

Advice from a Former FEMA Disaster worker who saw it all.

By Marvin Nauman

### Prepare and Have a Plan...Starting at Home

Years after Katrina, local and Federal emergency workers are still engaged in relief efforts following the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina. After 37 Disasters I share the following observations and offer the following advice:

**Observation:** Generally speaking, due to the unpredictability of mother nature's natural disasters, it is unrealistic to expect everything will work as perfectly as you anticipate it will. Things can and will go wrong. You have no idea until it happens to you... and it will sooner or later.

**Advice:** Any plan is better than No Plan. The better the Plan... the better you survive.

**Observation:** Do not count on being able to run down to the corner store, mall, or medical facility and expect to receive emergency services. Goods and services at these locations will be instantly overwhelmed by all of those citizens who failed to prepare their home and family to survive the effects of a local natural disaster.

**Advice:** Have an Emergency kit for the home & each car. Prepare several family/home based emergency plans. Have a plan in case everything else goes wrong. Have a Plan that includes your Pets whether your home or not. Plan to be flexible in executing your emergency plans. I recommend at least 3 weeks supply or more of medications on hand at all times if you can. In Katrina there were people that didn't see any help for two weeks... and that was a helicopter that was only dropping water and MRE's off.

**Observation:** The unprepared will seek shelter anywhere, including hospitals that really need to service the severely injured. If you run to a hospital for shelter but are not injured, you will be turned away.

**Observation:** The unprepared, in their desperation, may also brandish weapons in order to secure shelter, services, goods, or medical. This will likely result in an evacuation of the area and you'll end up with less than you started with. If your one of these foolish persons that brandish a weapon... expect the worst... even death. In a Disaster these facilities have been known to protect them selves with deadly force... with or without warning.

**Observation:** During the height of Hurricane Katrina's onslaught, more than one medical facility in New Orleans was ransacked and medical supplies stolen while medical personnel were sequestered in the facility's "safe zone." At another facility gang members fired upon the hospital staff trying to evacuate. The staff was ordered to stay put by its security force. 2 minutes later a single shot rang out... shortly thereafter security gave them an all clear sign to evacuate.

**Advice:** Secure emergency and medical supplies in safe zones and assign security guards to keep them secure from theft. Have ample Security for staff & patients or be prepared to evacuate.

**Observation:** In the aftermath of Katrina a very dictated skeleton utility crew struggling to survive themselves at a very remote major power generating station in the area, were able though sheer determination to keep the power station operating for those that still had power. That was until they spotted a mob approaching the power plant. The workers could not tell if the mob was

friend or foe. Even if a friendly mob... Power Plants are very dangerous places for people. The Power Workers had no choice... they had to take precautionary measures to protect their workers, the power plant, and the mob. The workers activated their emergency plan to shut the Plant down and airlifted their workers to safety. A sad story because that was the last operating power for the area and the Plant was shut down for several months until utility crews could clear the lines.

**Advice:** Don't be part of a mob. If you are part of a mob... delegate 3-4 people to make contact while the mob stays a safe distance away. Think about that... what would you do if suddenly 200+ strangers showed up and surrounded your house?

**Observation:** Following a relatively small, or minor, natural disaster, rescue workers and emergency personnel will be available to give local aid immediately, but will be quickly overwhelmed. Unless life threatening... you probably will be turned away. It will take emergency personnel several days to provide meaningful aid to all following a huge natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina or a major Earthquake.

**Observation:** Do not expect to be rescued. Do the math... look at a map of the area... First responders simply can not get to everyone every where in 2 weeks let alone longer. Get real... in the big one where do you think the aid is going to go? It's going where it's needed the most... mass populations, and important infrastructure to get things back in operation. Plus... they may be no way for them to reach you. Those that have a plan will survive the best. YOYO (Your On Your Own).

**Advice:** Don't be the CNN shot of beached humans on a rooftop begging for medication, food, & water... be the CNN shot of a family on a roof top with cases of MRE's, water and a sign saying, "we're fine thanks... can last another 20 days.

**Conclusion:** You really have no idea what it is like to be in an area with wide spread destruction where there are no services for 60 miles... and there are no services for several days, weeks, or months in some cases. You have to be totally self-sufficient to survive with no electricity, no food, no water, no gas, and maybe no home... for days/weeks/months... think about that. And forget about driving somewhere... there may be no roads or place to drive to. What use to take 10 minutes to reach... now takes 4 hours to days.