

Doomsday Ready? More Americans Becoming 'Preppers'

When an unexpected summer storm knocked out power across the mid-Atlantic region in July, more than 4 million people went without power for up to two weeks.

Throughout the summer, a severe drought across much of the country also put a serious strain on the nation's infrastructure.

Couple that with the threat of a currency collapse, civil unrest, and other nightmare scenarios—stocking up for the unexpected is looking smarter all the time.

Now, a small-but-growing segment of society is asking the question, "What happens when the lights go out for more than just a few days?"

Many of these "preppers" think the recent record-setting blackout could be just a preview of things to come.

Keith Iton is a die-hard prepper and has started a business to help others get ready as well.

"The biggest problem we suffer here in North America is complacency," he claimed.

"People figure since nothing has happened in 'x' amount of years, nothing bad will ever happen," Iton continued. "So they get comfortable, and they get lazy and then unpreparedness comes in. Then you have other people who look at history."

From 'Crazy' to Common

Survivalists are sometimes seen as wild-eyed, crazy people waiting for the 'zombie apocalypse.' But with the state of the economy in today's world, being prepared is more popular than ever.

Recently, some 2,000 people gathered in North Carolina for the the Carolina Readiness Seminar to discuss the risks and what can be done about them.

"It's very environmental, very green, takes us off of fossil fuels, and [is] very easy to do," prepper Joel Henderson said.

Henderson is co-owner of Green Gold Filters, one of the vendors at the recent convention. His patented filtration system is helping people accomplish something that America has been trying to do for years—run a vehicle without foreign oil.

"If anybody has a diesel engine, truck, tractor or generator, you can use used cooking oil as an alternative diesel fuel or motor oil," Henderson explained.

"If you go to the restaurants, this is a local restaurant here in Nashville, an Indian restaurant, this is their used cooking oil they were throwing away," he continued. "We picked it up, ran it through our filter system, and now we have a nice alternative diesel fuel that I'll put right in my tank."

'Doomsday Preppers'

The prepper movement is being helped along by a new trend in television shows about the subject. The most popular is National Geographic's *Doomsday Preppers*.

"*Doomsday Preppers* is the highest-rated show right now ever on National Geographic," casting director Brooklyn Bagwell said.

"It's a show about your average American family, unique people who are prepping for any of life's uncertainties, whether that be economic collapse to solar flare in 2012. No matter what it is they're going to be prepared," he added.

One of the challenges for the show is that most preppers aren't eager to advertise their stockpiles of supplies, since if the bottom drops out, looting could be a real problem.

"We do understand it could be a risk, but we do respect

privacy on the show. We don't have to say your first name or last name or where you're from," Bagwell said.

"We try to get in the lives of many diverse preppers, and have each prepper give a take away to our viewers so they can learn more about prepping," he said.

Prepare with God

Iton said the first step to being prepared, however, has nothing to do with canned food or bottled water.

"Your first step to preparedness, for me personally, is your relationship with Jesus Christ," he explained. "If you build a solid relationship with Jesus Christ, then you are more prepared than the average Joe."

"Then after that, if you can get a little food, water stored away, a little safe retreat, it'll all fall into place," Iton said. "You want to be able to feed yourself, feed your family, help a neighbor, help a friend."

A hundred years ago, having extra supplies in the house was considered completely normal. But that has changed.

A recent survey found that 55 percent of Americans have less than three days supply of food in their homes. Many people have no emergency supplies, or even a first aid kit.

But with America's infrastructure becoming more fragile every day, preppers say it's a good idea to stock up, just in case.