

Top 11 Mistakes New Preppers Make When Bugging In

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If a situation calls for bugging in, your family must be prepared. Protecting your crew from natural disasters and outside threats is paramount, though newer preppers can make rookie mistakes. What pitfalls should you watch for?

Here are 11 critical errors to avoid when bugging in.

1. Improperly Gathering Supplies

When it's time to bug in, your supplies dictate how your family thrives in a crisis. Therefore, wisely gathering your food, water and gear is essential to optimize your chances of survival. Keep a written or digital inventory to track expiration dates and understand what's available in your pantry. Newer preppers may mistakenly let food go to waste, thus limiting their selection when bugging in.

Another mistake that's easy to fall into is underestimating how much your family needs. For example, the rule of thumb for water is a gallon per person per day, so your stockpile should include a plentiful supply. Your inventory should also account for food that your family will eat, especially if you have picky eaters. When it hits the fan, morale is critical for your mental health.

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2. Keeping Supplies in One Room

While bugging in can be the best strategy, you must be aware of threats like looters. Desperate times may lead intruders to target your home for their supplies. Unfortunately, newer preppers make the job easier by concentrating everything in one room and not spreading things out in different areas. Find the balance between making your gear accessible and not easily taken by outsiders.

Keeping supplies in conventional areas like the pantry is acceptable, though you can get creative. Preppers may keep their gear in less obvious locations, like under furniture or inside the walls. If you want to maximize deception, place false bottoms or fake containers in your drawers to thwart thieves. Somebody in a rush might not notice the hidden supplies inside.

3. Picking a Poor Bug-In Spot

You could be sheltering in place for weeks or months, so your bug-in spot should maximize safety. Newer preppers may select a place with few resources or that's vulnerable to outside threats. Be picky when determining where you'll bunk down, as it could be the difference between life and death. Once your location is selected, fortifying your home and maximizing your resources is essential.

If you're just starting to prep, you may be searching for somewhere to shelter in place. Prioritize access to water and good soil, as these elements are essential to sustaining life. For defensive measures, your land should also have natural security features like forests and hills. Some regions in the U.S. might not have these built-in safeguards, so account for all these qualities.

4. Not Honing Relevant Skills

Supplies and shelter are paramount to survival, regardless of the situation. However, they shouldn't occupy all your attention and distract you from honing your skills. Newer preppers might be ill-equipped to grow food on their property or filter their water for safe drinking. When the time comes to bug in, they'll regret ignoring these essential abilities.

Focus on the most relevant survival skills before moving on to secondary competencies. For example, you should learn [how to do chest compressions](#) and perform CPR when emergencies arise. Veteran preppers are skilled in carpentry and construction and can repair their homes when needed. If you have time, practice your ability to barter or use a compass because it could come in handy.

5. Letting Information Get in the Wrong Hands

Social media is here to stay, and it can be valuable for building community. However, it could be a pitfall if you're not careful. Newer preppers may feel tempted to share their stockpiles and pictures of their homes, which could encourage outside threats. Tread carefully because you want to maximize your family's chances of survival.

Preppers should strike a balance between trusting their community and keeping information private. Only discuss the most intimate details of your security protocol with your immediate family. You can help your neighbors and fellow preppers while being mindful of what specifics you tell them. Besides your home, you should also protect your devices and use encrypted communication methods.

6. Shutting Out Others

When disaster strikes, it's OK to put your family and yourself first — after all, that's what most in your community will do. However, preppers might become too focused on self-preservation and shut out others who are willing to help. Having survival skills is great, but thriving in the long run is easier when you have a solid community. Newcomers within the survivalist circle should build trust and protect each other.

Building a prepper community starts with your neighbors, so find local prepper groups and like-minded individuals who have similar values. Once you feel comfortable and trust them, assign roles for potential bug-in situations. For instance, you can coordinate security protocols while another neighbor manages the food and water supplies. When you have a reliable village, you can overcome the circumstances and improve your survival odds.

7. Misunderstanding the Biggest Threats

Bug-in preparation should protect your family from the worst situations, such as economic collapse or civil unrest. However, you should prioritize the most pertinent threats to your location. For example, extreme weather is a more predictable danger and should be your top concern when preparing to bug in. While you can prepare for all scenarios, consider what's most realistic.

Your bug-in readiness should fortify your property from the natural disasters most likely to affect your area. Preppers in the Southeast should focus their energy on tornado and hurricane protection by reinforcing windows and cleaning gutters. Snow and ice are more prominent in northern states, so create a firewood or propane stockpile for winter storms. Be sure to listen to recommendations from weather experts.

8. Using Old Security Systems

Regardless of the threats, it's wise to have an updated security system for monitoring and taking action. Older devices [are vulnerable to security breaches](#) and may have performance issues as time goes on. Their limited capabilities could also mean you're out of luck when stopping trespassers or protecting your family members. Gauge your system's effectiveness by inspecting physical wear and performing regular updates.

Preppers should prioritize newer security systems when preparing to bug in, as these gadgets have newer safety features. For example, they offer remote monitoring to check surveillance footage on your phone. If you're away from home, you can still check what's happening in the bedroom or basement. Newer devices also feature two-way audio, which could be useful when giving directions to family members.

9. Ignoring Your Pets

Your parents, spouse and children are your priorities when protecting your household, though your pets also deserve attention. Newer preppers may forget to prepare their domesticated animals and regret it when it's time to bug in. Caring for cats and dogs is even more important because they are less able to help themselves during crises. Plus, healthy pets can boost morale when you need it most.

Like humans, your pets need enough food and water to last the entire time sheltering in place. Cats and dogs can have dry and wet food, though kibble lasts longer in your storage space. Your bug-in prep should also include a comprehensive medication list for your animals, so build a stockpile for them. They'll also need collars and microchips if they escape your property.

10. Forgetting Backup Power Sources

Municipal power grids may reduce their downtime and become generally reliable for communities. However, they shouldn't be your sole option when sheltering in place. Weather or cyberattacks could cause a grid-down situation and weeks of power outages, so you must have backup options. Unfortunately, newer preppers might not realize this until it's too late and they become stranded.

Your home should have multiple backup power sources to steady the ship in disaster scenarios. First, get a generator that suits your home's electrical needs and is reliable for a few days. A standby

system automatically turns on during an outage and minimizes disruption to your operations. Depending on sunlight availability, you should install solar panels to become less reliant on the grid.

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11. Procrastinating Practice Runs

Predicting when disaster strikes is challenging unless it concerns extreme weather events. That said, you don't want to be a deer in headlights once the situation arises. Newer preppers may focus their time and energy on gathering resources and forget to practice their emergency plan. There's minimal room for mistakes, so your family must act when it's time to move.

Sit down with your family and devise an emergency plan for bugging in. Each person should have clearly defined roles to minimize confusion when the moment strikes. Once you have your protocol, you should drill your family at unexpected times to keep them on their toes. These simulations expose what issues you must address and where your strengths lie.

Overcoming Common Mistakes During Bug-In Situations

Perfection might not be realistic, especially when everybody is in a frenzy to stay alive. However, preparation and simulations can give your family a better chance when it's time to bug in. Do your best for your loved ones, even if you make mistakes. Seasoned preppers still make mistakes but adapt and do what it takes to survive. Experience will teach you what works for your family in the most vulnerable scenarios.

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