

Sanitation During a Grid Down Collapse, by Nina in Washington

Sanitation may be an area that is neglected in our preparations for during difficult times. Not because people don't care, but because we take so much of it for granted we aren't aware of its importance. There are several areas in the sanitation arena that need to be considered when preparing;

1. Food
2. Daily Living
3. Waste Disposal
4. Medical
5. Deaths

The most obvious area to consider is that of our food preparations. We are all aware of the importance of washing our hands and not cross contaminating foods like meats and vegetables. All counters where foods may be prepared should be kept spotlessly clean. This includes areas where butchering is being done. The areas should be hosed and bleached and the meat meticulously washed, making certain the contents of the animals intestines does not come in contact with the meat. The animals should be covered with a fabric bag (one that breathes) to protect the meat from flies, and dirt while the meat is hung. All utensils including those being used for dehydrated foods and canning should be sterilized by boiling or baking. (Do not bake canning lids, they are placed in very hot water prior to processing.)

In the area of daily living, if we allow ourselves to become cluttered and disorganized because the world around us is falling apart we have begun the downward spiral ourselves. Remaining organized and clutter free gives us access to items which may be of immediate necessity and less chance of an accident of which even something as minor as tripping over clutter could become life threatening. Keeping organized also causes us less stress. Relieving our minds to be put to better use. It also provides activities to the group, giving tasks to those who may not be able to do other things or just an extra way to stay 'busy'. Clothes that are kept clean are warmer and last longer (dryers are hard on fabric). And shoes should be worn at all times outside. Personal hygiene is important not only for our physical health, but our mental health as well. Ever notice how much better you feel after a shower? It helps us maintain some a semblance of normalcy and civility in our lives not only for ourselves, but for the group. When we are clean and groomed it is also easier to spot someone not well. Special attention needs to be paid to the care of our teeth. Brushing, flossing and possibly rinsing with an anti-cavity rinse.

Feminine hygiene products that are disposable should be burned and the fabric reusables (for the same) as well as cloth baby diapers should be either boiled or bleached and hung in the sun. (The ultraviolet rays kill lots of bacteria)

Of course you can't assume that cleanliness is next to Godliness is only for the people in your group. Your animals will benefit from your diligent attention to their well being as well. Keeping their pens, bedding and feeders clean could mean the difference between animals used to fulfill our needs and sickly or dead critters. Most domesticated animal waste can be safely used as fertilizer after composting with the exception of dogs, cats and pigs. These should never be used around areas that will have vegetables and pregnant women should Never handle cat waste.

The third great consideration is waste disposal. This not only pertains to manure, but garbage as well. Most containers used for foods will probable be kept for some other need down the road. However, that means time and effort into making sure they are very well cleaned and stowed properly so as not to attract rodents or flies and bacteria. That which isn't needed should be burned, composted or deeply buried away from your area. Food scraps can be fed to animals or composted (not meats) or put into a worm bin (a little bit of meat is okay here) which not only provides great fertilizer for the garden, but worms for

your fowl.

Human waste is much more of a problem. We are no longer used to dealing with our own waste. Most of us just pass it on to someone else to take care of. The average person produces 2-3 pints of urine and one pound of feces per day. Multiply that by the number of people in your group for a day/week or longer and you begin to see the problem. If the sewer system is working you can still use your toilet by pouring water directly into the bowl to flush the waste. Five gallon buckets with a toilet seat can be used as a porta-potty. Lime, wood ash, and good ol' dirt can be used to reduce the odor. This will have to be cleaned daily and an area set up away from any possible contamination sites to be used for composting keeping the compost covered to deter flies, etc. You should not use this compost in food gardening. A trench toilet is also an option. Dig a trench two feet wide and a minimum of 12 inches deep and 4 feet long or more. After use, cover with the dirt from the hole, filling in from one end as you go. Bad bacteria can travel 300 feet from its original site. Pay attention to drainage and making sure the manure is covered with lime, ashes or dirt. The area could attract rodents, dogs, and worse, flies. The most important things to remember are reducing the fly/rodent problem and washing your hands thoroughly when you've finished. Stock up on hand sanitizer as well as soap. The book "*The Humanure Handbook*" by Joseph Jenkins is an interesting read. [JWR Adds: I must add a strong proviso. With this approach, temperature monitoring is crucial! Unless you can be *absolutely sure* that a bacteria-killing temperature is achieved, then **do not** attempt to use this method for manure that will be used for vegetable or grain growing!] In my opinion, the risks far outweigh the rewards.

For those of you planning on hunkering down in place if the grid were to go down and the sewer were to quit functioning, pay attention to where the access lids to the sewer are in your area. If you are anywhere down hill sewage may back up through these portals and even into your drains, and toilets. Give this some thought.

The fourth area of consideration is medical. In a TEOTWAWKI situation, we may be having people show up late or be accepted into our group that weren't there in the beginning. We need to consider that these folks whether loved ones or stranger may be bringing something unwanted with them. If possible a 'quarantine' area should be set up where these people could spend two weeks away from the group to make sure they aren't sick. It may sound cruel, but these people should remain without direct contact with the group. (radio contact or distant voice communication if acceptable would be greatly appreciated.) Their meals could be dropped off on paper plates that they could burn after finishing. There utensils washed by them and kept in the quarantine area. Anything that is needed should be brought and dropped off so as not to expose the other members of the group. They would need to remain in the quarantine area at all times and not expose people, animals, areas, or equipment. If after two weeks they are well, the chances are greatly reduced that they have a communicable disease.

There should also be a separate area for medical procedures. A separate bedroom or bathroom. This area should be kept spotless at all times. All items being used should be boiled or steamed (a steam canner or pressure canner as an autoclave) and all fabrics baked (200 degrees for one hour) prior to use. Tables, trays and equipment should be washed and bleached. (Alcohol is a great bacteria killer) New garbage bags can be used to cover tables, chairs etc. prior to use and after cleaning, and to protect between activities. They are fairly sanitary. Disposable rubber gloves and masks should be used when treating patients and if blood is present goggles should be worn (swim goggles, or ski goggles over glasses would work). Used dressings, etc should be burned or buried deeply, away from the area.

A hundred years ago our ancestors lived with germs that our systems are no longer used to. What would not have made them sick, could easily sicken us today. Rodents and flies that carry disease are probably one of the major concerns for us. In a grid down situation they would flourish. And if we weren't exceptionally careful, bring disease to us. Rodent control would be a regular requirement around our 'camps', but handling them could be an issue in itself. Probably best done with a mask and gloves. Keeping flies away from any

foods and food areas would be vital. Fly tape wouldn't hurt. All this of course means more water. Stock up on those barrels if you have no other means and if you'll be living downstream of metropolitan areas the water runoff could be deadly so remember to use caution.

The most difficult area of sanitation we may have to deal with is death. Although many organisms in the body of the deceased are not likely to infect a healthy person, handling the blood, bodily fluids and tissues of those who had been infected increases that risk. Many fluids leak from a dead body, including contents of the stomach, and intestines. Decomposition depends on how long the person has been deceased, the temperature of the environment and the damage to the body and the bacteria present. There are some basic precautions to take in handling the deceased. Wear disposable gloves when handling anything associated with the body and cover all cuts or abrasions with waterproof bandages or tape. Wear a mask, or face shield, goggles or some kind of protection to the face for the mouth, nose and eyes. Decomposing bodies can sometimes burst and spray fluids and tissues due to the buildup of gases. Wear aprons or gowns that can be destroyed. Wrap the body in a body bag or several layers of garbage sacks or plastic sheeting. The more quickly this takes place after the death, the less chance of leaking [body] fluids will occur. Graves should be dug at least 100 feet away from all open water sources and deep enough that animals won't dig them up. Cremation requires large amounts of fuel and may not be feasible. In case of accidental exposure, flush with huge quantities of water. (Dilution is the solution.) Thoroughly wash yourself afterward and dip your hands in a bleach solution even if no apparent contact was made. Disinfect all equipment, surfaces, floors, and so forth with a bleach solution. Don't forget to make notes on the deceased and the circumstances surrounding the death and burial. Take pictures if you can. Anything that you think is of importance in case the authorities come back and question it at some time. This may be the most difficult part of a crash. But, the quicker it is dealt with, the better for everyone involved.

Sanitation is a major concern in your preparations. Improper sanitation is responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths each year. It would be a shame if you stored your beans, bullets and band aids, but died of dysentery due to lack of proper sanitation. Give this one some serious thought.

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