



Outdoors-Magazine.com

<http://outdoors-magazine.com>

Urban survival kit

V Shrake

- Skills and guides - Bushcraft and Survival -



Publication: Friday 6 September 2002

Description :

Not really an outdoors topic, but what the hell...

Copyright (c) Outdoors-Magazine.com under a Creative Commons

Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike License

Now, don't you wish that you could have an ultimate fall-back, a kit that is with you at all times?

With the planning and foresight that should be the hallmark of the dedicated survivalist, you can.

As you have no doubt gathered from previous articles, I believe strongly in doing everything possible to improve our chances of survival. This means vigilance (watching for potentially dangerous situations), diligence (things could go wrong any time, anywhere), and perseverance (do whatever it takes to stay alive).

To complement the above, having the proper gear is a serious boost to having the proper mind-set.

In accordance with my "Layering" principle, I feel strongly that you should have a minimum of gear with you at all times, in all situations, even in your everyday life. What I call my "Bat Utility Belt" could, more realistically, be termed an Urban Survival Belt.

Just as Batman always seemed to have the proper gear on hand to fit any occasion or villain, we should strive to do the same. While it is impossible to determine what might be needed in a mostly hypothetical situation, certain things need to be addressed.

Assumptions:

1. We may be injured, or those around us may require medical assistance.
2. Food and water may be scarce, or contaminated.
3. Our fellow survivors may not be in a terribly charitable mood.
4. We may lose power, or have to move underground or at night.
5. We may have to provide our own shelter.
6. Basic tools will improve our chances of survival.

All of these are reasonable assumptions, based on observation and past experience, and would apply whether in the event of an earthquake, nuclear incident, or abduction by little gray men. My point is this: as long as we're alive, we're going to have the same basic requirements as on any other day.

When we consider that in today's world seemingly random violence surrounds us, terrorism is on an upswing, and there is no way to tell when the next earthquake, tornado, or flood might hit, it behooves us to follow the old Boy Scout adage of "Be Prepared".

As survivalists (or at least potential survivalists, assuming we do everything right), we might be missing a very important aspect of our preparedness: our everyday lives.

Of course we try to stay healthy, don't cross against the lights, and obey most of the traffic laws most of the time; but beyond that, how does your life stand up under the scrutiny of staying alive when everyone around you is dying?

Certainly, if we were to be at home when disaster strikes, we'd be sitting pretty. We would have access to all of that wonderful gear we've spent many paychecks purchasing, just in case the unthinkable happens. Now it has, and we're ready to start surviving.

But, wait a moment. As usual, Life has dealt us an unfair hand. Instead of being at home, or in our shelter or whatever, we were at work, or running errands, or picking up the kids from school. Even survivalists have lives outside of their bomb-shelter, and the odds are that disasters won't come at a convenient time.

"Not to worry", you say, "I took the precaution of stocking the car with a complete survival kit." Very good, except that your car is in the shop today, or buried under tons of rubble, or a vicious gang of rioters is busily disputing your property rights.

Whatever the reason, you are cut off from both your primary and secondary source of supplies. We just have to recognize what those requirements are, and then provide for them.

Since we survivalists pride ourselves on being able to get by without outside assistance (indeed, crave that autonomy), we must understand that survival situations aren't limited to the great outdoors. Just because it all comes crashing down on us while we're inside city limits doesn't mean we don't have to take care of ourselves. The fact is that we need to be even more self-reliant in such straits.

Just as we've always known, the police can't do a damn thing to protect you, even when things are "normal". Now imagine the confusion and conflicting orders resulting from a major catastrophe. Even better than imagining, just think back to the latest riots, or other recent calamity.

Even worse than no police presence, there will likely be no city services-type amenities: no phone to check on your family, no water, no power, overworked or non-existent Red Cross workers. You would have to deal with most of these problems in a wilderness misadventure, certainly, but at least in the mountains all you have to worry about is playing tag with the bears. In almost any city today, the greatest danger is your fellow commuter. Don't count on the milk of human kindness, because it won't be flowing for some time, if ever again. Make plans to take care of yourself, and be ready at a moment's notice to divest yourself of society's "aid".

But how to do this?

First off, let's look at our list of assumptions, and how to provide for them.

Assumption Resolutions:

1. A basic med-kit will cover most non life-threatening injuries.
2. Carry at least a little food and water with you at all times.
3. A folding fighting knife, a type becoming more popular everyday, is both a tool and provides self-defense.
4. Even if you're a dedicated non-smoker, you should still carry matches or a lighter.
5. Dress properly for the season, and think ahead to night-time temperatures; don't sacrifice utility to fashion or comfort.
6. In addition to your folding fighting knife, consider carrying a Swiss Army knife or one of the many excellent mini-tools now on the market; once you start carrying one of these little pocket tool chests, you'll use it daily, I guarantee.

Now that we've identified the most-likely problems, and covered the basics of solving them, I'll tell you what I carry, and how I carry it. This is stuff that I take with me whenever I'm away from the house, no matter how short the duration may be. For all I know, the excrement may hit the oscillating air-circulatory device while I'm in town to get the mail; I want to be ready!

By "Basic med-kit", I mean just that: what you envision needing to cover minor, everyday types of injuries. We won't have room for an entire ER, and don't need one. Assuming that you have been lucky and received only light bumps and bruises, a few band aids and the like will see you through.

Figuring on stores to be closed or downright dangerous to get to is a good bit of foresight. Likewise, don't depend on the water fountains to give forth a cool, refreshing spray whenever you're thirsty. I carry a half-quart canteen with me, full, at all times. Adding one drop of Clorox bleach to it kills all micro-organisms for about six months, at which time I re-stock. For food, I carry one MR-8 bar, which is basically the same thing as Coast Guard rations, only in a much smaller package. You don't get as much, but it fits into this type of kit much better. Unfortunately, they no longer make this product, but you could get almost the same low-bulk, high calorie content from BTU STOKERTM Energy Bars, which are sold by Brigade Quartermasters, the same outfit that used to sell MR-8's. Call them at 1-800-(338)-4327, and ask them to send you a catalog. They have all sorts of neat stuff. And, mainly as a nod to completeness, I carry an emergency fishing kit and snare wire. While you may not use either within the confines of the city, your first priority should be to get out! Out in the countryside, they should come in handy.

For personal protection, and daily utility, I carry an SOG company SOGWinder, a fairly large folding-fighter with a thumb opening stud. The stud is mainly what denotes a folding-fighter from other lock back knives, and is a worthwhile feature. It makes it much easier, as well as faster, to open your blade. Also, get a knife with a stout (thick) blade. This little honey is going to be doing everything from gutting and skinning wee beasties to possibly defending your life; choose wisely. Avoid fixed-blade knives, as most of the good ones will either be too large to carry daily (and discreetly), or will be illegal in your locale. For the same reason, don't carry a gun, unless you're lucky enough to have a CCW. Even if you can carry legally, you will still have to have a good knife for all of the things a gun can't do. While a firearm is most often a better choice for personal protection, most of us can't avail ourselves of this option. Additionally, knives are more versatile. So don't give the local constabulary a reason to come down on you, because we'll all have problems enough in the near future.

What you can do, as soon as the dust clears from whatever little setback you're encountering, is to find a good stick. Something around five or six feet long, and about an inch-and-a-half to two inches thick. It will help you to navigate rubble, as well as rabble. Just ask Little John.

One of Man's proudest moments, indeed one of the very things that make us sapient beings, is our mastery of fire. Don't give up this victory of our forebears in times of crisis: carry matches! Fire gives a sense of community and security that few other substances can equal. It's also an extremely useful tool. In the survivalist's arsenal, fire and knives are about equal in importance, and neither should be ignored. Fire is light in times of darkness, heat on a cold night, and makes hamburgers much more palatable.

Just as you provide yourself with the means to make fire when times are rough, you should carry a good mini flashlight. They both should be an integral part of a well-thought-out kit. I carry a Mini-torch [\[1\]](#) with extra batteries and bulbs, strike-anywhere matches, a Bic lighter, solid fuel bars, and a couple of Cyalume snap-lights. These items take up little space, but provide inestimable aid when needed.

If you were unlucky enough to be caught away from home when it all went bad, where would you sleep? Could you stay warm if the buildings around you were destroyed? These wouldn't be problems if you had thought ahead, trying to out-guess cruel Fate. A Mylar sheet or sleeping bag, such as I carry, provides a high level of thermal efficiency. That's a high-falutin' way of saying that Mylar (a space-age fabric developed to provide insulation for NASA) keeps you warm. It also takes up very little space. If possible, try to be dressed for temperature variations; wearing the proper clothes for the climate will go a long way to keeping you alive.

The last items in my kit are the ones that often see the most use: a Leatherman pocket tool and a genuine Swiss

Urban survival kit

Army knife from Victorinox. While these two little knives won't replace a real tool chest, you will have them on you at all times, and they are amazingly versatile.

Carrying this gear doesn't require you to herniate yourself, or look out of place to all the herd animals around you. Women have it particularly good in this respect, as they are always carrying a purse. To be honest, most of the purses I've seen women lugging around would provide a week's worth of goodies, even without adding dedicated survival gear. Men will find it a bit more difficult to carry their stuff discretely, but it is possible. As I intimated earlier, I carry my kit in a belt loaded with black nylon pouches of various sizes. None are terribly "martial" in appearance, and I rarely draw a second glance. That's partly due to the fact that I live in the sticks, and partly because of the sudden popularity of fanny packs, a cross-over from runners and bike riders. In casual clothes, even multiple pouches such as I make use of blend in nicely; a standard fanny pack, if you can find one large enough to carry everything, would be even less remarkable to the general populace.

Those of you who spend a good amount of time in suits are on you own. I can think of nothing that would fit in with that mode of dress that would allow you to carry anything worthwhile. Some "Suits", such as a friend of mine, can't even carry a pocket knife on them, due to corporate policy, so I guess it doesn't matter that there's no really discrete way for him to carry an urban kit.

Another possibility is a small ruck or book bag, such as seen on virtually every college and high school campus. Perhaps the business world's equivalent, the briefcase, would work in some instances. That may be an answer to those of you destined to pass your lives in wool and gabardine, but it means you'll have to carry your kit like a piece of luggage. I prefer to have my hands free. Another bad thing about both rucks and briefcases is the fact that you have to remember to pick them up; a belt is something that you wear, and take off only occasionally. On the other hand, a ruck would allow you to carry more, and add items that you've managed to scrounge.

There you have it, something else to consider in your quest to remain a jump ahead of bad times. You may come up with a different list of "essentials" than I did, you may even come up with a carry mode that works better in your environment. Whatever you carry and however you carry it, at least by having it with you your chances of survival just went up.

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).

[1] brand name removed