

**Crisis Research Centre**

Think forward, think back!

A stylized illustration of a city street scene. In the foreground, three people with backpacks are walking away from the viewer on a sidewalk. The background features several multi-story apartment buildings with blue and beige facades. The sky is a light blue with soft, white clouds. The overall style is a hand-drawn sketch with watercolor-like textures.

# APARTMENT BUILDING COMMUNITY

**CRISIS PREPAREDNESS  
TEXTBOOK**

""Apartment Building Community Crisis Preparedness Textbook" is only intended to provide general information to the board members and residents of co-operative housing associations of typical apartment buildings; it should not be used as the sole recommendation for any specific practice or method of operation.

The textbook is not intended to address or prevent all crisis preparedness challenges, problems, and situations, nor is it a replacement for ongoing individual and collective self-improvement. The textbook's purpose is not to emphasize the importance of individual, collective, local government, or national crisis preparedness, but rather to highlight the unavoidable interdependence of the interaction and effectiveness of all previously mentioned layers.

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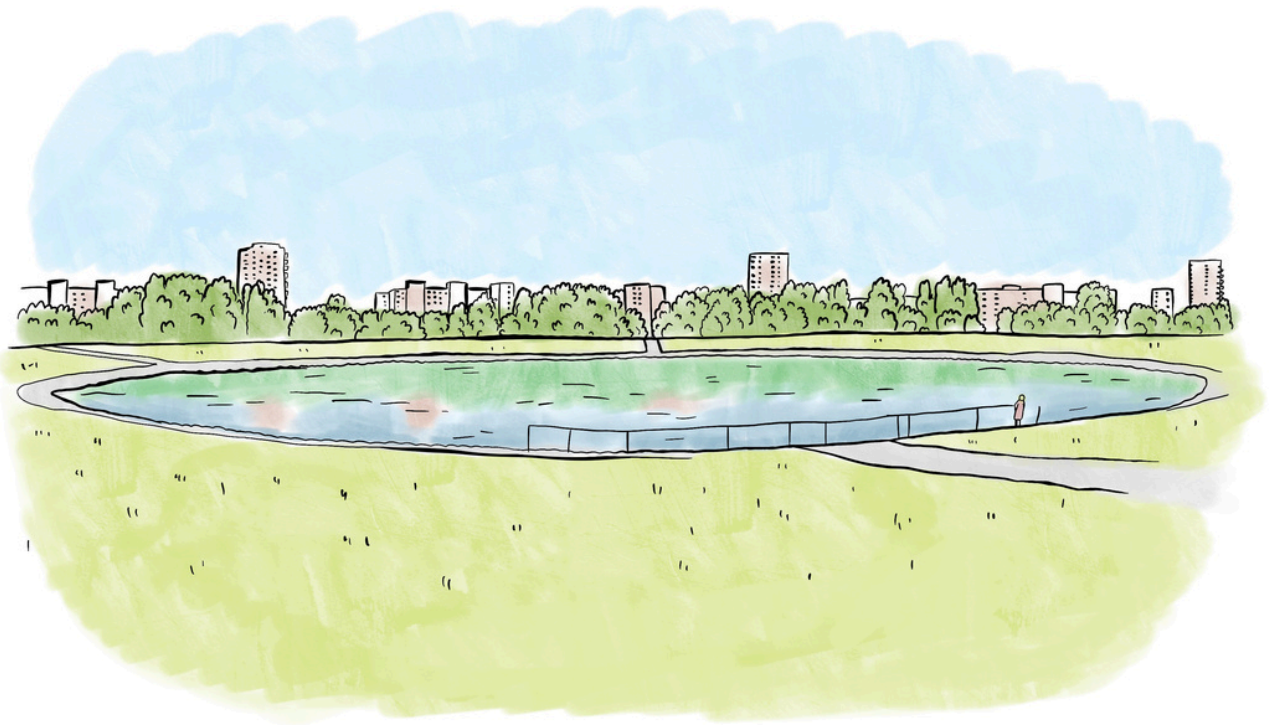
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# APARTMENT BUILDING COMMUNITY CRISIS PREPAREDNESS TEXTBOOK



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# 1. FOREWORD

Dear reader,

We are all familiar with the saying that there are two certainties in life – death and taxes. However, today we can confidently add a third: crises. The turbulent nature of the modern world has created a reality where one crisis follows another – or several unfold simultaneously. Just think back over the past five years – the health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the hybrid warfare across the Baltic Sea and cyberspace, U.S. trade tariffs, the energy price crisis, and the widespread extreme weather events caused by the climate crisis (floods, storms, heatwaves, and so on) – all have, in their own way, contributed to a growing sense of instability.

Unfortunately, crises don't only happen far away or affect only other people. Because our daily lives depend on a wide range of systems, we are especially vulnerable to disruptions, particularly in urban environments. Whether it's electricity, water, communications, or heating, the specific impact of a crisis depends on its nature. The tools and resources needed in a pandemic are quite different from those required in a sudden power outage.

In a short-term crisis, the loss of conveniences like electricity, water, or heating might feel like a temporary discomfort. However, in a larger-scale crisis, these can quickly turn into life-threatening problems. This textbook is designed to help you understand how even small steps in preparedness can significantly improve your ability to cope – and, in serious crises, even increase your chances of survival. And why not – it can also help preserve a degree of comfort during difficult times.

Unlike typical guides, this textbook doesn't just tell you how to stock up for a few days at home. It encourages you to think about long-term self-sufficiency and emphasizes the importance of community. Thinking about your community and acting together is especially crucial in urban environments, where residents depend far more on supply chains and infrastructure than those living in rural areas. This textbook will help you prepare for such situations and offers practical tips to support you along the way.

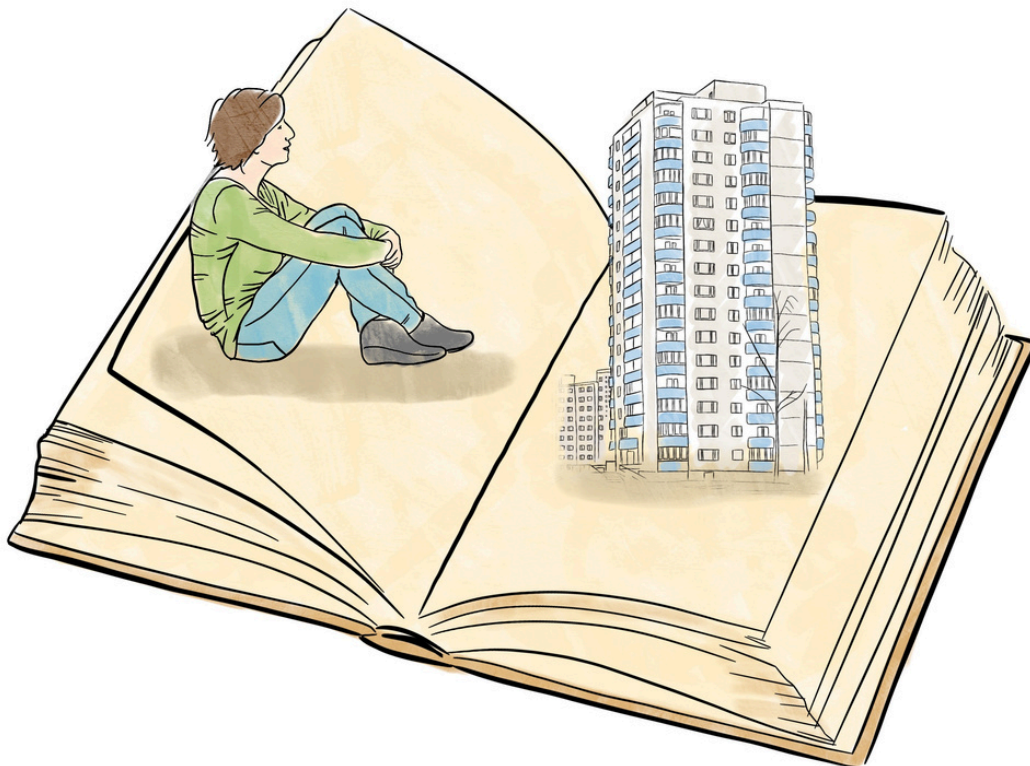
Each of us can contribute to managing crisis situations through thoughtful and proactive actions. The better prepared you are, the easier it is for authorities to assist those who are truly in need. At the same time, it's important to recognize that people's ability to prepare varies, whether due to available space, broader infrastructure, or financial resources. For example, infrastructure plays a key role: if you live in an apartment building, you are entirely dependent on centralized systems for water, electricity, and heating – systems that are beyond your personal control.

In contrast, someone living in a private house or on a rural property may find it easier to cope with disruptions to essential services, since alternative options like well water or a wood-burning stove are often available.

Therefore, as you read this handbook, take into account the specific realities of your own living situation and that of your family, and prepare accordingly. Remember: crisis preparedness is, above all, a practical understanding that there may be times in life when you'll need to manage with fewer conveniences.

To cope with such situations, it's wise to plan ahead and take action – even gradually, step by step. This textbook is here to help you do just that. The goal of crisis preparedness is to gain greater peace of mind from knowing that you and your family have a plan and the necessary resources to manage during difficult times. This textbook focuses on what anyone, regardless of their previous experience or knowledge – can do to prepare for longer-term self-sufficiency.

On behalf of the Crisis Research Centre, we hope that after reading this textbook, you'll take a few practical steps toward better preparedness – whether that means stocking supplies, learning new skills, or working with your community to improve local crisis readiness.



## 2. THE URBAN COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN CRISIS PREPARATION

Crisis preparedness (planning and resource planning) works best at the community level. However, living in a city may make it appear that crisis preparation is not necessary or that it is only done by government agencies and official organisations. It is useful to know that, actually, urban communities are more vulnerable in times of crisis due to the high reliance on central, urban infrastructure.

In densely populated areas, resources are limited, there is a high reliance on technology and supply chains, and most people don't know their neighbours well enough to cope in a crisis as a community. In this chapter, we will look at why it is important to plan for crises when living in a city, what you can do even if you don't have a large circle of friends or an active neighbourhood, and why knowing who lives nearby is beneficial.

### 2.1 DO YOU HAVE TO PREPARE FOR CRISES WHEN YOU LIVE IN THE CITY?

Let's begin this chapter by debunking some myths. This is important because myths keep us from preparing for crises.

#### ● ● ● HELP IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE IN THE CITY !? ● ● ●

Many people believe that urban areas provide a faster response to a crisis because emergency services are better equipped, stores are stocked, and the government can act quickly. In reality, during major crises, help can take longer to reach an individual in a city than in rural areas because there are more people in need; services may become overburdened. In the event of a disaster, traffic jams, emergency services, and supply chains are disrupted within days. Life-threatening cases are prioritised; everyone must be prepared to cope on their own – at least for some time. This is why the role of communities is critical during crises, as cooperation among neighbours and acquaintances may be the only way to get help.

#### ● ● ● I'LL SIMPLY GO TO THE COUNTRYSIDE !? ● ● ●

A common misconception is that in a crisis, it is simple to flee the city and travel to a safer location with more resources and fewer people. In reality, evacuation is not always easy and necessitates a well-thought-out strategy. Thousands, if not tens or hundreds of thousands, of people may attempt to leave at the same time, causing traffic chaos. Fuel availability may be limited, causing disruptions in public transportation. Without a specific destination and the necessary supplies to depart, leaving may be more dangerous than remaining. It is best to leave only if you have a specific destination in mind where supplies and accommodations are available, such as your country home or relatives or acquaintances who are eager to welcome you.

Alternatively, various state and local government agencies can organize **evacuation sites**, but their capabilities are limited and spots fill up quickly. Before leaving, make sure you follow **official announcements** and know which roads are open and which areas to avoid. Decisions made hastily and without preparation can exacerbate the danger.

## **LIVING IN THE CITY DEMANDS PROACTIVE CRISIS PREPAREDNESS!**

Many systems (water, electricity, transportation, grocery stores, and communications) are essential to city life but can fail quickly in times of crisis. If these disruptions last longer than a few days, people's survival will be dependent on their own preparation. Every city dweller should consider how they would survive independently for at least a week, better up to four weeks if all services were disrupted. **Have I got enough water and food? Do I have alternatives for heating, lighting, and communication? Who can I contact if necessary?**

If the answer to any of these questions is **NO**, you should begin working on crisis preparedness. First, you must **inventory your current resources**, including **physical** (food supplies, equipment), **operational** (skills, backup plans), and **social** (relationships, community support). Preparation does not imply panic or excessive spending, but rather a realistic assessment of how to stabilize your living conditions even if traditional systems no longer function.

### **2.2 WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS OR AN ACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD?**

Living in an urban environment frequently implies anonymity; **people live next to one another but do not communicate or know each other**. Many large apartment buildings can house hundreds of residents who have never spoken to one another. If you live in an apartment building, consider how many neighbours you know by name. **How many people do you communicate with?** How many people have you talked to about how to help each other during times of crisis?

When life goes on as usual, a lack of relationships among neighbours may not appear to be a problem, but in a crisis, it can be a significant disadvantage. Without a social network, you are more vulnerable during a crisis, making it difficult to find help, information, and even moral support. The support of those living nearby is critical here; even if you have many friends and acquaintances overall, you may not be able to contact or reach them during a crisis. As a result, it is critical that we maintain positive relationships with those who live nearby.

**To get started, try saying hello to people in the stairwell**, exchanging a few words in the elevator, or even discussing crisis preparedness at an apartment association meeting. This may not be an easy step, but it is critical to improving neighbourly relations. At the same time, it is worth noting that during a crisis, people naturally begin to offer more help to one another (with some exceptions), but **it is more effective in your own interests** to reach agreements and build as many stronger relationships as possible before crises occur.

## Is it possible to survive on your own?

Yes, but it requires more deliberate preparation. If you don't have a nearby close circle of friends or an active neighbourhood, you should focus more on your personal crisis preparedness. This includes both stockpiling supplies and acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to act independently during a crisis.

### How do you prepare for a crisis when you are alone?

If you know you don't have anyone to rely on, you should maximise your independence. Here are some concrete steps to follow:

- **Make a realistic crisis plan for yourself** – thinking through various emergency scenarios and how you will respond to them. Do you have another place to live if your current home becomes uninhabitable? How will you get there? What if this place can not be used? How will you ensure your water supply if the tap water goes out? Do you have enough food and essentials for at least a week, preferably four weeks?
- **Stock up** – in order to manage without a strong social network, it's important to plan ahead of time and diversify your stocks. This includes food, water, medical supplies, and energy.
- **Learn essential survival skills** – if you are alone, you cannot rely on others to complete critical tasks for you. Learn how to purify water, cook without electricity, practice hygiene, and get information.



### 3. UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO THREATS

Living in a city provides conveniences, but it also requires a greater reliance on complex infrastructure and service systems. If any of these fail, life can quickly become very difficult. When a crisis strikes, it is not time to consider what to do; it is time to act. How do you cope when you lose access to electricity, water, food, and the internet? Are you ready to leave your home if needed? In this chapter, we'll look at what can go wrong when you live in the city and how to prepare for it.

#### 3.1 IN TIMES OF CRISIS, THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT IS VULNERABLE

The city provides amenities and services that allow you to live without having to supply your own food, water, or energy. There is clean water at the tap, grocery stores offer a diverse selection of goods, electricity and the internet are always operational, and medical care is available. However, if one or several of these services go down at the same time, life in the city can quickly become difficult, if not dangerous.

As you know, a modern city is a rather complex system in which all necessary services are interconnected. A power outage can disrupt water and heating systems, as well as sewage systems, and cause grocery stores to run out of supplies. Without public transportation or fuel, getting around becomes difficult, and broken communications can make getting information a serious issue.

Imagine waking up one morning to find no electricity, spoiled food in the refrigerator, and a dead phone. There is no water at the tap, so you can't wash or cook. People have stocked up on essentials in grocery stores, as they did at the start of the COVID-19 crisis, and supplies are running low. The internet and mobile communications are down, so you can't get information about the situation or contact your loved ones. Fear and ignorance make people unpredictable, which could lead to unrest in the city.

This situation may appear to be a movie script or a distant reality, but it can occur during crises in developed countries. Getting started depends on how well you prepare ahead of time. Food, water, and energy supplies, alternative communication channels, and awareness of potential threats can all affect whether you survive a crisis or get into trouble. Preparation is not excessive caution but rather the confidence in your ability to deal with unexpected situations.

#### Which crises can occur in a city?

Cities are vulnerable to a wide range of threats, which can affect a large number of people at once. To the essential services, the most serious threat is the electricity outage. In the heating period, disruption in heating services is also a huge problem in which, for example, the district heating company is delivering heat, but it no longer reaches the apartments due to a failure of the circulation pumps in the apartment building, leaving you and your neighbors in the cold.

Here are some examples of potential crises that may occur in urban areas:

- **A power outage** can leave an entire city or neighborhood without electricity for an extended period of time, affecting water pumps, refrigeration equipment, communications networks, heating, and sewage systems.
- **In the event of a water shortage**, apartment buildings have no alternative water supply, and if the tap water stops working, people must rely entirely on their own supplies. Water is the most important survival resource.
- **Food shortages and supply chain disruptions** are major issues, as urban grocery stores can only supply residents for a few days. If supplies are disrupted, shelves rapidly empty. Before this, they may become rationed.
- **When pharmacies are unable to receive additional supplies**, even simple medications such as pain relievers or antibiotics may become rationed or unavailable.
- **Communication outages** can impede information dissemination, making situation assessment difficult and causing panic. Without mobile networks and the internet, people's understanding of the crisis's scope is limited.
- **Security** is likely to deteriorate if people believe that resources are scarce and assistance is not forthcoming. Panic and despair can result in increased theft, looting, and violence.
- **Military conflict and political instability** may appear distant, but recent years have demonstrated that they are not impossible, even in Europe. When a city is under threat, survival is dependent on public awareness and preparation.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR RESIDENTS?

People who live in cities rely more on systems than those who live in rural areas. While well water and stove heating can keep people's lives somewhat normal in the countryside, everything in an urban environment is dependent on centralized services. This means that if these services fail, life can quickly become critical. Keep in mind that, when it comes to ensuring water and electricity, the providers of vital services themselves have priority customers, such as hospitals, water and sewage system managers, cash service providers, and grocery stores in your area. The individual is the last in the list to whom the service needs to be provided in a crisis.

Vital service providers have crisis plans, but putting them into action in your area can be time-consuming. When something serious happens, people first turn to the state and local governments for assistance. However, in an emergency, resources are limited, and assistance can only reach the most critical cases. This means that **each person must be able to manage independently for at least a week, and possibly up to four weeks.**

### 3.2 WITHOUT ELECTRICITY, HEATING, WATER, FUEL, INTERNET, FOOD & MEDICINE

If all of life's necessities are cut off, you must be prepared to survive on your own, not only by having supplies, but also by knowing how to use them correctly.

A power outage has a wide-ranging impact on daily life and can last anywhere from hours to weeks. Without electricity, water pumps will not function, resulting in no water coming out of the taps, and sewage systems in apartment buildings may become clogged. Card payments become impossible, and stores may close when supplies run out. Heating systems can fail during the winter, rendering homes uninhabitable. Cell phone towers only run on backup generators for a short period of time, so communications can quickly go down.

You **must have alternatives for power and light**. A power bank allows you to use your phone when necessary, but it must have enough capacity and, if possible, be rechargeable via solar power or crank. To get through the night, candles, flashlights, and batteries must be kept on hand. **Water is essential for drinking, cooking, and washing**. The water supply should be **at least 2 litres per person per day**, but you must also consider cooking and hygiene requirements, which may add another litre.

Water purification tablets and filters can help make unsafe water potable. If there isn't enough water at home, you should be aware of alternative water sources, such as nearby natural water bodies or collection facilities. **If the grocery stores run out and supplies are disrupted, you must have an adequate supply**. This means that dry goods, canned goods, and other long-life foods can last for several weeks. Cooking without electricity can be difficult, so having a gas burner or another cooking method comes in handy.

**When you run out of gas, getting around becomes difficult**. If your car runs out of fuel and the gas stations are closed, you should consider alternative modes of transportation, such as cycling. In the winter, it is critical to have a sleeping bag, thermal underwear, and enough warm clothing to keep you warm at home. **Medical treatment can also be difficult to obtain**. Pharmacies can close when supplies run low, so keep a first-aid kit and enough prescription medication to last at least a month. It is also beneficial to understand simple home remedies for minor health problems.

Proper preparation will allow you to survive a power outage without suffering serious consequences. The key is to have supplies, alternative solutions, and knowledge of where to find critical resources if the situation lasts longer. If all of the above services fail at the same time, it becomes extremely difficult to survive in the city. **To avoid having to rely on others for assistance, you must first prepare yourself**. Only those who are prepared and aware can deal with difficult situations and help others.

### 3.3 ARE YOU READY TO LEAVE?

In a crisis, you may have to decide whether to stay in your home and wait for the situation to improve, or to leave and seek a safer environment.

This is not an easy decision because each option carries its own risks. If you leave too soon, you may find yourself in a confusing and unstable situation, with insufficient supplies and no safe destination. However, if you stay for too long, the situation may become dangerous, and you may be unable to leave the city. How do you make the correct decision?

To accomplish this, you must consider several factors, including the safety of your place of residence, the sufficiency of supplies, and the risks of evacuation. Not every crisis necessitates departure, but there are situations in which it is unavoidable. The following signs show that you should seriously consider leaving:

- **Physical threat to your place of residence** – if your apartment building or surrounding area is in immediate danger, such as a fire, an attack, or other violent event, you should evacuate immediately.
- **Life is becoming physically unbearable** – if you don't have water, food, or heat and have no way of obtaining them, staying at home becomes more dangerous than leaving.
- **Social order is deteriorating** – if there are signs that law and order no longer exist in the city, the streets are crowded with looters, and the police are out of control, it may be time to flee before chaos spreads.
- **Your health is jeopardized** – if you no longer have access to necessary medical care or medication, and your condition is likely to deteriorate quickly, it is best to leave and seek help elsewhere.
- **Evacuation orders have been issued** – if the government, municipality, or rescue service tells you to leave, you should comply.

Leaving does not simply imply walking out the door and starting to go somewhere. It requires planning and preparation so that you do not become trapped on the road and end up in a more dangerous situation. When is it best to stay where you are?



Many people make the mistake of leaving too soon and without a clear plan during a crisis. Sometimes they leave for a more dangerous location. It is sometimes preferable to stay at home and make do with what you have on hand. Here are a few of the most common situations where staying put is more sensible:

- **You have enough supplies, and the availability of resources is not an issue** – if you have food, water, heat, and medicine for weeks or a month, the situation is not immediately life-threatening, and there is no evacuation order, it is best to stay put.
- **Leaving is riskier than staying put** – if leaving a city means entering an unsafe zone, such as an area where armed groups are moving or where traffic jams could trap you, it is preferable to stay put.
- **Authorities advise staying put** – in some cases, authorities may ask people not to leave because the roads are closed or the security outside the city is worse than inside.
- **The crisis will be short-lived, and a quick recovery is expected** – if the disruption is temporary and the authorities have promised to stabilise the situation, it is more prudent to use your reserves and wait until conditions improve.

Staying put does not imply being passive. It indicates that you are prepared and monitoring the situation so that you can act quickly if needed.

### 3.4 HOW TO PREPARE FOR DEPARTURE?

If the situation requires you to leave, you must be adequately prepared. Leaving in a panic at the last minute without a plan can result in a situation where you don't have the necessary supplies, don't know where to go, and are caught in the midst of chaos. The evacuation bag, route, and departure time are critical. In an emergency, you must leave as quickly and smoothly as possible. To accomplish this, everyone must have an evacuation bag, a clear destination, and a well-thought-out departure strategy. Delays can make leaving difficult or even impossible.

An evacuation bag should have everything you need for at least three days. When it comes to food and water, opt for portable, long-lasting options like camping food, energy bars, and water purification tablets. Families with young children should bring baby food and diapers. Documents, ID cards, and cash (small bills) are required, as card payments may be interrupted. Personal medications and a small first aid kit can save lives. Clothing must be weather-appropriate; bring a hat, gloves, raincoat, and, if necessary, a sleeping bag or tent coat. As a light source, a flashlight and a solar-charged battery bank with at least 20,000 mAh are required. If the situation becomes dangerous, **you must be prepared to defend yourself.**

**The evacuation route and destination must be known in advance.** The best solution is to have family or friends who can welcome you. If this is not possible, consider alternative lodging options, such as a summer home or camping facilities in a safe area. In the case of an organized evacuation, the destination is an evacuation site set up by the authorities.

Before embarking on your own journey, ensure that the main roads are safe and that there are alternate routes in case traffic jams or obstacles render the usual route impassable. If you own a vehicle, always keep the fuel tank at least half full and have extra fuel on hand. If you don't have a car, leaving by bicycle or on foot may be your last option.

**The time of your departure is critical.** The ideal time to leave is before the city becomes chaotic. When signs of overburdened emergency services, empty store shelves, and disrupted communications (and, in extreme cases, looting) emerge, it is no longer safe to postpone your departure. Once the evacuation order is issued, you must act quickly, as delay could result in being trapped. Timely preparation and quick decision-making during a critical situation can mean the difference between life and death.



Leaving is a serious decision that should not be taken lightly, but it must be approached realistically. If your supplies and living conditions permit, staying put may be the best option. However, if the threats escalate and life becomes impossible, you must be prepared to evacuate quickly and effectively. **Do you know what you would do if you needed to leave your house in 30 minutes?**

**If the answer is NO, it's time to make a plan.** Because when that moment arrives, there is no time to think; only time to act.



## 4. INDIVIDUAL PREPARATIONS

A crisis plan is a guide for you and your family on how to handle various emergency situations. A clear, realistic, and easy-to-follow document is more important than its complexity.

Your crisis plan should be practical and prioritize the safety of family members in an emergency. The main risks are prolonged power outages, a lack of water, food, and medicine, the need to evacuate quickly, and potential environmental pollution. To accomplish this, you must first agree on how to communicate if the phones and internet go down. Establish a fixed meeting point and, if possible, use walkie-talkies or other independent modes of communication.

Reliable information is critical during a crisis. The safest option is to use a crank-operated or solar-powered radio, which can monitor official messages even during power outages. It is also useful to know the location of emergency centers and other information sharing points. Survival is dependent on supplies and their management. You must know how long you can go without waiting for more supplies, whether you have enough water, food, and basic necessities at home, and whether all family members have the necessary medications. Good preparation reduces reliance on external sources of assistance and improves chances of survival even in difficult circumstances.

### ● ● ● What are some inexpensive and practical solutions? ● ● ●

- **Prepare a crisis plan on paper and post it somewhere visible.** During a power outage, electronic devices may not function properly. Agree on a course of action with the people who matter to you.
- **Make a physical contact list.** Write down the phone numbers and addresses of all family members, close friends, and neighbors.
- **Agree with neighbors who will assist vulnerable people by gathering information.** If someone is more vulnerable (for example, an elderly person), they should have a designated contact person they can rely on in a crisis.
- **Make your own evacuation plan.** Consider when you'd need to leave the house and where you would go.



## 4.1 HOW TO PROPERLY STOCK UP?

Many people believe that **emergency supplies** entail shelves full of canned and dry goods, but you can stock up wisely, cheaply, and efficiently, even in a small apartment. **Food and water are the foundations of life.** Oatmeal, rice, buckwheat, pasta, and couscous are good choices because they are easy to prepare and last a long time.

Nuts, seeds, chocolate, dried fruit, and muesli bars are **high-calorie and compact foods** that provide quick energy while also being portable. Canned goods (e.g., stews, soups, canned meat and fish) are an excellent long-term solution, but their quantity should be limited due to their heavy weight. Camping food, or (freeze-dried) food, is ideal for an evacuation bag because it is lightweight and requires only water to prepare. Water supplies should be at least 2 litres per person per day, with more considered for larger families or in hot weather. It makes sense to ration your stock to some extent at the start of the crisis if you don't know how long it will last. This way, you can extend your ability to cope independently.

In addition to food, **medicine and hygiene are critical**, as health risks can escalate during a crisis. Adhesive and regular bandages, antiseptics, and any necessary personal medications should be included in a first aid kit. Wet wipes, soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, hand sanitiser, and garbage bags all contribute to a sanitary environment even when the water supply is disrupted or permanently shut off.

When gathering supplies, it is always possible to **use inexpensive and space-saving methods**. Rotating supplies ensures that food is not stored indefinitely; if something is reaching its expiration date, use it up and replace it with new ones. When packing an evacuation bag, prioritise light, easy-to-prepare foods. Community supply sharing can be beneficial when neighbours can stockpile essential resources like water filters or cooking equipment.

Sensible and planned supplies allow for better coping in any crisis situation. If you decide to leave your home, you may want to notify your community ahead of time, depending on your decision, so that others do not waste time looking for you if, say, a general evacuation order is issued. This way, you can help everyone save time and energy.



## 4.2 EVACUATION BAG

How do you pack a bag that will be useful when you have to leave your home? If you have to leave your home unexpectedly, you won't have time to pack. As a result, you should prepare a bag with everything you will require ahead of time.

If your evacuation bag has not yet been packed, it is worth thinking about it at home and preparing the necessary items separately so that you can quickly pack it and leave if necessary. You should also carefully consider your mode of transportation: it is possible to bring more supplies with you by car, but if you leave on foot, you must consider whether you can actually carry the intended load. On the other hand, when driving, you must consider the fuel supply and its availability when it runs out, as well as other drivers who may cause traffic jams and worsen road conditions.

It is advisable to prepare an evacuation bag for each family member or specific items that everyone will bring with them. It is necessary to discuss this with the family and practise how to act and what to bring in the event of an evacuation.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU PUT IN AN EVACUATION BAG?

- **Food and water** – dried and energy-rich foods, a water bottle and water filters or water purification tablets to purify water. Prefer lightweight packages, if possible special camping food – this way the bag will not become too heavy.
- **Clothing and weather protection** – weatherproof and multi-layered clothing. Keep in mind that even in summer the nights may be cold, even freezing, in Estonia.
- **Communication equipment** – walkie-talkie, batteries, power bank.
- **Documents and cash** – passport, ID card, small banknotes, and backup copies of important documents.
- **Hygiene items** – soap, wet wipes, garbage bags.
- **Survival equipment** – pocket knife, fire starter, multi-purpose tool.

Pack your bag according to your needs, keeping it light and comfortable. To avoid exhaustion, use a comfortable backpack that you can carry for an extended period of time. If possible, devise a cooperative evacuation plan, or arrange for neighbours or friends to leave together if necessary.



### 4.3 COMMUNICATION IN A CRISIS SITUATION

In an emergency, **information is critical because it enables you to make the best decisions** for your own and your loved ones' safety. When the internet, mobile communications, and other traditional sources of information are unavailable due to a power outage, network failure, or other emergency, you must rely on alternative communication channels and trustworthy sources of information. Without effective communication, people may be unaware of how serious the situation is, leading to panic and the spread of misinformation. Furthermore, calling for help may be impossible if someone requires immediate medical attention or other emergency assistance. As a result, **it is critical to agree ahead of time with family members and neighbours** on how to obtain and share information if digital communication methods fail.

When mobile communications and the internet are unavailable, it is critical to maintain contact with your community and seek reliable sources of information. A **battery-powered radio or a hand crank generator** is one of the best options, as many government agencies and rescue services broadcast official information over the radio during a crisis. **AM/FM and shortwave radios** allow you to listen to international news even when local sources are unavailable. As a result, it is recommended that you stock up on battery-powered or hand-charged radios and keep extra batteries at home.

When technical communication channels are down, **agreed-upon physical information distribution points** (e.g., emergency centres, Points of Invincibility, etc.) can be critical to the community. In urban areas, notice boards in schools, libraries, or community centres can be used to leave messages and distribute official information. In apartment buildings, information can be distributed via stairwell boards or a dedicated mailbox.

If electronic information is unavailable, **paper-based information sources** such as first aid manuals, evacuation plans, and contact information for local authorities and rescue services can be helpful. In the event that digital devices fail, these could be printed and readily available. It is critical to be prepared for communication in a crisis: keep a hand-cranked, solar-powered, or battery-powered radio with spare batteries at home, agree on alternative contact methods with family members and neighbors in case your cell phone or internet connection fails, and keep a list of important contacts on paper so you can use other communication channels if needed. Also, be aware of where to find official information during a crisis to prevent misinformation and panic.



## 5. HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY HELP YOU AND VICE VERSA?

In a crisis, community can be one of the most important survival factors. While many people prefer independence and personal preparation, the truth is that coping alone is far more difficult than coping in a group. Collaboration can result in improved access to information, more efficient resource allocation, a safer environment, and psychological support. When a crisis lasts for weeks or months, people quickly realize how difficult it is to survive without the help of others.

In this chapter, we'll look at how community can help you cope during a crisis, as well as how you can help your community.

### 5.1 HOW CAN I FIND LOCALS WHO SHARE MY GOALS?

If you live in a city, particularly in a large apartment building or an anonymous neighbourhood, it can be difficult to find like-minded people to collaborate with during a crisis. Many people are naturally afraid of talking to strangers and believe that everyone must fend for themselves. In fact, a few trusted contacts can be extremely helpful during a crisis.

In this chapter, we'll look at simple and practical ways to find people nearby with whom you can discuss crisis preparedness ideas without feeling awkward or drawing too much attention to yourself. If you're an introvert who prefers to keep a low profile, here are some discreet ways to find and join a community.

First of all, community does not imply that you must join a formal organisation. It can also refer to a small group of individuals in your apartment building, neighbourhood, or workplace who share similar values and are prepared for emergencies. When a crisis strikes, these individuals can be the ones to provide you with information, share resources, or assist you in an emergency.



## 1. START QUIETLY AND NATURALLY

If you dislike communicating or find it difficult to connect with others, don't worry; you don't have to be an active storyteller to meet people who share your interests and goals. How do I get started naturally and unobtrusively?

- **Ability to pay attention.** Listen to see if anyone in your stairwell, apartment association, or neighbourhood brings up crisis preparedness topics or is interested in practical solutions like gardening, craft skills, or technical craftsmanship.
- **Look for an easy conversation starter.** For example, if a neighbour brings home a supply of water in 5L barrels or carries camping equipment, you can say during the conversation, *"I've been thinking about collecting a small supply of water; do you have any good suggestions?"* or *"Have you ever thought about what to do during a long power outage?"*

**PRACTICAL TIP** — if you don't want to talk to people directly, begin quietly by listening, watching, and observing. Many people prepare for crises without talking about them openly.

## 2. FIND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS COMMUNITIES THAT DO NOT PRESSURE YOU

If you're not comfortable starting conversations, you can begin by passively participating or watching and learning. Where can you meet people with similar interests?

- **Social media communities and forums.** There are numerous local Facebook groups and other social media platforms where people discuss crisis preparedness and civil protection. You can begin by simply reading, without having to immediately participate. For example, there are groups where people share advice on how to stock up wisely in the city or which first aid kits to keep at home. But these topics may also arise in ordinary local groups.
- **Local workshops and events.** Look for information about crisis preparedness or survival courses on your city or district's website or at the library. If you do not want to participate in group work, you can begin by simply listening and learning.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — if you're not comfortable with active communication, you can start completely anonymously by reading forums and joining community groups without having to post or contribute right away.



### 3. INDIRECT "TESTING" OF NEIGHBOURS AND CO-WORKERS

If you don't want to talk openly about your crisis preparedness right away, you can use indirect methods to see if anyone else shares your thoughts. How can you tell if someone might be interested?

- **Ask a broad question without stating your position.** Ask at work, *"I heard one area had a week-long power outage. Has anyone considered preparing for that?"* When you see a longtime neighbor, you could ask, *"What if our house lost power for a week? A widespread blackout in Spain showed that we should be better prepared for such situations."*

**PRACTICAL EXAMPLE** — this method doesn't immediately make you open up about whether or not you're preparing for a crisis, as it's more of a discreet way of testing whether anyone else is thinking the same thing.

### 4. MAKE A CONCRETE PROPOSAL

If you're an introvert who doesn't like just talking to people, hands-on activities may be a better way to integrate into the community. How can you quietly participate in the community?

- **Offer to order something together that will help with crisis preparedness.** If you're going to order something online (e.g., water filters, food supplies, or solar batteries), ask a neighbour or coworker if they'd like to order with you. This may not result in deeper conversations right away, but it does foster trust and opens the door to further discussion later.
- **Exchange valuable skills and services.** If you know something useful, this is a great way to connect with others. For example, you could do a skills mapping exercise and discuss what someone does for a living.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — preparing together can improve trust and relationships.

### 5. CREATE A SMALL SUPPORT NETWORK THAT ISN'T FORMAL

If you have good relationships with a few people, you could gently suggest to them that it might be a good idea to form a small informal support network where people can help each other during a crisis. This does not have to be a formal group; simply knowing who to contact in an emergency.

- **Agreements can be extremely simple.** For example, if a power outage lasts more than two days, you exchange information, and if someone is without drinking water, you notify each other and share if possible. If the crisis worsens, you help each other buy food and find transportation.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — a support network does not have to be large or formal; simply a few people who understand that they can help each other in an emergency.



Finding a community does not imply that you should start actively seeking new friends right away. Many people prepare for crises quietly, but if you start small, you can gather a trusted group of people to help you prepare for a crisis. **Do you know at least one or two people who you could share information and collaborate with during a crisis? If not, this is the time to think about it.** You can also find these individuals in your community through Crisis Research Centre trainings.

## 5.2 HOW DO YOU FIND PEOPLE HAVE A SIMILAR VISION?

**Take the initiative and talk to people.** Begin with simple conversations in the stairwell with your neighbours or coworkers. Ask them if they have considered what to do in the event of a prolonged power outage or if they have any supplies at home. You might discover that one of your neighbours is already preparing for a crisis, and you can share your knowledge.

**Find some local hobbies and workshops.** Many towns and cities offer some civil protection trainings, have some crisis preparedness workshops, and even survival skills classes. If there isn't anything like this in your area, you could take the initiative and ask your local library, cultural center, or town hall to help organize such a workshop.

**Join a local online group.** For example, social media can help you find local groups that focus on community safety and crisis preparedness. Facebook groups with people from your city or neighbourhood can also be a good source of information.

**Set up meeting points.** If you already have a small group of people interested in crisis preparedness, you can schedule regular meetings to go over plans and prepare for emergencies. These meetings can also be conducted online.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — if you don't know where to begin, have a small "crisis awareness conversation" with people close to you as a starting point. Inquire if they have emergency supplies or know what to do if they lose communication.



### 5.3 WHY IS IT USEFUL TO KNOW YOUR AREA'S OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES?

Most people don't consider where their water comes from, how their food gets to the store, or what resources are available in their immediate vicinity.

In a crisis, however, ignorance can quickly become a major issue, because when the power goes out, communications fail, and stores close, **those who are aware of their surroundings and options do better**. You do not need to be an active member of the community to do this; simply having practical knowledge will help you cope better in an emergency.

#### WHERE TO FIND WATER AND HOW TO PURIFY IT?

Water is the most important resource for survival, but its availability is easily disrupted during a crisis. When the tap water supply fails, alternative sources must be used. Public taps and fountains may continue to function in some emergencies, but do you know where they are? They can be found in parks, bus stations, and public squares, but it is best to map them out ahead of time. Remember that they are closed during the winter, and if the water company is unable to supply water, the taps and fountains will be dry. In the event of a major power outage, they do not function.

Rainwater collecting is another effective way to replenish supplies; if appropriate containers or access to a rainwater pipe drain are available, the water can be collected and later filtered and treated. If there are any **natural water bodies** in your area, such as rivers, lakes, or springs, mark them on a map right away and see if they are accessible without transportation. For springs, use the website [allikad.info](http://allikad.info)

To avoid illness, drink purified water. One of the safest methods is to **boil the water for at least 5 minutes** in order to kill bacteria and viruses. **Water purification tablets** are a lightweight and simple way to disinfect water, eliminating most germs. If it is not possible to boil the water, a simple filter can be made by straining it through cloth, sand, and stones before adding purification tablets or chemical agents. Sports and hiking speciality shops sell **hiking or water purification filtration systems for bottles**, which can quickly and effectively purify water by removing the majority of harmful particles.

Remember that water purification tablets contain a strong chlorine compound, and prolonged use can lead to health problems. It is thus advantageous to have a variety of water purification products.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — download an offline map app on your smart device and mark possible water sources and, if possible, visit them to see if they are accessible (all year round).

## ARE SHOPS THE ONLY FOOD SOURCES AVAILABLE?

During a crisis, **grocery stores are often the first to run out of supplies**, and disruptions may result in a limited selection of food. It is thus worthwhile to look into alternative food sources early on. **Markets and smaller grocery stores** may be better stocked than large supermarkets, as many people shop at larger malls first.

It's also worth looking into whether there are any **community gardens** or greenhouses in your area that grow vegetables and can be used as a food source in an emergency. If you live in an area with private homes or gardens, your neighbours may have their own gardens that you can trade or use to call for help in an emergency. In some cases, **food banks and Points of Invincibility** may be able to provide food assistance, but their supplies may be limited or unavailable. Because card payments are disrupted when power goes out, it is critical to **keep cash in smaller banknotes** so that you can buy or exchange goods when needed.

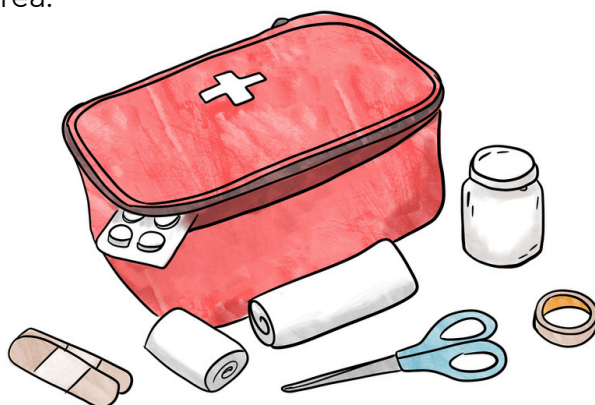
**PRACTICAL TIP** — walk around your local area and find out where there are smaller food shops, markets or potential food production areas. If necessary, write down their locations.

## HOW CAN YOU ENSURE ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE AND MEDICINES?

When **pharmacies close or medicines run out**, access to medical care is significantly reduced. This is why it is critical to have an adequate supply of **essential medications**, such as pain relievers, anti-inflammatory drugs, and other first-aid items. If you rely on prescription medications, you should have at least a month's supply because supplies can take time to replenish.

In addition to pharmacies, **community health centres** or **first aid posts** operated by **volunteer medical groups** may be able to assist. It may also be useful to know whether there is a **medical professional** in your area who you can contact in an emergency. **First aid skills are essential**; if you haven't practised them in a long time, consider training or learning the fundamentals through online courses.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — find out where the nearest pharmacies, health centres and alternative help points are. Write down their addresses if necessary. Find out if there are any voluntary medical aid groups in the area.



## SECURITY AND COMMUNITY COOPERATION DURING CRISIS SITUATIONS

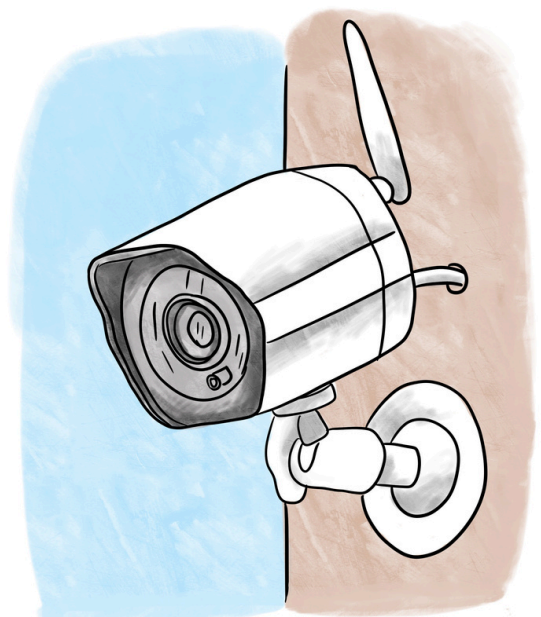
When official **law enforcement agencies** are overwhelmed, community cooperation can help keep the peace. While being socially active is not required, getting to know **your neighbours** at least a little bit can be beneficial when exchanging information or seeking assistance. You do not have to become friends with them, but knowing who lives nearby can help you cooperate during a crisis. If your apartment building has security cameras, they can help prevent crime and collect evidence as needed. If the situation becomes dangerous, a **neighbourhood watch** or **community patrol** can be established in the area, allowing people to share information about suspicious activity.

**PRACTICAL TIP** — consider whether your building or street has security measures or people who could help in a crisis.



In a crisis, a **person's ability to cope** is determined by his or her knowledge of local **opportunities and resources**. Water, food, medicine, and security are basic needs that must be addressed right away. **Public drinking water points, markets, pharmacies, and Points of Invincibility** are essential during a crisis, but they are useless if you don't know where they are or how to get to them.

The most effective way to prepare for a crisis is to map **your area and identify potential resources**. You can save the locations of the places you need in advance in a map app on your smartphone, or you can walk around your house to see what options are available. Being aware of an emergency early on can help save lives and reduce panic by allowing you to act quickly and confidently.



## 6. CAN YOU MANAGE ON YOUR OWN TODAY?

Before you take any action, you should conduct a realistic assessment of your current situation. Are you ready for a crisis that will leave your city without power, shops empty, and taps without water? Let's go through the checklist:

### WATER

- I know where to go (nearest natural water source, water distribution point) if the tap water stops working.
- I have water purification tablets or filters to purify water.
- I have at least 2 litres of drinking water per person per day for at least a week, ideally longer.

### FOOD

- I have at least a week's worth of easily prepared, long-lasting food, better if for up to 4 weeks. At least some of the food should be something one can eat right away without cooking involved.
- I know how to cook without electricity — that is, with a gas stove, a fire or a campfire.
- I stock low-space, nutrient-dense, long-keeping foods, including canned and dried foods (tuna, canned meat, lentils), energy-dense foods (freeze-dried special camping foods, energy bars, nuts), and carbohydrates (e.g. oatmeal, rice, buckwheat).

### HEATING

- Should the heating fail in winter, I have thermal blankets, warm clothing, a sleeping bag, even a tent to set up in the room.
- I have enough warm clothes and layered clothing to manage without heating if necessary, for example, a waterproof and windproof top layer, and I have at least considered buying special thermals.
- I have merino wool underwear that keeps one warm and wicks moisture, as well as cotton and fleece layers that are warm and breathable.

### COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOURCES

- I have a crank emergency radio to obtain official information.
- Even without internet and phones, I know how to get important information.
- In case of communication failure, I have a written contact list and an agreed meeting place with loved ones.

### FIRST AID AND MEDICINES

- I have a full first-aid kit and know how to use it if necessary.
- I have enough of the medicines I require on a daily basis (if I take prescription medications, I have at least one month's supply).
- I can clean and dress wounds, as well as administer first aid without major confusion.

## PERSONAL SECURITY AND EVACUATION

- I know when it is best to stay at home and when to leave.
- I have an evacuation bag packed with essential and useful items for at least 72 hours.
- I know exactly where I'd go if I had to leave the city.

● ● ● If you have less than 50% YES answers,  
it's a sign to improve your preparedness! ● ● ●

Begin with the basics (water, food, and communication) and progress step by step. Even small preparations will help you cope better during a crisis! You may not be fully prepared for a crisis, but that is completely normal! The important thing is to continue to improve your crisis preparedness. Prepare for a crisis by knowing what to do and what supplies and skills you'll need. Prioritize water and food supplies, followed by heating and communication. Don't overlook evacuation preparations; it's better to be safe than sorry!

### 6.1 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO AFTER READING THIS TEXTBOOK?

People put off crisis planning because they think it's expensive, complicated, and takes up space. Actually, you can prepare **smartly** and **cheaply**. After reading this textbook, you'll know how to handle crises. Knowledge alone won't help — you must apply it.

● ● ● In what ways might you improve your preparation?  
Start with small but significant actions. ● ● ●

- **How can you guarantee water supply?** Try adding a 5 or 7-litre bottle of water to your (also online) shopping cart. Continue until each family member has at least 2 litres to ensure a daily water supply for a week, up to a month if possible.
- **Food shopping without spending a lot?** Add one canned, dry (rice, pasta, etc.), or freeze-dried food to your shopping list. Slow stockpiling saves money and builds up a supply.
- **Are you prepared for emergencies with enough lighting and information?** Have flashlights or headlamps that charge via USB. Emergency radios should be hand-cranked and rechargeable or battery-powered (have spare batteries). Candles and the tools for lighting them should be secure and easy to find.
- **Should the gas or water supply fail, what follows?** Ask your apartment building manager how you might best manage your home through an outage.
- **Do you have a backup plan in case you lose communication?** Create a simple plan of action and arrange a meeting place with family or friends in case the phones are out of order.
- **Have you tried cooking without electricity?** See how you could create one dinner just from a portable stove or another alternative. Try building your own campfire, say, with a fire stick, while summer hiking (with adequate precaution). This way you will know what else you should learn or stockpile.

- **Could you manage without the internet?** Try spending a day without internet and electricity to see if you have other means to obtain crucial knowledge which can guide your decision-making.
- **Do you have enough warm clothes for a period without heating?** Check whether you have enough warm clothes to live without heating for a week if necessary.
- **Do you talk with your neighbors?** Talk to one of your neighbors; avoid discussing crisis readiness; simply get to know them. Even a brief contact can be quite helpful in an emergency.
- **How can you learn practical survival skills?** Participate in training courses on crisis readiness and pick up first aid skills; these can literally save lives.

If preparing for a crisis appears to be a daunting task at first, rest assured that it does not have to be. You don't have to completely change your life or do everything at once today. **Small steps will quickly lead to significantly better preparedness.**

Practice and test your knowledge. Build your own support network. Keep your knowledge current and learn more! These simple steps require little time and money, but they provide a solid foundation for being better prepared.

## 6.2 YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THE FIRST STEP!

By the end of this textbook, you will have accomplished something that many people put off: you will have begun to consider your crisis preparedness. That's a significant step! You took the time to become aware, which gives you a significant advantage. Preparing for crises does not imply that you should fear or expect the worst. On the contrary, it means that you can remain calmer, more confident, and more resilient regardless of what happens in life. Consider it a practical skill that gives you greater control and independence. When you know you can handle yourself, you'll have more confidence in other aspects of your life.

● ● ● **Why is this important from the community perspective?** ● ● ●

If you are more prepared, your family and community will benefit as well as you will. Imagine your friend is unsure of what to do should the electricity go off or your neighbour lacks drinking water. You can help them if you are aware and ready. Remember; we are not alone. While in daily life you may not get along with your neighbours, supporting one another during a crisis can be the means by which everyone manages better.

● ● ● **You've already come a long way!** ● ● ●

Now, briefly consider **where you were before reading this textbook**. Had you ever considered a battery bank or a hand crank pocket generator to help you charge several smart devices when the power goes out? Did you know how vital a water supply truly is? If not, you already know something rather significant about crisis preparedness.

The one question now is: **are you prepared and ready to act?**

You already have everything you need to start:

- **Your common sense** to evaluate problems and come to answers.
- **The people** around you with whom you can communicate and collaborate.
- **The knowledge** of how to be better prepared.
- **The ability** to take one small step at a time and move towards a more informed and safer future.



**In a year, where would you like to be?**



When you consider next year, think about what you could achieve in terms of being prepared. Achieving this begins with a straightforward **decision to act**. There is nothing to lose – preparedness simply means being conscious and ready to take small, wise actions to improve your chance of survival and getting by in a crisis.

You know **you have done something very valuable for yourself and your community** if at some point you realise you have a certain crisis reserve, you know who and where to turn to for information in a crisis, and can help others to the best of your ability.



## AUTHOR'S EPILOGUE

HANNES NAGEL is a co-founder of the Crisis Research Centre, a Junior Research Fellow at Tallinn University's School of Governance, Law, and Society, and a researcher on community-based civil protection. In Haabersti he is one of the initiators of the district's community-based civil protection K-24 project and Crisis Skills Training Programmes.



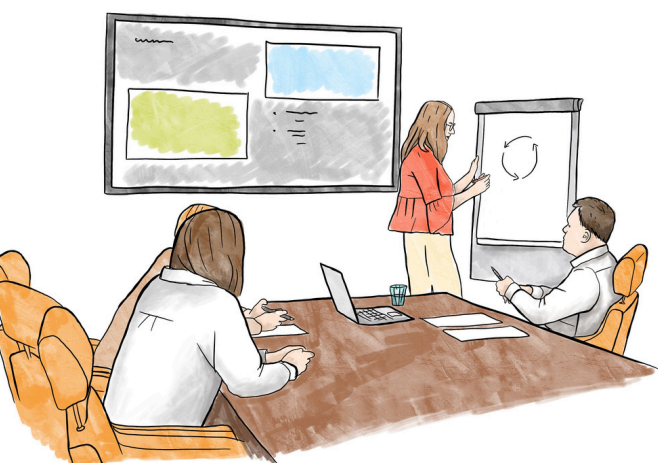
*“Haabersti is a typical apartment building-dominated neighbourhood in Estonia, where people face similar issues throughout the country: a lack of space, as well as a lack of knowledge and skills to improve crisis preparedness. In 2025, the city district had more than 52,000 people.*

*Because Haabersti has little civil protection infrastructure now and in the future, as well as a lack of internal security institutions such as police and rescue depots, the K-24 project activities supported in empowering district residents through community-based standardised crisis stocks and crisis skills training.*

*Over 400 local residents completed our crisis skills training programme during the spring of 2025. This textbook will also help the current reader, his or her family, and circle of friends improve their future individual crisis preparedness, thanks to the input of local residents gathered during project activities and discussion evenings, and will continue to do so in the years to come.*



*Happy reading and crisis preparedness building!”*



When you live in a city, you rely on many things every day, including electricity, water, transportation, shops, and the mobile network. What happens if one of these stops working? If it persists for an extended period of time, life can become increasingly complicated.

Most people who live in apartment buildings are unprepared for even a short-term emergency, let alone weeks of self-reliance.

This is where both **INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY** preparedness come into play, and everyone can benefit from the capabilities of their municipality and country.

It is difficult to do it alone, but when people work together to share information, resources, and support one another, it is much easier to deal with unpleasant situations. How can you make this as simple, cheap, and comfortable as possible?

For example, begin small:

- **PREPARE YOURSELF** – even small things like water supplies, first aid training, and crisis plans can be extremely beneficial.
- **KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS** – even a small amount of cooperation can go a long way in times of crisis.
- **USE SIMPLE AND WISE SOLUTIONS** – practical and space-saving supplies don't have to be expensive or complicated.
- **ACT CALMLY AND STEP BY STEP** – achieving crisis preparedness is a marathon, not a sprint; it requires awareness, patience, and a series of small steps.

If everyone contributes a little and the community becomes more aware, the entire urban area, regardless of location, will become more united and crisis-resistant.

Remember that **COOPERATION & AWARENESS** make us all more crisis-prepared and stronger!

**Crisis Research Centre**  
Think forward, think back!



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