

If you lost it all

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While some commentators and “experts” are talking about improved economic indicators we see little to truly give us hope. Foreclosures are predicted to be up in 2011. Add to this recent statements by Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, in front of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission that the financial crisis was worse than the Great Depression. Perhaps the so called “Great Recession” would be more aptly named the “Greater Depression”?

Add to this unemployment numbers that refuse to go down, food prices increasing along with government concern about food production and continued increases in price, gas prices that continue to rise, and other general financial concerns and the potential is there for more pain for the average person.



Back in 2003 there were several people who said that we could see as many as one million homes lost to foreclosure, these people (including yours truly) were called alarmists, conspiracy nuts, crazy, etc. As of today there are far more than one million houses that have been foreclosed on, the number is several times higher, with two million foreclosed houses in inventory. Over four million foreclosures are predicted to be filed in 2011 with up to two million of those being seized by the mortgage holder. Currently 14% of all finished houses are empty. Home values have dropped 26% to date, during the Great Depression housing prices dropped 25.9%, and there are predictions that home values will drop about 7% in 2011. This means many more people will owe even more on their homes than they are worth, making them that much harder to sell



We are seeing civil unrest in many parts of the world as people are upset with the cost of food and the directions that governments have been taking. Who knows where this civil unrest will spread or if we will see similar civil unrest somewhere near us. While most of these protests started off fairly peacefully they are now starting to turn violent, as if those countries are on the brink of civil war between those who want change in government and those that don't.

Let us hope for the best while preparing for the worst so that we can do everything we can to ensure that our families will survive if the worst does happen.

Looking back at the Great Depression there where many people who lost it all. With no place to live they were forced to live like nomads, only able to take with them what they could carry on their backs. Some people started off with a vehicle, but once the gas ran out they were stuck on foot. Many were left with nothing but the clothes on their backs and what they could carry. What if you lost it all and were forced to travel on foot? How much can you carry on your back? Twenty pounds, fifty pounds, one hundred pounds? For how long? Your spouse? Your children? Your parents? Can you carry enough to re-establish

some sort of permanent shelter? What about doing some basic gardening?

Below you will find a list of things you can carry on a small four wheel garden cart that can be pulled by hand or behind a bicycle. It is a lot easier to pull something on wheels, or a sled in the winter, than it is to carry it on your back... and you can pull more than you can carry. If you start off with a vehicle and trailer these items can be loaded on the cart which is then loaded in the trailer, the bed of your pickup truck, van/min van or SUV. You may have to get creative and keep the items in the vehicle and strap or tie the hand cart or sled to the roof... better to scratch the paint and have the cart or sled than to save the paint and have limited ability to carry things.

Transportation & Cargo

Bicycles

- repair kits
- inner tubes
- hitch for towing
- cargo racks, pannier bags



Cart

- 1200 pound capacity
- 4 wheels
- hand pulled or hitch pulled
- 30x46 inch deck
- can be pulled by bicycle
- ratchet straps / rope to tie down load
- tarp to cover load



Sled for winter

- 64x32 (14 inches deep)
- will fit on cart
- can be used as small boat



Shelter

- Tent (army 5 or 10 man arctic/ GP small with poles and liner or commercial canvas tent)
- Tarps & adjustable poles (for floor of tent, extra rain shelter, lean to, awning on tent, etc)
- Yukon stove and chimney pipe (heat tent in winter, cook on)
- broom and dust pan

The arctic tents have one door and lower walls than the GP small which has two doors and 5 foot walls. The GP small has optional liner, bug netting and vestibules (two can be added, one to each door) which will add more room. Commercial canvas tents don't always have a stove jack or hole. A "Yukon Stove" can be used with the military surplus tents, it may need stove pipe need an adapter for commercial tents as well a regular tent wood stove due to the size of the stove pipe opening.

Examples of military surplus arctic tent, GP Small tent and a commercial canvas tent below.



Bedding and furniture

cots
foam mattress (camping style)
blankets & sheets

sleeping bags
folding chairs
folding / rolling tables

Cooking

cast iron fry pans, pots & dutch ovens
large stock pot (or 20 qt dutch oven)
tripod, chains, hooks, spit
fire pit
grate / grill
water jugs

wash / rinse tubs
serving / cooking utensils & manual can opener
coffee pot
camping stoves, "Hobo stove", etc to cook on
cups, plates, bowls. flatware

Tools

Shovel, round point, long handle
Pick / mattock
Splitting maul
Bow saw , extra blades
Sledge, 10 pound
Fork
Rake, bow / gravel
Basic gardening tools

Shovel, square, long handle
Axe & hatchet
Splitting wedge
Machete
Prybar, 36 inch
Hoe
Bolt Cutters, 24 or 36 inch

Building Tools

hammer
hand saw
rope
wire
screws (1, 2 & 4 inch)
nuts, bolts, washers (for hinges)
level, square & plumb line
toilet seat (bucket toilet)
staple gun and staples

chisels
ripping / rough files & sharpening files
block and tackle
hinges (for doors, shutters)
nails (1, 2.5 & 3.5 inch)
manual drill and drill bits
twine
window screen
screw driver

Food

freeze dried
dehydrated
canned

water purification supplies
water jugs, bucket to get water from lake or stream
dried

Other

seeds
gardening books
basic carpentry book
travel board games, cards, etc

sewing kits
plant identification books
separate, complete Bug Out Bags for everyone
solar / crank powered AM / FM / Shortwave radio

This is not an exhaustive list. There are other things you can add or you may want to leave some items off. The list will give you an idea of what sorts of things you want to consider taking with you. The goal is to have enough tools, equipment and supplies to allow you to set up a permanent shelter somewhere. Your permanent shelter may not be much but it will get you started. Depending on how you will be taking your things with you there may be room to bring along a prized possession or two such as photo albums.

Since most children have back packs they take their books to school in it would be a good idea to have each person carry a few basic essentials in their back pack. This could be a change of clothes, eating gear, a book or toy, a flashlight, a lighter, small first aid kit, pocket knife, etc. While the majority of things would be kept on the

hand cart the back packs should be light but contain the daily basics or most frequently used items. The surplus army tents can be bought for \$300-\$400 and will stand up to years of use; they come complete with poles, stakes, insulating liner and have a stove jack (or hole) for winter use. Most consumer tents are designed for four one week periods over two years. A large family tent will run close to \$200 and will not last anywhere near as long as the surplus army or canvas tents will.

You may already have many of these items. Look around and see what you already have. Plastic totes or coolers work great for storing your gear in and make for easier packing.

If you think about, and plan for the worst, then if or when the time comes you will already have an idea of what you can take with you. You may even make a list or have some of the items in plastic totes or duffel bags to make packing them easier.

The tools listed above will allow you to build a log cabin or other shelter. The window screen can be stapled in place to cover window openings with shutters on the outside to close the opening off in winter or for rain. The hinges don't weigh much and they will be one of the more difficult things to obtain. The tools will also give you most of the tools you will need to start over from scratch in a new location. You may want to buy a book on how to build log cabins or basic carpentry so you can make things such as tables, chairs, etc.

Authors Note:

The idea for this article came about as a result of a news article about a year ago. There was an article about some photos from the Great Depression, it was one of those "aside" type of articles and not main page at all. Two of the pictures struck home, they are included on the first page. I saw a homeless man, or Hobo, carrying all of his worldly possessions in what looked like two pillow cases and a family with four kids and a baby walking with all of their worldly possessions in a kid's wagon. My grandmother lived through the Great Depression and told me many stories about the times and how hard it was. Although she lived in a large city she knew about the people who were homeless and wandered from place to place looking for food and work.

My grandmother rarely threw things out, almost everything could be reused more than once. She wasn't a hoarder, but if something could be washed and reused she would wash it and put it away. There was always food at her house, and she bought almost everything on sale. Her experiences during the Great Depression colored the rest of her life, if there had been a similar situation at a later point in her life I am sure that she would have made it through fairly easily and better than most people today.

We've been living with the "financial crisis" or the "Great Recession" for years, about three years officially and closer to eight since some people were warning about it. We've been told that it could be five or six years before unemployment is back to a normal level. We finally have admission that this current economic downturn is worse than the Great Depression in many ways, something many of us already suspected or knew.

Initially when I wrote this I had been thinking about those two pictures, and the others I saw, and I knew that like then a point may come when there are many people who have lost their jobs, lost their homes and have no place to go. I decided that writing a short article that could help people somewhat was needed. There is nothing I can do to prevent this situation from happening, but perhaps I could get some people to make some small preparations in case it does happen... perhaps I could help a few people have an easier time of it.

Many of the things I listed here are already owned by many. Most of the items are fairly inexpensive. The most expensive things listed here are the canvas tents and the Yukon stove, and with enough good quality tarps one can leave off the tents. I decided to have the tents on here because they are not much more than a good quality commercial nylon tent. A nylon tent with a tarp over it will work, and the tarp will extend the life of the nylon tent. It is better to have something than to have nothing.

I did not list firearms because not everyone has or wants one. Having firearms to hunt with, and possibly defend yourself with, is a good idea. Talk with friends and family if you need advice on which to choose.

I hope you find this article useful and it provokes a bit of thought. Let us all hope we are never in the position of living like the people in those two photos on the first page.