

Most Americans Aren't Prepared for a Disaster (But Should They Be?)

The majority of Americans are not prepared for a disaster. According to a [recent survey](#) commissioned by the Ad Council, only 17% claim to be “very prepared.”

So, why aren't most of us prepared?

Well, of course, there's good-old-fashioned busyness and/or laziness. I think, also, there's the fact that most of us have grown up in a world where food is a thing purchased at a grocery store, energy is zipped throughout our home as a result of that monthly bill we pay, and governmental programs are there to prop us up if we come upon hard times. An alternative to this world is not really on our radars.

In addition, shows like *Doomsday Preppers* and inane talk about a “zombie apocalypse” turn many people off from disaster preparedness. But you don't need to be expecting a doomsday scenario or the apocalypse to justify being prepared. As any student of history knows, shit happens, whether it be in the form of a natural disaster, an epidemic, economic collapse, or war.

Hell, even the U.S. government [recommends](#) that you have a disaster kit with enough supplies to last you at least 72 hours.

As a [Business Insider article](#) last year reported, New York City firefighter Jason Charles “goes a few steps further.” Here are many of the supplies that he includes in his “bug-out bag” – a bag packed with survival supplies for getting out of the city (which over 80% of Americans live in) in the event of a disaster:

- A four-person tent.
- An emergency blanket.
- Water bottles.
- Water purification packages.
- First-aid kit.
- An emergency candle kit.
- A 10-gallon folding bucket (for carrying and purifying water).
- At least a week's worth of food (he has a lot of MREs).
- Fire-starting materials.
- Particle masks.
- A portable saw.
- A hatchet or other weapon (Charles lives in New York, where they have strict gun laws).
- A solar-powered outdoor radio and flashlight that can also charge a smartphone.
- A portable solar panel (for one's devices).

In addition, Charles keeps extra survival supplies in his apartment closet.

The classic aim of virtue ethics is to arrive at the mean – a behavior that represents a moderation between two extremes. I feel that many of people on a show like *Doomsday Preppers* miss the mean through turning prepping into a lifestyle, through being too certain about their cataclysmic prophecies ([Charles himself is preparing for the explosion of the Yellowstone National Park supervolcano](#)), and perhaps exhibiting too great a fear of death.

However, I also wonder if too many people today miss the mean on the other side, by having too much faith in the endurance of present structures and the peace of a recent past.

One doesn't need to go "full prepper." But perhaps we should all be moderate preppers?