

MUTUAL AID FOR FIRST RESPONDERS TO EXTREME CIVIL EMERGENCY

The day will come when fuel prices are sky high, supermarkets will be rapidly emptying, banks will have long lines and may even be closed. Government at all levels appears in disarray and nothing they are doing seems to help. The only predictable thing about this moment of “punctuated equilibrium” is that it is unpredictable in its timing and its details. This flyer suggests mutual aid ideas to facilitate rapid and authoritative response at the grassroots to such an unprecedented situation. If the good guys and gals don't get there the firstest with the mostest, someone else will.

Gather a small group of helpers. Ideally, this is a group forms pre-crisis, and you already know and trust those involved. If you haven't done that, proceed as best you can. There is a lot that needs to be done, and many hands will make for lighter work.

Give your group identity and authority. Or operate under the identity/authority of an existing organization. In a serious crisis, identity and authority are often one and the same. Authority also derives from authentic leadership that offers practical suggestions for adapting to rapid changes and mitigation of dangers. Think and act “servant leadership.”

Develop a communication infrastructure. You must be able to communicate with your group, the people in your area, and with your allies elsewhere. If electricity and a copy machine are available, that's great. But if not, build a hectographic duplicator. Put up bulletin boards at major intersections/gathering places in your area (e.g. police and/or fire stations, grocery stores). If radio is working, use Citizens band, Family Radio Service, or Ham radio to facilitate communications. Set regular contact times, frequencies, and develop/use codes for sensitive/dangerous issues.

Get your plan ready. Use the **Simple Critical Infrastructure Map** method (<http://files.howtolivewiki.com/Dealing%20in%20Security%20JULY%202010.pdf>) to identify primary threats and design your response. Here is a summary in case you haven't downloaded it, the crisis is upon you, and the internet is down: (1) **Six primary ways to die** – too hot, too cold, hunger, thirst, injury, illness. (2) **3 sets of essential services** protect us – Shelter (too hot, too cold), Supply (hunger, thirst), Safety (illness, injury). (3) **7 layers of infrastructure:** person/individual, household, village/neighborhood, town, region, country, world. (4) **4 tiers of cooperation** – individual, group, organization, government. (5) **4 factors necessary for group formation** – communications, space (to meet/plan), transportation, resources. (6) **3 necessary items of social infrastructure for organizations:** shared map (knowledge of the area/situation), shared plan (ideas for response), shared succession plan (what happens if leaders don't lead or make too many mistakes) (7) **6 major problems in maintaining infrastructure** – neglect, time and wear, operators/skilled personnel, necessary system externalities (such as fuel for a power plant), economics, violence/disaster. (8) **3 effects of infrastructure failure** – services become unavailable, service prices rise steeply, service standards drop (e.g., dirty water, random blackouts). The results of infrastructure failure range from minor inconvenience to mass death. (9) **4 primary infrastructure delivery paths** – produce on site, grid services, delivery, fetch/carry.

Get the word out. Use the Extreme Civil Emergency flyer and/or develop your own printed communication that identifies/explains the major threats and how to mitigate/adapt to them. Tell the story! Develop talking points for your unique circumstances and get people out talking. Bring back the town crier if necessary. Get there the firstest with the mostest!

Call a neighborhood meeting. The Shared Critical Infrastructure Map system provides an excellent method for working through a meeting process so that you develop shared maps, shared plans, and resolve leadership questions. As you identify issues, use the common experience/knowledge of the group and the printable flyers to develop responses.

Start a neighborhood safety/security patrol. If the telephones aren't working, tell people to put something red on their front door, window, or fence if they need help, green if they are OK, and yellow if they have knowledge/resources to offer. Organize resistance if anyone attempts to take advantage of the situation. Stop any effort to interfere with necessary survival projects. Beware of the tendency of people to resort to bad behavior/habits when under stress. Disasters/crises always bring out both the best and the worst in people, so plan for this from the beginning.

Secure/protect critical infrastructure/resources. Offer assistance to police, firemen, EMTs, medical facilities, stores, warehouses, pumping stations, electrical infrastructure, and other essential locations in the the area to protect them from looting/damage.

Be helpful and provide instructions. People will need to adapt rapidly to seriously degraded circumstances and many will not have the skills and knowledge necessary to do so successfully. Help people by freely offering advice, instructions. Organize classes to teach, provide a reading room for research. Think servant leadership!

Assist with vulnerable groups. Hospitals, schools, child care centers, and nursing homes may need to be evacuated and alternative facilities developed.

Send a delegation to city hall, and/or other local government location(s) and to neighborhoods close by. Tell them what you are doing, ask about outside resources available (be prepared for “nothing” as an answer), offer them resources (information, knowledge, flyers, your plan, etc.)

MUTUAL AID BEFORE AN EXTREME CIVIL EMERGENCY.

In a crisis, those who get there the firstest with the mostest have the best chance of influencing the outcome, for good or for ill. Use this 5 point process to prepare to respond effectively, when the times call for prompt grassroots action to save and protect human life and community: (1) design your mutual aid contingency plans in advance of need, (2) acquire the necessary knowledge & resources, (3) make connections & build relationships, (4) practice your plans, and (5) be ready to act without hesitation or uncertainty at short notice. In doing so, you plant and nurture the seed of a spontaneous emergent order that can cope with a perilous situation that may be mushrooming out of control. Good design will enable you and your community to build new structures amidst the collapsing ruins of the old that both replace the old failed systems and protect you and your neighborhood from their falling debris..

Prepare yourself and your household first. Observe and analyze/evaluate your own household's vulnerabilities, design your responses, and implement your plans. Authority comes from authenticity, and walking your talk gives you credibility in a crisis.

Find and develop your core leadership group and give yourselves identity, competency, authority. The time to develop trusting relationships is before a crisis hits, so start with people you know and trust. If you aren't working through an existing organization, start one. There are 4 primary sources of an organization's emergent authority in a crisis: (1) the human rights to participation & association; (2) practical work in advance of need to identify challenges and opportunities and develop plans to mitigate dangers and adapt to changing circumstances; (3) your willing ability to freely share this expertise and situational awareness with others (servant leadership!), and (4) your competent group discipline to work together on common tasks. Appearances count! Make an authoritative-looking picture ID for each member of the group.

Work on your shared map, shared plan, and leadership issues. Use the Shared Critical Infrastructure Map system <http://files.howtolivewiki.com/Dealing%20in%20Security%20JULY%202010.pdf> or find your own method. The time to identify threats, resources, and design contingency plans is before the crisis hits. Make multiple copies, and spread them around. Plan for best and worst cases, and points "in between."

Find the knowledge and instructions you will need. Providing practical knowledge and instructions that will help people protect themselves and their families and adapt to changing circumstances is important to establish credibility. While computer files and CDs are useful to transfer and distribute info, in some emergencies they may not be usable, so wherever possible, get paper documents and books. **Make copies of printable flyers.** You need enough saturate your neighborhood and extra to share elsewhere. Make copies of the Civil Emergency flyer for every household in your neighborhood, & one set of the other printable flyers for every 10 households.

Develop the essential organizational infrastructure, both physical and social, and practice using it. Get a small copier, a generator/inverter, and make a hectographic duplicator. Get your radio system and test it regularly. Meet regularly and conduct drills to test your designs and practice your responses.

Become involved with your community. Don't be a stranger to your neighbors. Know them as well as possible under the circumstances. Where appropriate, join neighborhood non-governmental organizations/institutions and patronize locally owned businesses. Introduce yourself! Trusting relationships built in advance of a crisis are likely to carry through the emergency as trusting relationships. Know who the trouble-makers are too.

Localize and Regionalize. If your Mutual Aid group is concentrated in your neighborhood, help start similar groups in other areas of your municipality/region and network with them. If your Mutual Aid group is scattered over a region, members should establish mutual aid groups in their local residential neighborhood. In a crisis, your areas of practical cooperation will be the household, neighborhood, and municipality. Before the crisis, you can work effectively at the region and even higher levels, but the most productive will likely be the individual, household, neighborhood, municipality levels. Support community/regional projects that increase resilience, protect infrastructure, and reduce the brittleness of vital systems.

Essential design disciplines and principles. Observe carefully and thoroughly. Research – climate data, resources, threats, opportunities. Trust yourself. See everything as part of a whole. Solutions grow from place. Never do anything for only one reason. Do only what is necessary, but do what is necessary. Design and act on a scale appropriate to the circumstances; incorporate redundancy, responsibility, and resiliency everywhere. Work with the edges, promote/protect bio-diversity. Nothing you do (or don't do) is without consequence(s). Energy follows patterns set for it; everything works both ways. Everything needs something else. Seek a harmony between giving and receiving. We start small or we don't start at all. Make the least change for the greatest effect. Design from patterns to details. Cycle everything. Prefer biological solutions where possible/practical. The problem often contains the solution. Don't let the perfect become the enemy of the good. First things first, second things second, etc. Design so that all can participate in their own rescue. Think and design "outside of the box". Don't be afraid of manual labor. Incorporate personal, household, and community responsibility everywhere. Use a 4 steps – Observe, Evaluate, Design, Implement (follow that with critique and practice.)

Don't abandon your morality and principles. Don't leave anyone behind for the wolves to devour. The best designs care for people, care for the planet (with particular focus on your immediate neighborhood), and have a care for the future. In a crisis, cooperation is more important than competition. Never seek a good end by immoral means.