



# How to Avoid Danger During Civil Unrest

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Civil unrest, or civil disorder, is a breakdown of normal society that leads to riots, violence, or other sorts of disorder, and is often ultimately suppressed by armed government officials.<sup>[1]</sup> Civil unrest can happen anywhere, as recent riots in places as varied as Dubai, Ferguson, Paris, and San Bernardino suggest— all that is required is enough people – and can happen for a variety of reasons, such as political unrest, weather, fire, and socio-economic instability. There are techniques to avoid danger should you find yourself in the midst of a civil unrest at home or abroad, as well techniques to wait out the unrest and stay safe in the aftermath.

Method  
1

## Avoiding Danger Altogether

**1 Stay home.** Most experts agree that the safest place to be during a civil unrest incident is in your home. Staying home keeps you out of the chaos and also allows you to defend your location, if you need to. Don't go back out to find out what's going on, and don't delay getting home if you're out.<sup>[2]</sup>

- You can and should prepare for emergencies, such as civil unrest, bad weather, or any other mass incident. Staying home will allow you to effectively utilize your resources while keeping you safer from danger.<sup>[3]</sup>

**2 Create a safe room.** A safe room is a specially-designed room in your home that meets Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) standards and is virtually impenetrable to external problems, such as weather incidents, fire, or looters.<sup>[4]</sup>

- FEMA's guidelines primarily ensure that your safe room is weatherproof. You can, however, fortify your room for additional standards, such as fireproofing or bulletproofing.

**3 Fortify your house.** Many experts agree that you should also fortify your home, whether you choose to install a safe room or not. Fortifying your home means that you strengthen its barriers, just in case the unrest incident spills over to your location.<sup>[5]</sup>

- Invest in a security system that includes outside cameras. This will offer you an additional line of defense.
- A popular, basic fortification is replacing standard windows with impact-resistant glass.

**4 Stay informed.** One benefit of our digital age is that we can stay connected pretty easily and have 24-hour access to the news. Make it a point to read up on or listen to what is happening globally, nationally, and locally. Staying informed about current events and any situations that may potentially devolve into civil unrest gives you more time to ensure that you and your family's safety.<sup>[6]</sup>

- Many news organizations have applications for smart phones that will send you alerts if big news is breaking in your area.
- Make sure that you don't just rely on the internet for your information. If a civil unrest situation persists, you may lose internet and cell access.
- Consider purchasing a battery-operated or hand-crank operated radio to stay informed if you lose electricity.
- A police scanner will allow you hear police radio traffic, which will alert you to any situations long before they are broadcast by the media.

Method  
2

## Developing a Plan

**1 Stockpile resources.** Whether the civil disturbance is brief, lasts for days, or even weeks, you'll need access to

basic necessities. This especially important because you won't be able to go out and replenish your supplies. Plan ahead, think about what your family needs (not wants), and stockpile appropriately.

- Make sure that you have enough water for every member of your family. The average adult drinks one half gallon per day, and children, sick people, and pregnant women drink more than that. It's safest to store pre-packaged water, and don't forget to account for your pets too.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Store enough food for your family to survive several days, and remember to consider dietary restrictions, such as Celiac Disease or allergies. Opt for foods with the most nutrition and longest shelf life, such as canned vegetables, stew, and powdered milk. Some foods may even be stored indefinitely.<sup>[8]</sup>
- Keep a 30-day supply of medications on hand, if you can, and keep them together so that you can easily stick them in your emergency kit if you need to. It's also a good idea to make a list of all medications your family takes and the dosages.
- Make sure that you have a fully-functional first-aid kit in your supplies.
- Have emergency cash on hand in small bills.<sup>[9]</sup>

**2 Form a network.** Having a group of people that you can trust, prepare with, and share resources with is invaluable. Should the unrest remain uncontrolled, your group will rely on one another for survival, as you won't have access to supermarkets or drugstores.<sup>[10]</sup>

**3 Locate a place to meet.** Work with your network, family, and friends to decide where you'll all meet should civil unrest persist. Remember, cell service will likely not be good in the area, so make sure that you all know exactly where to meet, how to find one another, and when you'll go to that location.<sup>[11]</sup>

- For example, you might decide that if a state of emergency is declared, your group will meet at the predetermined location within an hour of the announcement.
- Or you may decide that if roads become blocked, you'll meet up so that you can evacuate safely.

**4 Practice your plan.** Don't wait until there is a civil unrest incident to find out if your plan to avoid danger and stay safe is effective or not. Practice your plan with your family and your network so that you can work out any kinks and modify your plan as needed. There are emergency plans available on the internet for download that can serve as a good template from which you can develop your own plan.<sup>[12]</sup>

Method  
3

### Defending Your Location

**1 Secure your home.** If rioting is imminent, secure your home and business. Rioting often brings looting, and looters can pillage and destroy your property. Make sure your doors are locked, and board up all your windows. Remove small valuables to a safer place if possible, since determined rioters will get in just about anywhere.

**2 Check your locks and windows.** First-floor windows are more vulnerable than others, and doors without deadbolts are less secure. It's possible that civil unrest incidents can spill over to other areas, such as your house, and you need to ensure that you have adequate locks on all of your doors and windows.<sup>[13]</sup>

**3 Know the law.** It is important to know local laws governing self defense, no matter how you plan to defend yourself and your home. You don't want to find yourself in trouble after the unrest has been controlled because you violated the law. This is equally important if you are in another city, state, or country.

- You'll want to learn federal, state, county, and city laws that apply to your address.

Method  
4

### Travelling abroad

**1 Register your trip.** Let your Embassy or Consulate know your trip details so that they can keep you informed if any civil unrest situations occur. Often, they can help you evacuate, should it be necessary, and assist you with resources. Also, they can help you get in contact with your family back home so that you can let them know you're okay.<sup>[14]</sup>

- Every Embassy or Consulate has a website or phone number that you can easily locate on the internet.

- When you contact the Embassy or Consulate, ask if there is any additional information or precautions that you should be made aware of.

**2 Have a plan.** You likely won't know the area very well if you're travelling abroad. Take some time to learn the layout of the streets, official evacuation routes, the Embassy location, ATM locations, hospital locations, and any other relevant potential sources of assistance.<sup>[15]</sup>

- You can typically get maps of travel destinations from your travel agent, from a bookstore, and online so that you can learn the area before you even begin your trip.
- Many hotels and local governments offer free maps of the area for travelers. This is a great resource that shows you the layout of the city and, because they're geared toward travelers, also show landmarks, which can be helpful to know in times of civil unrest.

**3 Know security protocols.** Often, local governments will have security protocols for civil unrest incidents that apply to locals as well as travelers. Learn these security protocols so that you don't put yourself in extra danger and are able to take advantage of any protections the government might offer.<sup>[16]</sup>

**4 Get travel insurance.** You might think that travel insurance is just for missed flights or medical emergencies that happen while you're on your trip. And while most travel insurance has a specific exclusion for civil unrest, there are policies that you can purchase that will cover this event. If you think that you're going to an area where unrest is more likely, it is worth the extra work to insure your trip.<sup>[17]</sup>

#### Method 5

### Evacuating and Surviving After an Unrest

**1 Avoid public transportation.** Because streets may be gridlocked, crowded, and potentially violent, avoid public transportation, especially bus and train stations. These places may become hopelessly – and dangerously – crowded if there is even a threat of impending civil unrest. Airports can also become swamped, potentially dangerous places, so it's best to call the airport or your Embassy in advance to check on the situation there.

**2 Don't fuel the fire.** Survival experts agree that if you do need to leave your home, do so quietly. Don't attract attention to yourself, keep your head down, be quiet, and don't get involved in the unrest. You don't want to put yourself in unnecessary danger or delay your evacuation.<sup>[18]</sup>

**3 Know the official evacuation routes.** If you live in a weather-incident prone area, your local government may have pre-established evacuation routes. These may be a good option for you, but more than likely they will be at a standstill with everyone trying to leave en masse. It's a good idea to ask if the state or county has any secondary evacuation routes mapped out and to keep those in mind as well.<sup>[19]</sup>

**4 Seek assistance.** Whether the civil unrest incident was brief or lasted for weeks, your life will be disrupted to some degree. After the situation is controlled, relief organizations may come into the area to offer food, water, and medical treatment. While it's still safest to stay home, seek assistance from hospitals and relief organizations if you need it, only when it's safe to do so.<sup>[20]</sup>

#### Tips

- If you know civil unrest is occurring, the best thing you can do is stay far away from it. Do not venture into a riot to gawk or to find out what it's about.

#### Warnings

- During episodes of civil unrest, many people fail to heed warnings to evacuate so that they can protect their homes or businesses. Consider this decision carefully, as it may put you in grave danger. It's important to remember that if looters strike you will likely be outnumbered, and your attackers may be armed. If you can evacuate, it's usually better to do so –

your property is not worth your life.

### Sources and Citations

1. <http://definitions.uslegal.com/c/civil-disturbance/>
2. <http://blog.cheaperthandirt.com/steps-staying-safe-civil-unrest/>
3. <http://blog.cheaperthandirt.com/steps-staying-safe-civil-unrest/>

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