

Creating My Ready Plan

Introduction

It was a typical Midwest Sunday afternoon. People went to church, ate out for lunch, even gathered for a high school graduation ceremony. But catastrophe was coming. Late in the afternoon of May 22, 2011, a tornado cut a 6-mile-long swath through Joplin, Missouri that changed lives forever.

The residents of Joplin had only 19 minutes of forewarning before 200+ mile per hour winds leveled 75% of their city. If you were told right now that a catastrophic, life-changing event was going to happen to you in just 19 minutes. What would you do? Do you have a plan?

When life throws you a curve ball, what do you do? That is the question we help people answer. Our focus is helping you come up with a personalized plan. We call it a Ready Plan – one that outlines what YOU will do when disaster strikes.

Weather tends to be a big factor in disasters, but it is far from the only factor. Nor is it the only mechanism of loss we discuss. Disaster comes in many forms: the unexpected loss of a job, civil unrest, cyber attack, and more. At MyReadyPlan.com we focus on preparation, response, and recovery.

We talk about readiness in simple language that applies to regular, everyday people just trying to survive and thrive. If that describes you and how you made it here, then we've got what you are looking for!

Chapter 1: Why You Need a Plan

General Eisenhower is famously quoted as saying, "Plans are worthless but planning is priceless." So, if plans are worthless, why waste the time making them? The answer is simple. Because something, anything, is MUCH better than nothing. Sitting back and hoping for the best is a recipe for disaster.

Having a plan and being prepared is really all about reducing the impact of external

events on your everyday life. We plan so we are not caught by surprise!

But what about events that we have no control over? Well, the reality is that we experience those events every day. If you drive down the freeway, and a ladder falls off a work truck in front of you and you ended up with a flat tire, that is outside of your control. If you have planned for it, you SHOULD at least have a spare tire and know how to change it. Just because we can't control the event that causes a crisis doesn't mean we can't be better prepared!

The mechanics of how this works is fascinating. Let me ask you this – have you ever had a dream you able to remember after you woke up? How were you able to remember something that didn't really happen? That is the magnificence of our mind and brain at work.

By going through the planning process, we give our minds the opportunity to solve potential problems in advance. The mind will then call on the brain to store that memory for future use. While it may seem like a small thing, the ability to pre-play potential scenarios in your mind will go a long way toward reducing the anxiety you feel if an event actually happens.

Chapter 2: Three Parts of a Ready Plan

Part 1 - Prepare

During the preparation phase we are planning for our most likely risks and building a response plan should those risks come to pass.

- **Assess** - Each step in the process begins with an assessment. What are the risks, what do you currently have available, what are the major gaps you need to fill? During your initial assessment its best to be honest with yourself and your skills. If you are not honest with yourself, you will only end up hurting your own chances for a successful outcome!
- **Plan** - Now that you know what the gaps are, plan for how you will fill them. While many of your preps can be done for little or no money, some will have an associated expense, so be sure to include how you plan to pay for them. And don't be intimidated by the scope of the work. Take it one step at a time and little by little you will be ready!

- **Practice** - Having the equipment is not enough, you need to practice with it. Even something as simple as a tent requires an understanding of how to put it up correctly. Would you rather figure that out now or when it is windy and raining and you really need shelter? Take the time to practice with your preps.
 - Learn to use your fire extinguisher
 - Learn CPR and First Aid
 - Learn to change a tire
 - Learn Amateur Radio
 - Learn how to start a fire
 - Learn how to use a compass and read a map
 - The list goes on...

Part 2 - Respond

- **Assess** - As with the planning, we begin the response with an assessment. Take a few seconds to figure out what's going on, how bad it is, and what you need to do next.
- **Communicate** - Say OUT LOUD what you are doing next, even if there is no one else around. When we are in stressful situations our body responds by narrowing our field of focus. Your vision literally narrows to only the thing(s) necessary to preserve your life. There may be a crowd of people around and your mind just won't let you see them. Always be communicating what you are doing. If you're in an evacuation scenario, send a message to someone outside the area with information on which way you are going, where you are trying to get to, and when you will check in next. ABC - Always Be Communicating!
- **Act** - There is nothing left to do now but act! Do It!

Part 3 - Recover

- **Assess** - After taking action and the event is past, begin your recovery by assessing any damage, your health, and the equipment and supplies consumed. Also, take a minute to jot down a few notes about what you did well, what you could have done better, and what you want to build on for next time.
- **Replenish** - Don't hesitate to restock your supplies. In 2005, I was activated in response to Hurricane Katrina. After three weeks in the field, I returned home on

September 15th, took a shower and went to bed. I decided to resupply later. Instead, I was re-activated for Hurricane Rita a little more than 48 hours after getting home. **ALWAYS, restock and resupply as soon as possible.**

- **Repair** - Tools break. Repair what you can, replace what you can't.

Bonus: Repeat-Repeat-Repeat

After you complete the Recovery phase, it is back to planning! Pull out those notes you took during your recovery assessment and use them as inputs for the next iteration of the planning cycle!

You should have noticed that each part of the cycle begins with an assessment. Every time we begin to plan, respond, and recover, we must first assess the current state of things, then plan accordingly. I've seen hundreds of people develop plans for conditions that are pure fantasy. Certainly, we can plan for our desired outcome, but if we cannot make an honest assessment of where we are beginning from, our journey is doomed from the first step.

Chapter 3: Three Horizons of Preparedness

3 Day Horizon (focus of this book)

The goal of this book is for you to be able to watch events unfold on TV and be confident in your ability to provide the best protection possible for yourself, your family, and your community. Begin building a stockpile of food and supplies necessary to support your family for three days. We don't need to worry about anything beyond three days until we have three days covered. As we get into building your Ready Plan, focus on the first three days and then build from there.

Intermediate - 3 Week Horizon

As you begin to get your 3 Day preps ready, it is time to start thinking about the 3 Week Horizon. With the confidence you've gained getting the first three days covered, you can continue and expand. Start a garden (even if it's just a small window garden). Set aside part of your budget for training in the areas where you are weak.

Long Term - 3 Month Horizon

By this point, you should have a solid plan in place and have made preparedness a habit. Things like picking up extra pasta or storing and rotating gas are just part of what you do. But the 3 Month Horizon (and beyond) present some interesting problems of their own. Where do you store all your supplies? What do you say to people when they ask why you have so much stuff in your pantry (and stuffed into every nook and cranny around the house)? These are all topics we address as we get deeper into your preparedness journey.

Chapter 4: What Are You Planning For?

Many times, when we start talking about preparedness and being ready, the conversation devolves into a political or blame-based conversation. Trust me, there will be plenty of time for that when the event is over. Right now, we need to focus on the most likely events to occur where you live/work/play and what you need to do to be ready for them. Just like the residents of Joplin, Missouri who were just going about their regular Sunday activities, disaster can happen in an instant.

The "Most Likely" Approach

We recommend using the "most likely approach" to planning. In other words, what is the most likely event to occur that could disrupt your life? As mentioned earlier, weather is an easy example so let's use it here to illustrate.

I live in the south, in Tornado Alley where we get several to dozens of tornados per year. On the other hand, it is rare for us to have a wildfire or earthquake. So, my most likely event will be a tornado. What will be YOUR most likely event?

And, after I have completed my Ready Plan for a tornado, I can repeat the process for the next most likely event. In my case, it would be a random power outage. We keep repeating this process until we've covered all the likely events. Pretty simple, huh?

Chapter 5: The Ready Plan Worksheet

In Part 2 of this book, you will find the Ready Plan Worksheet for you to use during your planning process. Feel free to pull these pages out and make as many copies as you need for your planning efforts.

Here's what you will see on the Ready Plan Worksheet:

Risk Title, Number, and Probability

The reality is that we live in a world of multiple threats and risks. No single plan is comprehensive enough or specific enough to cover all the possibilities. So to keep you from becoming too "generic" during the planning process, we recommend that you create multiple Ready Plans for specific threats or situations. So at the top of the Ready Plan Worksheet you will see a place to record the threat you are planning for and a 1 to 10 scale of how likely it is to happen to you.

You will also see a space to record the Risk Number. After you have made multiple Ready Plans, you will likely need to prioritize them from most likely (number 1) to possible, but least likely.

Categories

In a crisis there are many types of assessments you need to make in a very short period of time. These assessments will differ based on the crisis (the specific threats and impacts of a tornado are different than a wildfire, or job loss). The categories described on the Ready Plan Worksheet are a starting point. There may be more or fewer categories for you in your specific circumstances or based on the threat you are planning for. However, these nine critical categories apply to most situations.

Most Likely Impact

When planning for a crisis there are lots of things that COULD happen, but what is most likely? If things go completely sideways, you will have to adapt on the fly. Having a plan will make that easier and planning for the most likely impacts makes the planning process feel more reasonable. Use the space on the Ready Plan Worksheet to record what you believe the most likely impacts will be. As you continue the planning process you can refer to it to keep your plans focused on point.

Remember to use the time horizons we talked about in chapter 3. When you are preparing your first Ready Plan, start with the three day time horizon. In other words, make a plan based on being on your own for three days. After you have a solid plan and have worked hard to fill any gaps, reconsider your plan with a three week horizon. Always work to improve your readiness!

Mitigation

The mitigation section of the Ready Plan Worksheet gives you space to record your ideas and approaches to reducing the effects of the most likely impacts. For example, if you think a likely impact of an incoming hurricane will be an evacuation order, how would you mitigate the impact of that order? Pack a bag in advance and keep it in the car? Call ahead to find a friend or other location to stay? Keep enough gas in the car to start your evacuation?

Capabilities

The capabilities section gives you the opportunity to think about some of the specific capabilities you want or need to develop to be ready for the planned threat. For example, in the case of a prolonged power outage, the cellular telephone networks may not work. If they fail, what capabilities do you need to communicate with friends and family? The right answer for you may be to get a ham radio license and equipment, a satellite phone, or something else. These are YOUR plans. Make them fit your life.

Notes and Next Actions

The Ready Plan Worksheet is a framework you can use to put your plan to paper, and there will inevitably be aspects of your life that don't fit neatly into this format. Use the Notes section to record anything else you need to remember or consider.

Chapter 6: The 9 Critical Categories

When you start thinking about preparedness it is easy to become overwhelmed. There's a lot to consider. To make it easier, we've broken preparedness down into nine critical categories. Could there be more? Sure, but we believe that these categories combine the most common aspects into a more manageable format. Let's take a look at the nine categories.

Shelter and Warmth

We begin with the most basic of human needs, shelter, and warmth. This category also includes considerations for power/electricity and basic sanitation, and fire starting, and fire prevention.

Food and Water

After securing shelter, food and water will become your next greatest concern. In some planning scenarios it may be your greatest concern (if shelter is not at risk).

Health and Medical

An obvious consideration in this category is obtaining or providing immediate care (first aid) during or after a crisis when formal medical care may be inundated or unavailable. But in the planning phase we should also consider longer term impacts and mitigation strategies. Do you or someone in your family require life-sustaining medication or equipment? Does the medication require refrigeration?

Don't overlook rest. In the immediate response, it is often easy to find yourself 'amped up' and going for hours, thanks to adrenaline and your body's fight or flight response. In an extended situation however, you need to plan for rest. In fact, it is the need for rest that makes preparedness as a stand-alone entity or family unit difficult. See chapter 9 for more details about forming or joining a mutual aid group.

Security and Defense

Providing for your personal security is something we often take for granted, much like our health and medical care. But when the emergency systems are not available, or when the threat is immediate (someone trying to knock down your front door), we must consider how we will provide for our own protection. During Hurricane Katrina, as citizens of New Orleans sought shelter in the SuperDome, they quickly found out that the number of people inside far outpaced the capacity of the security forces who were focused on needs outside the building. How will you ensure your security and personal defense during a crisis?

Communications and Situational Awareness

In the 1997 movie "The Postman" starring Kevin Costner, the residents of Pineview are desperate for news from outside their small enclave. While this may seem far-fetched, consider how you will get news and information if the cell network is not working? Do you have a battery powered radio or TV? How will you let your family and friends know you are okay or in need of help? Also maintaining macro situational awareness (when will the flood water recede so we can go home) don't overlook the need for micro situational awareness. Many would-be muggers and thieves have been thwarted by someone just 'paying attention.' How will you pay attention AND get rest?

Mobility and Outdoors

Most of the developed world is fortunate to have well-developed transportation systems and here in the United States, it is the exception rather than the rule for an adult to be without access to a vehicle. But will that vehicle be available and operable during a crisis? Will the roads be passable, or will they be clogged with others trying to evacuate? Do you have the fuel necessary to get where you are going? All these considerations may lead to you planning for an alternate means of mobility, potentially even walking.

If you do find yourself on foot, are you ready? Do you have proper shoes and clothes? Are you fit enough to walk out of a danger zone? Walking is a lot slower than driving; will you need to camp along the way?

Depending upon the threat, don't overlook other means of mobility, like water. Do you live near a river, lake, or ocean where a boat could improve your position?

Home and Family

This is one of the broadest and admittedly vague categories for readiness. Since everyone's home life and circumstances are so varied, we try to capture "everything else" here. Do you have pets? Will they shelter with you? (Many public shelters do not allow pets). Will they evacuate with you? How will you feed them?

Do you have children or other family members that will require special support? How is their mobility and what are their special health needs? How does their presence change any of the plans or considerations you've made so far? If you are at work when the crisis hits, will you try to get to them or meet up with them somewhere? How will you communicate?

Kids and family members with needs are indeed a special case, because they can create their own crises. Suppose you are travelling with your kids and get separated from one of them? Do they know what to do? Do they know how to ask another grownup for help? Will they ask another grown up or are they afraid of all strangers?

Do you have livestock or crops? What special considerations do they require?

Income and Economics

While not quite as broad as Home and Family, this category can have wide-ranging considerations and impacts. Most Americans are little more than one or two paychecks away from oblivion. What would happen if you or the primary breadwinner in your household got laid off tomorrow? This scenario is only as far away as a fire in the main office building!

What about a broader economic event? During the COVID pandemic we saw vestiges of a full-blown supply chain breakdown. The next crisis that comes may in fact be food distribution breakdown, gas prices rising out of control, or run-away inflation. How would any of this impact your ability to earn or maintain a living?

If a crisis comes and you are required to evacuate your normal day-to-day life, will you still be able to work or earn an income? Could you survive being let go or laid off because you are 250 miles away in safety?

Community and Leadership

In this final category, be sure to consider those around you and your role in community readiness. As your confidence to face life's critical moments increases, those around you will naturally take notice. You'll be the person they call when they have a flat tire or a leaky faucet. If you have power during a power outage, they'll take note. Are you prepared to step in to your role as a community leader? What tools and capabilities do you have or need to take on that role? It's not really a choice whether you will be a leader or not. By being prepared, you are already a leader. Furthermore, because people will take note of your confidence during the crisis, they will naturally turn to you for instructions. Most people are very open to being told what to do, especially during a crisis. Think ahead and plan now on how you will respond. Also refer to Chapter 9 on starting or joining a mutual aid group.

Chapter 7: Being Ready is a Journey

When you begin your readiness journey it can seem daunting, so much so that it might seem there is no point. As we've already discussed, SOME plan, no matter how small, is better than NO plan at all! Start small and begin working readiness into your everyday routine.

Chapter 8: Rinse and Repeat

It may be tempting to look at readiness as a "one-and-done" checklist of things that, when complete, will make you "ready." The reality is readiness is an ongoing effort. There are always new things you can learn, new preps to make, and rework on the pieces you already have in place.

In Chapter 3 we talked about the Three Horizons of Preparedness, 3 Days, 3 Weeks, and 3 Months. The decisions you make that work for a 3-day horizon may not work well for a 3-month horizon. For example, you can purchase pre-packaged food supplies for 72 hours, that satisfies your 3-day horizon plan. But those food stuffs tend to be expensive and purchasing 3 months' worth may be cost prohibitive. In this case, you may opt to look at growing some of your food or buying extra portions of the foods you already eat.

Security and Defense is another great example. You may be able to meet your 3-day horizon requirements by adding security film to your windows and a better deadbolt and longer hinge screws to your doors. But will that be sufficient for a 3-month shelter in place order? When your neighbors run out of food, they'll come knocking, and they won't be asking nicely. Your 3-month option may be to evacuate to a more secure location – one that you should be looking for now.

The point here is that there is always something you can work to improve. As you incorporate readiness into your everyday life, look for ways to improve incrementally. If you're worried about power outages and want to use a solar solution, buy one panel a month until you have all you need. Spending \$100 per month on panels for 12 months is much easier than dropping \$1,200 all at once!

Everything you do today to be better prepared moves you one step ahead of the crowd.

And as the old saying goes, you don't have to be able to outrun the bear, just the rest of the crowd being chased by the bear!

Chapter 9: You Are Not Alone (next steps)

When the residents of Joplin, Missouri came out of their shelters in May 2011, they saw total devastation. Over 75% of the city was destroyed, more than 1,000 commercial buildings and over 600 homes were wiped away. There were 158 deaths and approximately \$2.8 Billion of damage inflicted in just 38 minutes. But what happened next was just as astonishing.

Also the formal support response, neighbors started helping neighbors. Families that had their entire life turned upside down showed up to help other families in need.

No matter how much preparation you do, there is a limit to how much you can do by yourself. You have physical limitations, like the need for rest and sleep that will prevent you from doing it all. It is also unrealistic to believe that you can master every aspect of readiness from the 9 Critical Categories. This is where it pays to be part of a team.

Support Teams are known by many names: Neighborhood Watch, Mutual Assistance Groups (MAG), Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). But they all serve the same purpose – to provide support during life's critical moments. By being a member of a team, you immediately have access to the expertise of the entire group and you have someone to count on to answer questions as you progress on your readiness journey.

The Health and Medical category is a great example. Everyone should know some basic first aid and CPR, but not everyone needs to be an EMT. However, if you have an EMT in your support team, then you have a go-to subject matter expert when you have medical questions. Maybe you enjoy growing and canning your own food and want to share that experience and knowledge with the whole team. By being part of a team, you share the strength of the whole team and you are no longer limited to what you can learn and master by yourself.

Another great aspect of being a member of a support team is having someone to call when you need a hand, even in a non-emergency. By investing in relationships with other team members when they are not needed, you earn the trust of the entire team for when you do need them.

What happens when you're away from home, traveling to grandma's for Thanksgiving or taking a road-trip and you breakdown? Can your support team still help? They can if they are part of a larger network like American Contingency. The AmCon network provides structure, resources, and support for teams all over the country, as well as a built-in vetting process that can give you confidence in the trustworthiness of the support being offered.

In December of 2021, Carl was driving to Pennsylvania after visiting family in Texas. In rural Mississippi, he hit a deer and it disabled his vehicle. Within 30 minutes of updating the network with his situation, multiple team members were rolling to provide support. THIS is the power and the confidence that comes from being part of a nationwide network – of being American Contingency.

Next Steps

Congratulations on starting your readiness journey! As you begin to assess where you are and the work you need to do, it may look intimidating, but don't let that stop you! You got this far for a reason. You want to provide for and protect your family when life's critical moments come. Remember that and make it your motivation when the going gets tough.

Take some time now to pull out the MyReadyPlan Worksheets from the end of this book, choose a threat and make a plan. It doesn't matter if it is perfect or not, in fact, it won't be. But SOME plan is better than NO plan! The only way to make progress is to start!

You should also consider joining a support team, which would be a great resource for you as you start your journey.

If you would like help finding a team near you, go to <https://www.AmericanContingency.com> now to get started.

Part 2

The Ready Plan Worksheet

MyReadyPlan .com

Congratulations! Today you are taking the first step toward better preparing yourself, your family, and your community for life's next 'what-if' moment!

Use the attached template to create a Ready Plan for you and your family. Everyone has unique circumstances and needs so customize the plan to make it work for you! Completing this plan in advance will help you organize your understanding of the threats you face during the PREPARE phase of readiness.

Most of us live in areas where there are multiple risks and threats. Tornadoes and hurricanes, wildfires and floods, even civil unrest. You should create as many Ready Plans as necessary to address **all** the threats you face.

Don't forget to refer to the Ready Plan Workbook for more information or background on any of the topics below. If you don't have your own copy of the Ready Plan Workbook, you can download one for free at MyReadyPlan.com.

MyReadyPlan for:

Risk Number:

On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the probability it will impact you, your family, and your community? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Shelter & Warmth

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Food & Water

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Health & Medical

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Security & Defense

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Communications & Situational Awareness

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Mobility & Outdoors

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Home & Family

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Income & Economics

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Community Leadership

Most Likely Impact	Mitigation
Capabilities	

Prioritized List of Areas to Improve / Things to Fix

If someone shared this Ready Plan with you, thank them! Then head over to MyReadyPlan.com to download the workbook and start YOUR Ready Plan!

Part 3

Sample Ready Plan

MyReadyPlan for: [SAMPLE] TORNADOS

Risk Number: 1

On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the probability it will impact you, your family, and your community? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Shelter & Warmth

Most Likely Impact Power outage, probably short, just a couple of hours. Maybe wind damage	Mitigation Candles and flashlights, generator for the refrigerator.
Capabilities Get around in the dark Keep the food cold Stop any rain leaks	

Food & Water

Most Likely Impact Have to boil water for a while	Mitigation Have some bottled water on hand and some way to boil water if the power is out
Capabilities Somewhere to store water Some way to boil or filter water	

Health & Medical

Most Likely Impact Cuts and scrapes from flying debris or while cleaning up. Maybe a broken bone?	Mitigation Have a "boo boo" kit for everybody Have a serious first aid kit for bigger issues.
Capabilities Know how to clean a cut Know when you need stitches Learn how to splint a broken bone	

Security & Defense

Most Likely Impact Not much, just need to keep an eye out for strangers in the neighborhood	Mitigation ???
Capabilities Neighborhood watch?	

Communications & Situational Awareness

Most Likely Impact No TV, maybe no internet or cell service. Where will I get news?	Mitigation Battery radio?
Capabilities Battery powered radio Walkie-talkies to talk to neighbors?	

Mobility & Outdoors

Most Likely Impact Roads blocked by debris or power lines. Gas stations closed	Mitigation Don't get out on the road. Keep plenty of gas in the car.
Capabilities Learn to recognize power lines Store some gas at home	

Home & Family

Most Likely Impact Kids will get bored. Can't go check on mom.	Mitigation Get some board games or workbooks for the kids. Mom....???
Capabilities Teach kids to occupy themselves or help Mom....???	

Income & Economics

Most Likely Impact Missed shifts, can't get to work for a few days	Mitigation Build up some savings!!
Capabilities Find a side hustle to make a little extra	

Community Leadership

Most Likely Impact City services all tied up, can't get any help with limbs or power lines	Mitigation Create the capability within the neighborhood! Talk to the neighbors!
Capabilities Organize the neighbors Some way to talk during emergencies	

Prioritized List of Areas to Improve / Things to Fix

1. Build a basic bag with flashlights and boo boo kits and water bottles

2. Talk to the neighbors and see who has a battery powered radio, maybe a ham radio?

3. Figure out how to boil or filter water

4. Figure out how to build up a little more in savings

5. Figure out a plan to stay in touch with mom!

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