

## Chapter 1

# **[ Facing the Facts, and Preparing For Them ]**

## Facing the Facts, and Preparing For Them

“This increase of power from the mere musket and the little cannon all the way to the hydrogen bomb in a single lifetime is indicative of the things that have happened to us. They indicate how far the advances of science have outraced our social consciousness, how much more we have developed scientifically than we are capable of handling emotionally and intellectually.”

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Millennium Assessment Report, drafted in the year 2000 by 1,360 of the world’s top scientists and backed by the World Bank and United Nations, reports that we have polluted, exhausted or completely destroyed over two-thirds of the Earth’s most critical resources, including the most important, our fresh water supply.

We continue to act as though we had a spare planet to exploit once we’ve torn the life from this one. But we don’t. Besides doing everything we can to minimize future damage to the planet, we all must begin, in a grounded and practical way, to prepare ourselves for the consequences of our global environmental crisis.

Then there is terrorism, which, is a modern-day form of war practiced by fundamentalists of various religions and political beliefs. Some researchers have remarked that the causes and events of 9/11 are still not entirely clear. Whatever the cause, the results are evident: thousands of Americans have died, and more terrorist incidents are on their way.

Information in this book will help you develop a personal life-defense plan to protect yourself and your family from nearly anything that *Homo sapiens*, Mother Nature or the devil himself can dish out.



## **Destructive Weather and Natural Disasters**

**Severe Storms and Floods, Hurricanes, Typhoons, Tornadoes, Droughts, Heat and Cold Waves, Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions, Tsunamis.**

We are already beginning to see some of global warming's ominous effects, such as the melting snow cap on Mt. Kilimanjaro in Kenya, cracks in the Arctic ice shelf, and the increase in frequency and destructiveness of hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes.

Extreme weather changes will also spread disease by altering the migratory and reproductive patterns of animals and insects. According to a report commissioned by the UK's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, climate change could soon lead to the extinction of many animals including migratory birds. Disease-carrying animals such as the deer mouse (hantavirus), rat and flea (bubonic plague), deer tick (Lyme disease), mosquito (yellow fever, malaria, encephalitis, dengue), and others will seek out new areas where they can survive, nest, multiply, and make the two-legged vermin that roam our metropolitan streets seem relatively tame in comparison.

As we have seen in New Orleans and Southeast Asia, Mother Nature may decide at any moment to show us who's boss and wash us away with tidal waves and hurricanes, rock us with earthquakes, or even blow us away with a "super volcanic eruption" as in April 1815 when Tambora in Indonesia exploded violently and an estimated 92,000 people were killed. Rare as they are, events this catastrophic need to be taken seriously.

According to BBC News (August 9, 2004), scientists have their eye on an insecure rock the size of the Isle of Man on the Canary Island of La Palma:

The rock is in the process of slipping into the sea and Professor Bill McGuire, director of the Benfield Grieg Hazard Research Centre fears that when it finally collapses, the resulting tsunami will cause massive destruction along the

coasts of countries like the USA, UK and many on the African continent within a matter of hours.

The triggering factor could be the eruption of the volcano on La Palma, called Cumbre Vieja, which could feasibly blow “anytime” according to Professor McGuire.

Catastrophic global geophysical events (or gee-gee’s) happen infrequently, but they do happen, and scientists are concerned that another may occur at any time. Professor Stephen Self writes in a 2005 report for the Geological Society of London that gee-gee’s could “result in the devastation of world agriculture, severe disruption of food supplies, and mass starvation.”

Sometime in the future, one or more of the world’s largest cities, particularly along the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” will likely experience a massive earthquake or volcanic eruption that will inflict enormous damage. If you live in a vulnerable city, make sure to keep a Grab-and-Go Bag at the ready. (See Chapter 4 for “Grab-and-Go Bag” information.)

Large meteor collisions have occurred, and could happen again at any time. The most recent event was in Tunguska, Russia, in 1908. Over 800 square miles of Siberian forest were flattened by the exploding object that never even hit the ground. On March 8, 2002, an 80- to 130-meter-long asteroid tagged 2002 EM7 passed within 298,400 miles of Earth—a negligible distance in astronomical terms—and it remained undetected until after it passed.

Get those seat belts fastened; this book will help you and your family prepare for what might be a bumpy ride.



## **Emerging Diseases**

### **Infectious Disease Outbreaks, Local Epidemics, and Pandemics.**

As we continue to crowd our cities, overuse antibiotics, defrost ancient bacteria in polar ice caps with global warming, and cut down old-growth rainforests, releasing organisms dormant for eons,

new microscopic and submicroscopic enemies will vex us for years to come.

SARS, bird flu (H5N1), and necrotizing fasciitis are a few of the most frightening recently emerging lethal diseases. In late 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) released an uncharacteristically grim statement to the press that we will almost certainly face another pandemic within the next few years.

The Black Death in medieval Europe, the great American smallpox epidemic of 1775, and the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 killed tens of millions of people. The global AIDS crisis alone will likely kill at least 20 million people over the next decade, and as the Nobel Prize laureate Dr. Joshua Lederberg explained to me at a conference for the Society for Risk Analysis at Rockefeller University in 1995, all viruses mutate. Even the dreaded HIV could transform into an even more virulent disease if it becomes pneumonic (transmittable by air).

Of all the threats that you will learn to defend yourself against in this book, infectious disease is probably the most challenging. The strategies for staying safe in the microbe jungle take commitment and diligence. Chapter 16 provides infectious disease defensive protocols.

## **Weapons of Mass Destruction**

**Nuclear Weapon Detonation in a Major City or Near a Chemical Refinery or Nuclear Power Plant; Dirty Bomb Detonation in a Major City, Biological Agent, or Chemical Weapon Attack.**

WMD proliferation and terrorism are an explosive mix that could set off the final war that fundamentalist fanatics seem to be working full-time to provoke. Terrorists are playing for keeps, studying ways to bring down the “Great Satan,” including nuclear options.

There are over 36,000 weapons in the global nuclear arsenal. The United States has about 7,400 nuclear weapons, and Russia has 8,400 ready to roll—more than enough to destroy each other many

times over. The Russian weapons are less secure than the American arsenal, and vulnerable to theft.

In 1996, the Russian General Alexander Lebed warned the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. State-Department that over 70 Small Atomic Demolitions Kits (SADMs)—nuclear explosives designed to demolish bridges, buildings, and other structures—were missing. Most have a yield of one to three kilotons, enough to wreck and contaminate a large urban area if the device is well placed. If it were used against a nuclear power plant, a SADM could shatter the dome and destroy the reactor, forcing a flash core meltdown.

Terrorists might choose a nuclear power plant near a major city to maximize damage, chaos, and death. Or they might pick the softest target—the station with the feeblest security and safety mechanisms. Presently, there are 104 operating reactors to choose from in the United States.

Of these many targets, the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant, which stands on the east bank of the Hudson River only 24 miles away from Manhattan, could well be a springboard for terrorist nirvana. The 1982 Calculation of Reactor Accident Consequences (CRAC-2) estimated that a meltdown of the Indian Point Unit 3 reactor would produce over 50,000 fatalities and 167,000 injuries.

We have escaped a thermonuclear holocaust at least 16 times since the atomic genie was let out of “Little Boy” and “Fat Man” at the Trinity Site in Alamogordo, New Mexico.

The first incident was the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. According to former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in Errol Morris’ documentary *The Fog of War*, “At the end we lucked out. It was luck that prevented nuclear war. We came that close to nuclear war at the end. Rational individuals—Kennedy was rational, Khrushchev was rational, Castro was rational—rational individuals came that close to total destruction of their societies, and that danger exists today.”

The most terrifying instance of dumb luck came in September 1983 when Lt. Col. Stanislav Petrov detected what Soviet missile commanders feared the most: a signal that the U.S. had launched a massive nuclear attack. As his fellow soldiers prepared for a coun-

terstrike, Lt. Col. Petrov hesitated because he doubted the integrity of the signal. Despite defying military protocol, he rode out the storm until he could confirm that there was no U.S. missile launch after all and thereby prevent Mutual Assured Destruction.

Radiological weapons or radiological dispersion devices are considered terrorist weapons designed to spread radioactive material and make its target uninhabitable. Sometimes they're called "dirty bombs" which more accurately refer to a nuclear weapon. The most dangerous form of radiological weapon would release plutonium in aerosol form. Other forms of radiological weapons include bombs, rocket shells, and ordinary explosives laced with radioactive material. The most likely targets are large cities, reservoirs, food storage and processing facilities, large transit terminals, stadiums during sporting events and concerts, large farms and financial districts.

What are the odds for further lucky breaks? The U.S. government spends billions to construct and maintain fortified military command centers—also called wartime relocation centers or COG (Continuity of Government) facilities—such as Mount Weather in Virginia, or at Raven Rock in Pennsylvania near Camp David. These shelters keep the president, his cabinet and family, and other key political, military, and industrial personnel comfortable and secure, with sophisticated command, control, communication, and defensive and offensive equipment that allow them to survive disasters. The rest of us are on our own.

Let's not forget "the poor man's atomic bomb," biological and chemical weapons, which are cheaper and more accessible than nuclear devices. The U.S. government tells us that we can expect to see both used in future attacks. Anthrax will most likely continue to be the workhorse of bio-terrorists because of its relative low cost and ease of manufacture, processing, storage, and dissemination. The 2001 anthrax attacks against five media offices and two U.S. senators showed that even a small bio-weapon attack can spread fear and chaos. A few kilograms distributed in a crowded city could kill more than one hundred thousand people, according to Dr. Lawrence M. Wein in Reuters Health. Anthrax could also contaminate large

enclosed areas such as subways and office buildings for long periods, crippling transportation and commerce. Bio-terrorists can also use viruses such as smallpox, Ebola, and Marburg. If bio-engineered viruses get into the hands of terrorists crazy enough to use them, this could radically alter the world as we know it.

According to Dr. Kanatjan Alibekov (Ken Alibek), former head of project development for Vector Labs and the Russian Biopreperat, his former employers were working hard in the late 1980s and early 1990s to develop viral weapons. In the late 1990s, the CIA said that they had helped the Russian military destroy all of its dangerous bio-weapons, but can we believe that Russia's military hardliners did not secret away their worst man-made plagues?

Bio-warfare has also led to the insidious development of genotype and race-specific weapons. John Eldridge wrote in a 1999 issue of *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence* magazine that publicly available information can be used to develop race-specific toxins and to engineer germ weapons. In South Africa during apartheid, a top-secret biological and chemical weapons warfare program, Project Coast, was headed by Dr. Wouter Basson, a cardiologist who allegedly tried to create race-specific weapons against the nonwhite population.

WMD proliferation has helped to make our troubled world even more dangerous, and unless we get it under control, real nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, unlike the non-existent ones in Iraq, will be acquired by a terrorist organization. Then the world will see again the same horrors that suffocated soldiers in the battlefields of Europe during WWI, tormented the victims of the Tuskegee Experiment, and scorched the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I hope and pray the day never comes when you will need to apply what you learn in this book. But it might, and if it ever does, our aim is to help you survive.



## **Environmental Degradation**

**Increased Water and Air Pollution, Leading to Higher Global Cancer Rate, Genetic Mutations, Conflicts over Fresh Water, Tainted Food Supplies.**

We have overloaded our environment with toxic waste. Much of the ecosystem is contaminated with carcinogens, mutagens, and other toxins making their way into our food chain and water supply. Mutations in amphibious life around the globe are a disturbing indication of their annihilative potential.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, over 40% of the water flowing in rivers and washing beaches across the United States is polluted. Even the underground water in aquifers is becoming tainted. More than two billion people internationally drink from water supplies so contaminated that they would fail the EPA safety standards. In countries without regulatory mechanisms, industrial pollution levels increase dramatically. In Russia, fishermen of the Ural River will not eat their catch, for fear of harmful effects of pollution. Toxic slicks in Chinese rivers led to shutdown of water supplies for millions.

In 2000, the World Resources Institute reported that “fresh water systems around the world are so environmentally degraded they are losing their ability to support human, animal and plant life. Their decline will mean increased water shortages for people and rapid population loss or extinction for many other species.”

We will exhaust the earth’s fresh water supply between the years 2015 and 2022, says the CIA 2005 Global Trends Report. We are also contaminating the water we have left with agricultural runoff, industrial pollutants, and even ordinary household products. U.S. Geologic Survey hydrologists found high concentrations of chemical contaminants, pharmaceutical and personal care pollutants that linger with unknown health consequences in tap water. With every sip of water, reports the EPA, we take in a soup of unknowns, possibly including chlorine, cholesterol, coprostanol (digestive by-products), pesticides,

caffeine, insect repellent containing DEET, and medications such as blood thinners, antidepressants, birth control hormones, and blood-pressure medicines.

Our air is a health hazard. In the United States, three out of four people inhale air so dirty that it poses a threat to their health. In 2002, the American Lung Association in its annual state of the air report gave an F grade for air quality to almost 400 U.S. counties, 15% more than in the previous report, and including small towns as well as big cities.

To help mitigate problems from water and air pollution, see Chapter 7, on water purification, and Chapter 22, which has a section on reducing indoor air pollution.



## **Massive Computer System Failures and Sabotage**

**Power Failures; Disruptions of Commerce, Government, and Transportation; Water-purification and Pumping Station Shutdowns; Food, Fuel, and Medicine Delivery Disruptions; Nuclear Power Plant Shutdowns; Medical Equipment Malfunctions.**

We enjoy the benefits of computer technology, but most of us ignore its exponentially expanding complexity and fragility. As the global population rises, dependence on technology increases. Teeming humanity will have to manage the logistics of sharing dwindling resources by yielding ever more control to machines. As we give computers more power over us, we balance on a flimsy technological tightrope that can snap at any time.

Preparedness against these problems speaks to our need to know how humans existed in a world without electrical power and gasoline, and gives us a motivation to store food, water and explore alternative power sources.

## **> Nuclear and Other Technological Catastrophes**

**Nuclear Power Plant, Rail, and Aviation Accidents; Chemical and Oil Refinery Fires, Leaks, and Explosions; Toxic Spills; Blackouts; Water Crises; Communications and Transportation System Failures.**

The Chernobyl disaster illustrated the horrific potential of nuclear accidents. Besides power plants, submarines are susceptible to accidents and attacks and are a possible source of nuclear contamination. Aging reactors are hotspots of danger around the world, and even optimally functioning ones are terrorist targets. Study Chapter 20 to prepare and protect yourself.

## **> Civil Unrest**

**Riots and Other Breakdowns of Order.**

Riots can follow any of the disasters we've already considered, or they could be provoked by other causes. Being prepared for any event affecting a large number of people includes being prepared for fallout with a human face, when panic and critical scarcities foment violence. See Chapter 5 on Personal Defense.

## **> Economic Disaster**

**Economic Depression, Massive Unemployment, Scarcity, and Unrest.**

This category of woes overlaps with the others—economic mayhem can be a result of terrorism or a cause of rioting. Economic disasters require special consideration because they can also arise from less obvious causes. The desperation to which the Great Depression drove Americans illustrates that our economy's fragility is another danger requiring preparedness. A massive terrorist attack, global pandemic, oil crisis, or "gee-gee" could trigger a major market crash.

## > Terrorism

### **Terrorist Attacks by Various Means (Car Bombs, Explosive Devices, Aircraft, Sabotage, Nuclear, Biological, Chemical and Radiological Weapons, Poisons).**

The era of international conflict on the scale of World War II is over. Apart from occasional large eruptions of organized military conflict, such as that in Afghanistan and Iraq, this will likely be the century of the terrorist. Terrorist attacks are hard to predict or prevent. Their causes range from political grievances to superstitions and esoteric group delusions.

Shoko Asahara's Aum Shinrikyo cult staged sarin attacks on the Tokyo subway system in 1995 for reasons still unclear. Members of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh cult grew salmonella in a laboratory and poisoned salad bars, sickening hundreds in a bizarre attempt at electoral influence. The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, a white-supremacist survivalist cult, acquired enough cyanide to poison major cities' water supplies, but the FBI apparently cut their plot short.

These examples show the diversity of motives and the alarming sophistication of terrorist groups, but we can't ignore lone extremists and sociopaths who may sneak past radar, as the "Alphabet Bomber," Muharem Kurbegovic, did in the '70s. This disturbed engineer, posing as a fictitious organization, Aliens of America, murdered people with bombs and threatened to release a nerve agent in Washington, DC. Aryan Nations alumnus Larry Wayne Harris, arrested in Las Vegas for possessing anthrax, also tried to buy bubonic plague samples from a Maryland culture collection.

A low-budget terrorist can make deadly explosives from commonly available materials and amplify the killing power of his or her bomb with buckshot, nails, nuts, bolts, or shards of metal and glass. Be alert for abandoned bags, boxes, radios, dolls or other potential disguises for bombs near crowds and for the nervous behavior, adrenaline sweat, and bulky clothes that may indicate a suicide bombing

about to happen. Suicide bombers who penetrate crowded public places typically wear bombs that are easy for them to trigger, so you should try to put a wall between yourself and the bomber instead of trying to intervene.

Although terrorists can strike anywhere, some potential targets call for special vigilance.

- ▶ **Airports and other mass-transit terminals**
- ▶ **Freight trains (especially those hauling chlorine, cyanide, hydrochloric acid, gasoline, methane, and other hazardous chemicals)**
- ▶ **Department stores and malls**
- ▶ **Cruise ships**
- ▶ **Amusement parks**
- ▶ **Ferries**
- ▶ **Bridges**
- ▶ **Chemical factories, refineries**
- ▶ **Nuclear power plants**
- ▶ **Water purification, storage, and pumping facilities**
- ▶ **Fuel storage depots**
- ▶ **Communication lines and satellite dishes**
- ▶ **National monuments**
- ▶ **Tunnels**
- ▶ **Resort hotels**
- ▶ **Television stations**
- ▶ **Nuclear weapons facilities**
- ▶ **Bio-weapons research laboratories**
- ▶ **Food irradiation facilities**

As our planet becomes more crowded, terrorism will continue spreading like a disease through the disaffected. Keep your ear to the ground and collect whatever good intelligence you can find. Realistic expectations mean better preparations and a better chance to protect those you care about. Chapters 19 and 20 address terrorism.

On the New York radio station WRKS-FM in February 2001, I warned listeners about terrorists targeting the World Trade Center and to avoid the area if at all possible. My Paul Revere act saved a few lives, including close friends, my mother's, and my own. As an information junkie, I read everything that I can get my hands on, surf the Internet, listen to shortwave radio, and meet with friends in the military, law enforcement, and "low places" to stay informed about everything that passes over the bridge—and under it. As a result, I knew that terror was coming to the complex prior to 9/11. The World Trade Center might still be standing if our government had taken the threat as seriously as I did when I suggested to *New York Magazine* in 1999 that Manhattan should have surface to air missiles guarding the skyscrapers.

You've had a glimpse of some inevitable calamities. The following chapters provide ways of getting through them. First things first: if you want to stay alive, you need to be fit enough to deal with a more challenging and less convenient physical life than you're accustomed to at this time. But take it from me, the physical discomfort encountered in working out and increasing stamina and strength will pay off in spades for most every life situation.

