

FROM THE INTRODUCTION . . . The *Disaster Handbook* describes the foods, tools, and other “calamity commodities” you will need when misfortune comes knocking on your door.

It says the biggest danger of a disaster is it prevents you from performing those simple everyday tasks that keep you alive. Hence the heart of this book reveals how to cook, wash the dishes, clean your clothes, bathe, go to the bathroom, and keep everything sanitary when you have no power and no pure water. When misfortune knocks your life ajar, these are the links that form a chain of survival.

It asserts that the part of your home or workplace that will serve as shelter must be nearly indestructible. For what use is it to have everything you would need in a disaster if where you store and use it is destroyed? Hence this reference, in addition to describing what you will need in a disaster, details how to design and construct a building’s areas of disaster storage and use as indestructibly as you can make them with architectural drawings you can take to a professional designer or builder. Viewing disasters through an architectural lens has another advantage. It will shift your concerns from worrying about what on earth could happen to you to envisioning those constructions that will keep you safe—and this will shift your thinking from *fear-oriented* to *task-oriented*. This will replace paralysis with strength, and you will be able to steer your life more quickly and surely back to normal.

Nearly as important is what you *don’t* need in a disaster. You don’t need a generator. You don’t need to know wilderness survival skills. And you don’t need an arsenal of weapons or knowledge of hand-to-hand combat. When facing these challenges, far more citizens know the need for teamwork and friendship and try to help each other, and would rather be known as Samaritans than Survivalists.

To overcome a disaster you also don’t need to be young or strong. During two major disasters the author performed many tasks that appear in these pages when he was past the age of seventy. Absent youth and strength, he exercised the kind of creativity and cleverness everyone has regardless of age, strength, or gender.

You would think everyone would want to know these things. But many potential readers will skip the shopping cart or cash-out clerk because they have seen so many disasters on TV they’ve acquired a panic mentality when they think of these events. “Disasters scare me to death!” they cry. “I don’t want to read about them!”

But really, learning how to defeat a disaster is as easy as deciding to go out to dinner. Remove the dread that bars your doors of perception, and you will enjoy a banquet of treats that will make the difference between suffering and safety. You will enter a brave new world that will erase your panic, and release you from the grip of terror, and remove you from the deadening effects of indifference—and you will find that switch of initiative that will energize your intelligence, empower your imagination, and rouse your sense of vigilance in ways that will tilt the odds of danger from being forever against you to being always in your favor.

Another reason why disasters seem so needlessly frightening is because many victims tend to see them as a whole rather than divide them into much smaller and more manageable problems. A disaster can seem overwhelming when you are confronted with everything at once—but if you break it down to the dozens of little things you need to do and knock them off one at a time, the whole thing can seem as easy as eating a lavish dinner one bite at a time.

Then—your mind free of fear and one chunk at a time—you can hue from the quarry of solid reason and impenetrable confidence a course that with this book in hand will lead you, your loved ones, your neighbors, and your business colleagues to live in reasonable comfort and economy in nearly any disaster you may face, until better days return.