



December 22, 2019

Shelter, Fuel, and Alternative Cooking

“It’ll Just Be Like Camping”—Not

I used to think that too until I saw pictures at the Hong Kong library of what happened during World War II in Hong Kong when everybody “went camping.” Hong Kong is basically set in a jungle environment where the humidity allows for lush and thick vegetation all around it, so you don’t really see how many people there are. Well, when homes were destroyed and families were forced to use sticks and grasses to cook and for warmth and light, all the vegetation was stripped very quickly. The hills around Hong Kong and the nearby towns were as bare as the dunes of the Sahara Desert. People starved and died of exposure, in part because the land was stripped. It has taken many decades to grow back. Face it, if everyone in Utah County thought they could just use the available wood around us as fuel for warmth and cooking, our mountains and hillsides would soon be like Hong Kong and then we would face flooding and mud slides.

Besides being impractical, an open fire associated with camping is a horrible idea in a crisis. It wastes available wood and risks the secondary disaster of fire. If toxic materials such as foams and plastics (or even worse) are burned by a lot of people, they may provide fuel for a little while, but it will add toxins to the environment that can cause long-term and prolonged suffering that may be almost as bad over time as light atomic fall-out. Have you seen recent pictures of industrial Asian countries where toxins from manufacturing have built up in the

environment? More and more people in those pictures are wearing masks over their mouth and nose. Now in some countries there is an added charge for using things like PVC coatings in manufacturing. Often people live with masks on just to breathe. Even if the air appears to be fine, they are being affected by residual toxins.

Storing Fuel

1. If you have a good fireplace or wood burning stove, you can store wood in the form of a woodpile. However, over a few years it will decay and accumulate termites and other bugs if not used, and more regulation is being considered for these appliances.
2. You can store a limit of 25 gallons of propane or butane at any one time. However, this can be a fire hazard and should be responsibly stored. It should also be used and rotated to keep it fresh. If you use a BBQ grill, camp stove, or other device and you use it a lot this is a possibility.
3. Charcoal for cooking—stores well for a long time as long as it is kept dry.
4. The best place to store fuel for your car is in your gas tank. Keep it full! If you can’t get gas at some time, at least you will have what is in your tank.
5. The only way to store solar power is with a battery back-up system. That can be expensive and complicated. However, you might look into that if it is of interest.
6. There are many small generators on the market, and plans for more. I have never seen one that will meet the needs of a common household in Alpine, but they can help run small motors and electronics. One thing to consider is that in the event of an EMP strike, many electronics will be incapacitated. I am not saying that we will every have such a strike, but it is something to know.

*While talking about this kind of thing, many people are discouraged and “freaked out.” It is better to focus on what you can do in case you need it and not on the awfulness of such a

situation. People are quite resourceful and resilient on the whole, and life would not be over in the event that we had serious power outages. Most of us would make it, and remember—attitude is critical when faced with a crisis.

Ten Things You Can Do Now

1. Be prepared with warm bedding and clothing. It is amazing how well you can do just by preparing for cold in this way. Also consider clothing for hot months without air conditioning.
2. Have supplies for warm drinks and soups in your food storage. It helps to keep both your inside and outside warm.
3. Have cooking alternatives (I recommend at least 2) that use as little fuel as possible and/or things that store easily and well.
4. Have light alternatives—while nothing compares with electricity we have now, there are some good options. If you don't want to store a lot of batteries and keep them current, look into lights that can be solar charged or wound up. These exist. A few candles or an oil lamp aren't bad ideas either if you have space, a proper place to keep them, and are aware of safe practices in using them.
5. Have shelter alternatives—one or two for sheltering in place, and one or two in case you have to evacuate. Know what rooms in your house naturally stay the warmest or the coolest. Consider how you can take advantage of this if you need to.
6. Know how to turn off and drain water pipes just in case you need to do this for winter. If you do, have plans for how you will get and keep water.
7. Know how to take care of food if power goes out. Have at least a small insulated cooler and plans for keeping food without refrigeration. Plan for what you will do if you need to quickly care for food in a freezer. Learn safety rules for avoiding food poisoning. I recommend having a thermometer that will register 35°–200° F so that you can work with food temperatures.

8. Plan and have some alternative methods for transportation such as bicycles and good walking shoes. You may want a garden cart or other method for hauling goods or water.
9. Practice and be aware of ways to conserve energy and fuel. If you already do this now, it will be helpful in the event you have to think that way at some future time.
10. As you use the electric appliances in your house, evaluate what you would do if you no longer had the electricity to use that appliance. What would you need to use as an alternative? Do you have the alternative? What circumstances in your home or the way you do things would have to change? An example—in countries where they don't depend on appliances they beat rugs outdoors regularly instead of vacuuming. Some appliances take way too much energy to feasibly use them without our regular power grid. Heating appliances take the most. Others take very little. What appliances could you use if you had only a small generator?

Notes from Red Hen

Dear Speckle,

We had a similar problem one year. Here are some things we did. First, we cleaned out all of the straw so that we kept only enough in the coop to make the floor easy to clean. Then we changed it as often as we could. Second, we only brought food into the coop when it was time to eat, and only enough to fill us so there wasn't any left for the mice. That meant we had to clean up any that was spilled immediately. Last, we made friends with the barn cats and talked to them about the problem. They agreed to help us clean out the mice and leave all chickens alone for a loaf of bread when we bake. I felt that was a fair trade.

Good Luck, and let me know how things are in a week or two,

—Red

