the right sort of help can be sent.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SENSORS

There are a number of different kinds of emergency medical sensors that seniors can wear which will either notify the individual of an upcoming problem or notify others when they have a problem. One type of sensor warns the senior wearing it that they are about to have a heart attack. The idea is that armed with this information,

CHAPTER 3: SENIORS AND SURVIVAL SUPPLIES

they can take the necessary preventative actions to prevent it. Another type calls for help when seniors fall, which could help in situations where they are injured, suffer a heart attack or just plain fall down.

HELP WITH HEARING

Hearing aids have a long history, going all the way back to horns that seniors held up to their ears in order to catch more sound. Modern hearing aids are worn inside the ear and almost invisible. However, there's another way to use technology to help out seniors that have trouble hearing. That's to use amplified devices or devices which give a visual cue. One example would be a flashing light attached to a phone. When the phone rings, the light flashes as well. There are also some alarms on the market to help seniors out with hearing problems. These alarms warn them of pending danger that they might not have heard. When the alarm sounds, it prompts the individual to check and see what situation has caused the alarm to go off.

HELP IN FINDING LOST ITEMS

As we all age, it's not uncommon to have problems remembering simple things. Where we left the car keys or phone are common enough problems for young people; they're worse when we grow older. Devices attached to the key or phone can help the senior find them, which could save valuable time in the case of an emergency. Rather than having to waste time finding the car keys, so that they can get out of the house, they can know right where the keys are and go.

Please keep in mind that these devices are only as good as the individual is committed to using them. You can have the greatest collection of gadgets going, but if you don't use them, they don't provide any help at all. Along with buying these devices for the seniors in your life, there's a need to convince them of their value and train them in their use.

We've already talked some about the special supplies that seniors need and stockpiling those supplies in advance. However, I feel that it's important to spend a little bit of time talking about general supplies from the viewpoint of a senior.

Everyone who is interested in prepping and survival is stockpiling supplies these days. There have been many books written on the subject, with countless lists of foodstuffs and other supplies that the average prepper should have squirreled away in their home. While it is impossible to perfectly plan for every emergency, were anyone to actually have everything included in all those lists, they'd probably be in pretty good shape.



Seniors face a special problem in the area of supplies. Not only do they have special needs, but their mobility is often lower than that of others. As we age and our bodies start to give us trouble, it becomes harder and harder to get around for simple things like shopping trips, let alone trying to do so in the midst of a disaster. For this reason, I believe that it is especially important for seniors to create a sufficient stockpile of supplies for use in a survival situation.

There is a good possibility that seniors might find themselves trapped in their homes or apartments for weeks on end during a crisis situation. Unlike younger, more agile members of society, getting out to see what is happening or to scrounge for supplies is a much greater challenge for the seniors amongst us. In most cases, the safest thing for them to do might just be to lock the doors and stay inside.

This means that they have to have everything that they will need in their home. In order to make sure that all bases are covered, it will be necessary to run a test to see if it is possible to survive on what is stored in the house. Look at it as if it were a camping expedition and the home was nothing more than a shell. For this exercise, we need to assume that there is no electrical power, no water and no sewer service. With those constraints, what is missing from the home in order to survive?

Looking at it that way, we can put together a rather extensive list of supplies that seniors need, just like anyone else. About the only advantage that seniors might have is that they usually live alone, singly or as a couple, so they won't need to have as many supplies on hand as they would for a family. Nevertheless, having supplies for two people rather than four still means having half the supplies, so while there is some advantage; it's not a huge one.

Let me throw another wrench in the works here. Most of the time, when we think about preparing our homes for use as a survival retreat, we include our backyards. That makes sense for most of us and gives us a place for a garden, a well, a chicken coop and even a rainwater collection system.

While most seniors have enough mobility to get around in their backyards and could even manage to do a little gardening, we can't make that assumption. In addition, I think that it would be a good idea for seniors to stay out of sight as much as possible, so that they don't attract the wrong kind of attention from people who will see them as easy victims. Even though it would be an inconvenience, it would be better for seniors to stay inside, rather than to have a problem with people attacking them.

That means that all of the seniors' supplies must be indoors, including their water supply. That can be a bit

challenging, especially considering most water supply solutions require getting water from outside. However, it is possible to make a rainwater collection system that brings the water inside, just like it can be gathered and stored outside. It's also possible to put in a well that is accessible from the inside.

If the well or rainwater collection system can't be put inside, all that is needed is to screen the area where they are located, so that the senior can make it from the back door to the water supply and back, without drawing any attention to themselves. It's not all that unusual to screen things in a backyard, so that won't be seen as an invitation to robbery.

The problem is that we have to combine supply and safety at the same time. While this is an issue for everyone, I believe it is a greater issue for seniors. Therefore, some extra precautions need to be taken. I'll talk more about this in a later chapter.

Food and water are merely a starting place for stockpiling supplies. While those are two of the most important areas, it will also be necessary to have a way to cook that food. If the power is out, it may not be possible to cook on the stove, even if it's a gas fired stove.

For most preppers, not being able to cook indoors means moving the kitchen outdoors. They'll use a barbecue grille or fire pit in place of their stove. While convenient, that might be difficult for seniors to manage. While a gas barbecue grille isn't all that hard to use, cutting wood for a fire pit or for use in a fireplace requires a lot of strength. Unless they can get the wood already split (which is usually possible for an extra price), using wood for heat or cooking will be out of the question.

Another cooking option might be a camp stove. There are many designs of camp stoves, but they all fall into two basic categories; propane or what is called "dual fuel." The dual-fuel stoves are the old-fashioned camp stoves where you poured gasoline into a tank and pumped it up to pressurize it. That may or may not work, depending upon the senior and their hand strength. Someone with arthritis wouldn't be able to use it, because they'd have trouble pumping up the tank. The propane camp stoves work off of small tanks, much like propane torches for soldering copper pipe. While

effective, the tanks can get a bit expensive.

One way around this problem is to adapt a propane camp stove to use the larger propane tanks that are used for barbecue grilles. It is fairly easy to rig an adapter to make this connection, which would make it possible to use the camp stove for a long period of time off of one tank. Of course, if you live near Mexico, you can just buy a propane stove that's designed to work off of those tanks.

It is safe to use a propane stove indoors, but good ventilation is required. If larger tanks are used (larger than the 20 pound ones) they should be chained to the wall or a piece of furniture, so that they can't fall over. A falling tank can be very dangerous.

Another fuel related issue for seniors is heating. It seems that seniors are more susceptible to cold than other people are. Every winter, we hear stories about how one senior or another died of hypothermia during a power outage or because they couldn't afford to heat their home. Without adequate heating in the home, there is little hope for these people to make it.

Once again, we're faced with the problem of wood as a fuel. For most preppers, wood is the number one choice for heating their homes, in the case of a power outage or other disaster which would prevent them from heating their home in the normal way. Depending upon the health and mobility of the particular senior, wood may or may not be an option. For most, splitting the wood is too hard a physical task; so they would need to buy wood that is already split.

In some cases, seniors live in older homes, which have steam heat. The nice thing about this is that steam heat requires the least amount of electricity of any heating system available. There is no need for blowers to move the air or pumps to move hot water. Many of these old homes use heating oil for their boilers. Since the oil is gravity fed to the boiler, there is no need for a pump to provide fuel. The only electricity used in the entire system is for the control circuitry. That can be run off of battery power, with a little bit of modification.

If a senior is fortunate enough to have steam heating in their home, I would highly recommend putting in a battery backup system to keep the boiler running in the case of a power outage. While it would cost a few hundred

dollars to build such a system, it would be well worth it.

For those seniors that don't have a steam heating system and can't use wood, I'd recommend going with kerosene heaters. These can be filled with a hand operated pump, out of a five-gallon can of kerosene. While the weight of the kerosene can might be an issue, it wouldn't be anywhere near the problem that splitting wood is. Besides, kerosene cans can be mounted on dolly's, allowing them to be moved around without lifting them. The only real problem would be if there is a local source for buying kerosene. Kerosene sales are not common in all parts of the country.

In my opinion, there really isn't much reason for seniors to spend a lot of time and effort on accumulating and learning how to use most types of survival gear. Much of it is intended for bug-out situations, rather than for bugging in. If a senior is in good enough health that they can walk off into the woods with a backpack on, in order to survive off of the land, then they don't need this book; in fact, it's kind of hard to really call them a senior, no matter how old they are.

As we all know, bugging in doesn't require the same types of equipment that bugging out does. It will be challenging enough for seniors to have the necessary equipment for bugging in, without having to worry about preparing to bug out. While there are situations where a senior might have to bug out, that doesn't mean that they will be bugging out into the wilderness.



CHAPTER 4: SENIORS AND BUGGING OUT

While I firmly believe that it will be better for seniors to bug-in in most situations, there are a few where it may be necessary for them to bug out. I'm not talking about situations where they would bug-out to live in the wilderness, but situations where there is a government mandated evacuation, such as in the situation of Hurricane Katrina.

Bugging out in such a situation isn't the same as bugging out into the wilderness, due to a general collapse of society or other societal reason for getting out of town. While there may be a societal element to it, the major reason for the bug-out will be to avoid some pending natural disaster. If the government is mandating an evacuation in such a case, seniors should comply.

The main reason I say that seniors should comply in such a circumstance is that complying with a required bug-out to avoid a major hurricane, flood or other natural disaster will increase the seniors' chances of survival. Looking at the footage from Hurricane Katrina, it's clear that those who chose to stay behind were faced with great physical challenges to stay alive and get themselves to a place of safety, while they were awaiting rescue. Seniors may not be able to effectively accomplish that.

This type of bug-out doesn't require a bug-out bag that's more survival kit than anything else. It requires a bug-out bag that provides the senior with the necessary provisions to be comfortable in a temporary shelter, while they are waiting to make it back home. More than anything, it needs to be packed with what the senior will need to have, in order to protect their health.

So, what should be in such a bug-out bag?

- Medications that the senior has to take
- Medical monitoring equipment, such as glucose meters and blood pressure cuffs
- Medical equipment that the senior needs, such as wheelchairs or walkers
- First-aid kit
- Rugged clothing



- A warm coat, hat, gloves and scarf
- Extra shoes (comfortable)
- Raincoat
- Blanket
- Emergency food supplies that don't require cooking
- Water bottles
- Camping eating utensils, plate and cup
- Copies of important papers, preferably in electronic format
- Toilet paper
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Anti-bacterial hand sanitizer
- Baby wipes
- Cell phone
- Emergency radio to find out what's going on
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries for everything
- Cash

As you can see, this list is much different than what you typically find in a bug-out bag; but its purpose is much different as well. The idea here is not that the seniors take out across country on their own, but that they are prepared to survive a temporary emergency shelter. As I said earlier, any seniors who are able to survive in the wilderness on their own don't really need this book.

CHAPTER 5: SENIORS AND SURVIVAL GROUPS

I firmly believe that seniors are an important part of any survival group. At the same time, being part of a survival group provides the best possible survival potential for seniors. I realize that saying that seniors are important to a survival group may sound a bit strange to a lot of people, but the wisdom and knowledge that they possess can easily make a huge difference to the group, especially with seniors who are old enough to have grown up doing things manually which we are accustomed to using electrically powered equipment for.

With our high dependence on electricity in our modern society, many have lost the ability to do things without electrical power. The average do-it-yourselfer can't even cut a board straight with a hand saw anymore. We are so used to using power saws, that many of those do-it-yourselfers don't even have a hand saw in their workshop.

At the same time, we have become highly dependent upon society in general doing things for us, rather than doing them ourselves. Past generations were accustomed to canning their own fruits and vegetables, preserving them for winter. They would butcher their own hogs, smoke their own hams and salt their own fish as well. Today, we go to the grocery store and buy those things. But what will we do when the grocery stores no longer have those things on the shelves?

It's not just in the area of food that we've lost a lot of this ability, we've also lost it in the areas of working on our own homes and repairing our own cars. In my father's generation, the average man grew up knowing how to do basic carpentry and plumbing. They would repair their own cars, fix a leaky faucet, replace the worn and weathered porch steps and do a lot of things for themselves. I don't see this in the generation of my children. While they might all be experts in changing programs on their computers, very few of them know how to change the spark plugs in their cars.

That's where the seniors in our survival groups can be a great help. While they may not have the physical strength and mobility to do everything themselves, they have much of the knowledge of how to do those things. As



trainers and coaches, they can help the rest of us survive.

So, what sorts of skills can these people add to the survivability of our groups?

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Edible plant recognition
- Sewing (especially for repairs)
- Mechanics (both vehicles and small engines)
- Plumbing
- Carpentry
- Canning food
- Smoking meats
- Animal husbandry
- Gardening
- Raising chickens

Of course, not every elderly person is going to know the same thing; it will be necessary to determine what skills they have and how those skills will benefit the group. In addition to all these basics, the elderly are likely to know alternate ways of doing just about everything that we need to do in order to survive.

To the elderly amongst us, I'd say that they should bone up on their homesteading skills and any of the other skills that they have from the way things used to be done. That will increase their value to any survival group that they join, helping the group overall, as well as their perceived

value to the group.

It's important to realize and accept the limitations of seniors as part of a prepping group. There's no sense having an 80 year old man with poor eyesight on the roster as a lookout to protect your survival retreat. While he might have the savvy to recognize friend or foe, as well as being able to teach Davy Crocket a thing or two about shooting, he may not have the eyesight to see those enemies coming down the road.

This can cause resentment amongst other members of the group, especially when they don't understand the real reason for having those seniors as members. Unless each and every member of the team understand why the seniors are there and what they bring to the group, their presence could cause unnecessary friction.

The elderly can also help with a wide variety of tasks that don't require a lot of physical strength and mobility. In such a situation, where a group is totally self-dependent and having very little contact with society, the group will need to do everything for themselves. That includes having to take care of the children and educate them. Having raised three children, whom we home schooled, I can say with some authority that raising kids and teaching them is very time consuming.

While the parents are the primary caregivers for their children, as well as the primary teachers in a home schooling situation, there will be times where the parents need to be working on other things. During those times, the seniors in the group can help the overall group efficiency by helping to take care of and educate the children.

Remember, when we're talking about a survival group, we're basically talking about a communal living arrangement. That means that everyone works together for the good of the group, not just for the good of their families. Utilizing the seniors to help with the children so that their parents can do the physical labor necessary for survival simply makes sense from an overall group efficiency point of view. The work gets done and the children are taken care of.

There's another important area that I mentioned in the introduction in which seniors can be a great help to any survival group. Any survival situation brings with it a lot of stress. Nothing is sure. Everyone has to do things

that they aren't used to. People are thrust into a situation where they have to interact on a much closer basis than they are used to. Interpersonal relationships are pushed to their limits.

Generally speaking, older people are mellower than they were in their younger years. They are able to look at the problems of life through the lens of many years worth of experience. At the same time, the changes in their bodies, especially in their hormone levels, make them less emotional. As such, they are less likely to be stressed out or in a rage by what is happening. They can take things much more pragmatically, adjusting to the situation.

There's something much more important than their ability to adjust to the situation though. That's their ability to help others adjust to the situation. When everyone else is stressed out, speaking to the seniors in the group can provide the necessary therapy to help calm them down.

There's a meme that I've seen a couple of times where an elderly couple who were celebrating their 75th wedding anniversary was asked about the secret to their success. The woman answered the question by saying, "In the time in which we grew up, when something was broken, you didn't throw it away, you fixed it." She was of course referring to her marriage, which like all marriages was broken. Knowing that all marriage relationships are broken, we often need some help to fix them. This is another area in which the seniors can add a lot to the group. Through their years and experience, they have hopefully learned how to fix their marriage. That qualifies them to teach others how to fix theirs.

Knowing that we will be in a stressful situation when we are trying to survive, it only makes sense to have at least one couple in the group who has the experience to help all the other couples get through their rocky times. Most of the time it doesn't take a certified marriage counselor to show a couple the right path out of the rocks that they are in, it just takes someone who can see the path because they have trod there before.

When we allow the seniors in our survival groups to become life coaches to the rest of the group, we really gain from their experience. Sadly, modern society pushes these people aside, rather than seeking out their help. Yet, if we were to sit down at their feet and listen to their words, we would find much wisdom that we need for life.

CHAPTER 6: SENIORS AND SELF-DEFENSE

Thugs and other criminals tend to look at seniors as helpless prey. Being cowards and bullies themselves, they often target seniors in an attempt to get whatever they want. This is purely a pragmatic move on their part, weighing the risks against potential gain. These people tend to see seniors as all having fat retirement accounts, not knowing how things “really” are and being unable to defend themselves.

In a crisis situation, this perception of seniors will increase. Not that they will be seen as more helpless, but that more people will look at seniors in that light. There is always some percentage of society which obeys the law merely out of fear, rather than out of a respect for the law. In a crisis situation, law enforcement officers are usually overwhelmed, preventing them from providing society with adequate protection. These people see this as an opportunity. Where they might not have broken the law before, they will during the crisis.

Of course, these people are even greater cowards than the average criminal. That means that they will pick their victims carefully, looking for single mothers, seniors, those who are ill, and anyone else who appears as if they can't defend themselves.

This is the situation that seniors face in any disaster or crisis. Not only do they have to be concerned about the same risks and problems associated with the disaster, but they also have to deal with a much greater risk of coming under attack by those who want to steal what they have. While there are good people in the world who would be willing to protect those who need it, the criminals are aware of them as well and will go out of their way to avoid any contact with them.

With this high risk to seniors, it is clear that seniors need an equalizer. The right weapons and training will provide them with the necessary equalizer, allowing them to confront their attackers, perhaps not on equal footing, but at least on footing that gives them a good solid chance.



Many try and steer seniors towards tazers, pepper spray and other self-defense weapons. There are two basic problems with these weapons. The first problem is that they are short-distance weapons. You have to allow the attacker to get within a few feet of you before you can use them. I've always believed in keeping any enemy at the farthest possible distance. The second problem is that using these weapons in the close quarters that they have to be used at requires either very quick movement or very deceptive movement. By and large, seniors aren't all that good at quick movement.

The best weapons for use as equalizers are always firearms. A gun doesn't care how big you are or how strong you are. It will work just as well for a five year old child as it will for a member of Seal Team 6. Of course, that Seal probably knows how to use the gun better than the child does, or better than a senior citizen does, but the gun itself is just as effective.

Anyone with any amount of brains whatsoever assumes that a person holding a gun knows how to use it and can use it accurately. At least, they assume that up until the person holding the gun demonstrates otherwise. So, it's important

to learn how to use a gun accurately, so that the threat of the gun can be followed up by appropriate action.

PROBLEMS SENIORS HAVE WITH GUNS

Before looking at particular types of guns, it's important for us to understand the limitations that seniors have in using them. As we age, our bodies tend to become more and more dysfunctional. This manifests in a variety of ways and will not be the same for any two people. However, there are some common possible problems that seniors will have in using firearms. They are:

- Arthritis
- Shaky hands
- Slower movements
- Physical weakness
- Poor vision

While all of these limit one's ability to effectively use a gun, they don't eliminate the ability to use one. As long as the individual can safely hold the gun and fire it, there is no reason for them not to have one. The key is to find a gun that works well for them, considering any physical problems or limitations that they may have.

WHAT TYPE OF GUN?

The first question we must consider is what type of a gun will be the best for a senior to purchase. While this varies a lot depending upon the individual's strength, coordination and personal preferences, I'm going to take a little bit of a worst case look at the idea. If we assume that the seniors in question are old enough and in bad enough health that they can't move quickly and easily, then we need a gun that is going to be easy to shoot and not provide so much recoil as to cause the shooter problems.

I'm also going to proceed on the assumption that any shooting that the senior needs to do will be indoors and not outdoors. With the difficulty of maneuvering a long gun indoors, I would recommend staying away from rifles and shotguns. A pistol offers much more maneuverability and can be just as effective for short-range shooting.

Normally, I would say to buy the biggest gun that you are comfortable shooting. A lot of men like the old Army .45

caliber pistol, model 1911. I learned to shoot with this gun and think it's an excellent firearm. But for elderly people who have limitations, this might not be a good choice. Besides, it's a hard gun to learn how to shoot, if you've never shot before.

The .380 caliber semi-automatic pistol fits the bill of being an easy to shoot gun, very well. While not a very big caliber, the .380 has several advantages over other similar calibers, such as the 9mm. First of all, it has a smaller powder charge, so the .380 has minimal recoil. About the only other common caliber with less recoil is the .22, but the .22 isn't a very effective self-defense round. The second advantage of a .380 is that the lower powder charge means that the gun has a slide spring that isn't as stiff. That makes the slide easier to rack, putting the gun in battery.

Some people prefer revolvers over semi-automatics, but the semi-automatic offers the user the benefit of being able to be reloaded faster and carrying more rounds in the magazine. This means that the senior can stay in the fight longer, rather than being out of shots once they shoot the six shots in their revolver. Of course, the more magazines they have, the more they can shoot.

When my wife started shooting I bought her a .380 semi-automatic pistol. She has very weak hands and needed a pistol which she could rack the slide of easily. The .380 was so much easier for her to use, that I was sure I had made the right choice for her. Her particular gun has a double-stack 15 round magazine, ensuring that she has plenty of shots to use.



Avoid compact handguns. While they are nice and concealable, a compact handgun is harder to control and has much more recoil. They may very well feel like they are about to jump out of your hand, reducing your control over the gun, which can be very dangerous.

Always use self-defense rounds in any handgun. Typically, self-defense rounds are hollow point. When they strike a target, the round expands, making a larger hole and causing correspondingly larger amount of damage to the person hit. Since the .380 is a fairly small caliber handgun with a low powder charge, self-defense rounds help make up for the gun's limitations.

DEALING WITH SPECIAL LIMITATIONS

Some seniors have very shaky hands. In that case, I wouldn't recommend a .380 semi-automatic but rather one of the revolvers that shoots .410 shotgun shells. I realize that this goes against what I said earlier about revolvers, but in this case, it is more important that the shooter have a gun which allows them the ability to fire without having to aim as accurately. This isn't as good a solution as a .380 semi-automatic pistol, except for those people who are facing this limitation.

For seniors who have vision problems, I would highly recommend putting a laser sight on their gun. Most marksmanship instructors don't particularly like laser sights, seeing them more as a gimmick than anything else. Their biggest concern is that it is easy to become dependent upon the laser sights and if they don't work, you can't shoot.

While there is some very real validity to that concern, I would have to say that it is overridden by the concern about being able to shoot accurately. I have always worn glasses, and as my age has increased, my eyes have gotten worse. As it stands right now, I can't focus on the front sight, unless I wear my computer glasses. Since I don't wear my computer glasses in public, that means that without my laser sight, I can't aim my pistol accurately.

Therefore, in the case of seniors who have vision problems, I personally think that laser sights are the way to go. If possible, put a green laser sight on the gun, rather than a red one. The green ones are brighter and can be

used in daylight. I highly recommend getting a sight that automatically turns on when you draw the gun, such as the Crimson Trace or the Viridian if you can. These are more expensive, but can save you valuable seconds.

HANDGUN TRAINING FOR SENIORS

Just owning a handgun isn't enough; you have to train with it as well. While shooting a handgun is fairly intuitive, shooting it accurately is a skill that requires time and practice. Fortunately, most seniors have plenty of time that they can use for practicing their skills.

If you don't have much shooting experience, you may want to consider buying a .22 semi-automatic pistol for target practice. While you need to spend some time shooting your self-defense gun, you can get a lot of good practice in with a .22. The lower cost of the rounds will actually pay for the gun over time.

There are a number of basics that are part of shooting accurately, but the most important are sight picture and trigger control. Without a good sight picture and good trigger control, there is a much better chance of missing, than hitting. Both of these have the potential of being problems for seniors, which just increases the need for practice.

Besides practicing basic shooting, it is useful to practice shooting at multiple targets and shooting under low light conditions. While attacks can come at any time, they are most likely to come at night, when the light is low. Criminals often attack together, as they are cowards.

The other important thing to practice is getting the gun into action quickly. Many people keep their gun unloaded in the night stand or in their closet. That makes the gun totally useless if someone breaks into your home. You need your gun where you are, so that you can get to it quickly.

Ideally, you want to draw the gun and have it ready at the first indication that there might be a problem. Whether that is a sound you hear outside or a shadow crossing the window, whenever there appears to be a potential for break-in, you want to draw your gun. That way, you have it ready if you need to. Answering the door with a gun in your hand isn't a bad idea either, especially if you can hide the gun from view, while keeping it ready to use.

OTHER SELF-DEFENSE CONSIDERATIONS

I already mentioned that I'm not a big fan of "alternative weapons" for seniors. If a senior has the dexterity and eyesight to use any of these alternate weapons, then they have the dexterity and eyesight to use a gun. In almost every case, the gun will be much more effective.

However, there are two alternative weapons which I feel can be very useful to seniors. The first is the oldest alarm system on the planet; the dog. A good dog will do more for you than a burglar alarm, often warning you before the alarm can go off. Not only will it let you know that someone is coming through the door, but that somebody is coming up the walkway as well.

If you are going to have a dog as part of your self-defense, I recommend a fairly large one. Small dogs don't put fear into the hearts of criminals like larger ones do. However, a large dog can make the criminal forget what they were planning on doing and send them running. Often, a dog will put a stop to the attack before it can happen.

The other weapon I would recommend is one of the newest categories of weapons around; sonic weapons. These were first developed for ships, in order to drive off pirates. You can buy small versions of them, which are appropriate for use in a room in your house.

The sonic weapon produces a sound which affects the person hearing it. Depending on the weapon and what frequency it is producing, the effects can include nausea, disorientation and fear. A sonic weapon pointed at the door to your home can turn away attackers who are bent on your destruction.

PREPARING THE HOME FOR DEFENSE

The average home is not well prepared for defense. Even if you listen to all the conventional wisdom and install the devices that they tell you that you should, all you are doing is keeping the honest people honest. All it takes to break into a home with the normal security arrangements is a good quick kick from a booted foot.

The problem is that we look at security from a viewpoint of protecting ourselves from relatively honest people. Those who want to prey on others don't fit in that category; therefore, the advice doesn't work.

Most criminals enter a home through the front door. Conventional wisdom says to put a deadbolt on that door, so that it will be secure. While the deadbolt will be strong enough, the door frame itself won't be and will probably break. So, to make that door secure, it is necessary to strengthen the door frame to the point where that booted foot won't kick through the door.

This is actually fairly easy. You can buy security striker plates to replace the originals. Don't buy the ones that are about a foot long, go for the longer ones. They are three feet long or longer. That extra length spreads the force of the kick out farther, helping ensure that the door frame won't break.

Those security door striker plates need to be installed with three inch long, case hardened screws. Those longer screws will then attach the door frame firmly to the home's structural studs, spreading the force of the kick out even further and making the door more secure.

At the same time that the door striker is installed, the door's hinges can be replaced with security hinges. These have something like a mini-deadbolt in them, so that if the

door is struck, the hinge pin doesn't have to support the full force of the attack. Like the new striker plate, these hinges should be installed with three inch long, case-hardened screws, to make sure that the door hinge screws can't be pulled out or broken off.

The other big security problem is window glass. It doesn't matter if we're talking about glass in the windows or the doors; any glass is incredibly easy to break. If a criminal can't make it through the front door, they'll look for another way in. That probably means breaking some glass.

Glass is hard to reinforce, but not impossible. There are window films which can be purchased to be installed on the inside of the windows and make them stronger. These films make it much harder to break the window out. Even if the glass itself is shattered, the window film will hold the glass in place, much like a shattered windshield is held in place on a car. Unless the criminal takes the time to totally remove every bit of the glass and the film, they won't even be able to get a hand through the window, let alone climb through it.

The other option for windows is to have burglar bars installed on them. Burglar bars are metal bars that cover the window, making it impossible for someone to get through, even if they shatter the glass. It may make you feel like your home has been turned into a jail, until you get used to it, but there is no way that a criminal will make it through the windows.

Between securing the possible entryways, having dogs to act as an alarm and having a pistol to defend themselves with, any senior should be fairly secure in their home. About the only thing that could be added to that would be a couple of armed guards; but then, most people can't afford that.



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