

Chapter 4.2: Rescue Curve for Preppers ¹

The rescue curve was first developed in 1992 by Kauffman and Carlson (1992) (Figure 4.1). Since then, it has gone through several refinements. Although the model was originally developed in the context of outdoor activities, the model was generalized to non-outdoor activities (Kauffman, 2003). It has been applied to fire safety, rock climbing, motor boating, and automobile driving. For preppers, the rescue curve is a way of thinking and approaching rescue. It helps frame why preppers prep and why they need to be self-reliant. They know that once an incident occurs, they can easily slide through the different phases to injury, damage, or loss.

The Rescue Curve answers the question why preppers are preppers. Preppers are self-reliant. They abhor or seek to avoid rescue by other outside your group (i.e. government rescuers) (Figure 4.1). Because they are self-reliant, they focus on prevention measures. If a disaster occurs, what can they do to rescue themselves (i.e. self-rescue) or what can their family do (i.e. rescue by other in your group). Conceptually, the rescue curve provides a justification for preppers prepping.

The Rescue Curve states that once an incident occurs that can result in injury, damage or loss, as time increases and without intervention, the probability of survival or in not having injury, damage, or loss falls from near certainty (1.0) to zero. The first line of defense against injury, damage or loss includes: prevention and safety, self-rescue, rescue by others in your group, rescue by others outside your group.” (Kauffman and Carlson 1992, Kauffman 2003, and Martin et al 2006)

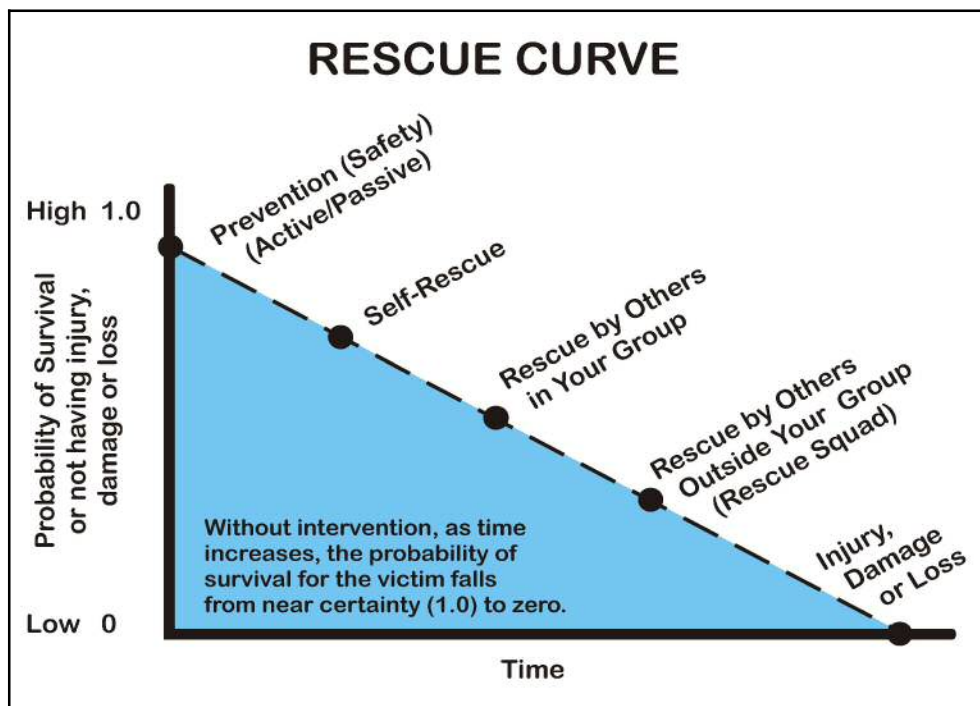


Figure 4.1: Rescue Curve

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Prevention – A potential victim's first line of defense is *safety and prevention*. These are the measures taken prior to an incident occurring. They include the active and passive measures that a person takes to avoid a rescue situation or if a rescue situation occurs to better help you survive the situation. Actually, prevention includes those measures taken in case something happens. In and of itself, the act of prepping falls into this category. All the preparations taken prior to a crisis are a form of prevention. Building a bunker, stocking it with food, water and other supplies, and learning about what to do in time of a crisis are all acts by the prepper that fall into this category.

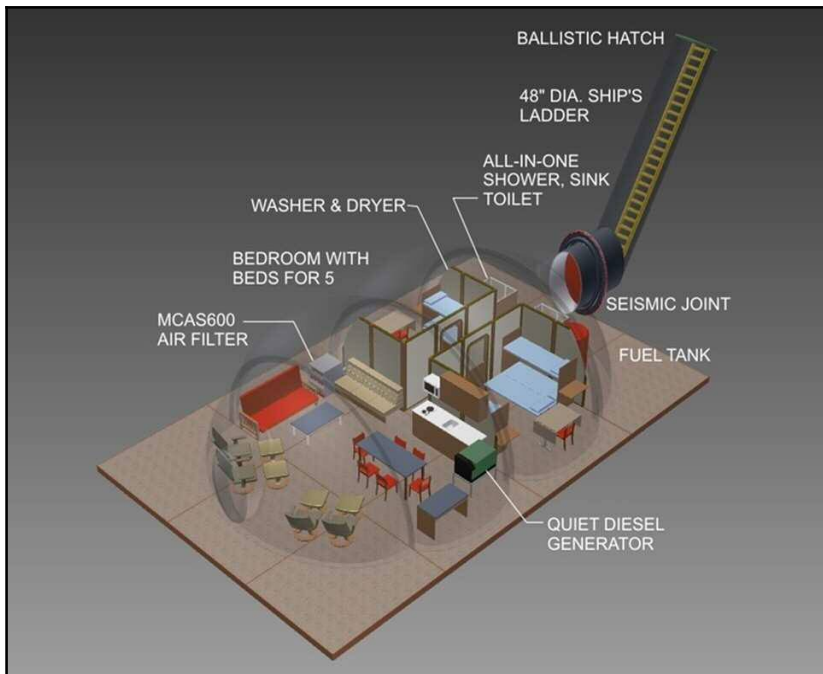


Figure 4.2: Prevention – The bunker is a classic example of prevention. Source: Internet Photo.

Passive Measures – are those measures a person takes that normally don't help prevent the initial incident but help the person in any or all of the rescue phases if an incident occurs. Normally, for the climber, the use of ropes and protection are only for protection against a fall. Ropes and protection don't aid in the actual climb. Actually, in an unpublished study by this author, climbers indicated that ropes and protection actually interfered with their climbing experience. The paddler's life jacket aids the paddler if they come out of their boat. It doesn't provide much benefit otherwise. The spare tire has little value to the driver until there is a flat time. Actually, in time of emergency, the spare tire can be set on fire to signal location for rescuers. It burns with a thick black smoke. Be sure to deflate it first.

For preppers, their first line of defense are passive measures. Passive measures include all the measures taken prior to the disaster. Most prepping involves passive measures. Building a bunker or stocking a basement with a cache of food, water, medical and other supplies typifies this approach (Figure 4.2). It includes the knowledge, skills and abilities learned about prepping. For the most part, barrier analysis discussed in the previous chapter complements this approach.

Active Measures – Active measures are those measures a person takes to help prevent the incident from occurring. A climber's climbing ability, a paddler's paddling ability, or a driver's driving ability are examples of active safety measures. The participants use of their knowledge, skills, and abilities to avoid the rescue situation. For preppers, the most notable active measure is bugging out where the prepper travels to a safer location. It is avoidance of the natural or man-made crisis that can inflict harm.

Incident – An incident was defined in the previous chapter on barrier analysis. There is a *hazard* or *event* (i.e. disaster) which can result in an *energy transfer* to harm the *target* (i.e. prepper). If the barrier(s) used to protect the target are *less than adequate* an incident or accident can occur. Last, there can be *multiple causes*.

For preppers, there are two levels of incidents. The first level is the *macro* or *original incident*. It is the disaster for which preppers prep. Using the *Surviving the Unexpected Emergency Model*, these disaster events can include hurricanes, floods earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanos wildfires, snowstorm, riots and war.



Figure 4.3: Incident – The Cumberland River flooding Nashville in 2010. Source: Internet Photo.

The second level is the *micro incident* or the accident that occurs during macro incident. Turn to the *planning side* of the *Surviving the Unexpected Emergency Model*. Faulty food preservation or food spoilage, tainted water, improper sanitation, shelter failures, communications failures, etc. are examples micro incidents that can easily occur during the larger incident. It includes trips and falls, and a host of things that can occur in a new environment.

Self-rescue – An incident has occurred. The first level of defense is *self-rescue*. It is what you can do to rescue yourself (Figure 4.4). In terms of the accident process, a transfer of energy most likely has occurred. Regarding elapsed time, the victim is the first person who can respond and assist. A climber falls and drops several feet as the rope suspends his weight. Reaching out, the climber grabs hold of the rock face and continues on with the climb. The paddler uses an Eskimo roll or swims with his boat to the shore. The swiftwater swimmer uses “defensive swimming” and swims to shore (Figure 4.5). Taking the spare tire from the trunk, the driver changes the flat tire and moves on down the road.

On the macro level, self-rescue for the prepper, is the use or implementation of the preparations taken for the anticipated disaster. It is using the bunker, the cache of food and water, and other measures to protect oneself. Also, it is the knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences gained to aid



Figure 4.4: Self-rescue – Two paddlers in a boat during hurricane Katrina. (Source: Getty)

the prepper in surviving. Anyone who has used flint and steel or a bow drill to create a fire knows that the time to learn how to do it is not during an emergency.

On the micro level self-rescue is what the victim can do to rescue himself. This is an energy transfer leading to a potential accident. What can the victim do to prevent harm. For example, what does the victim do if there is an accident cooking, an accident while traveling on an ATV, getting lost or disoriented while hunting, or some other incident. Self-rescue is catching the item before it spills, righting the ATV and moving on, or reorienting oneself and reaching the destination safely.

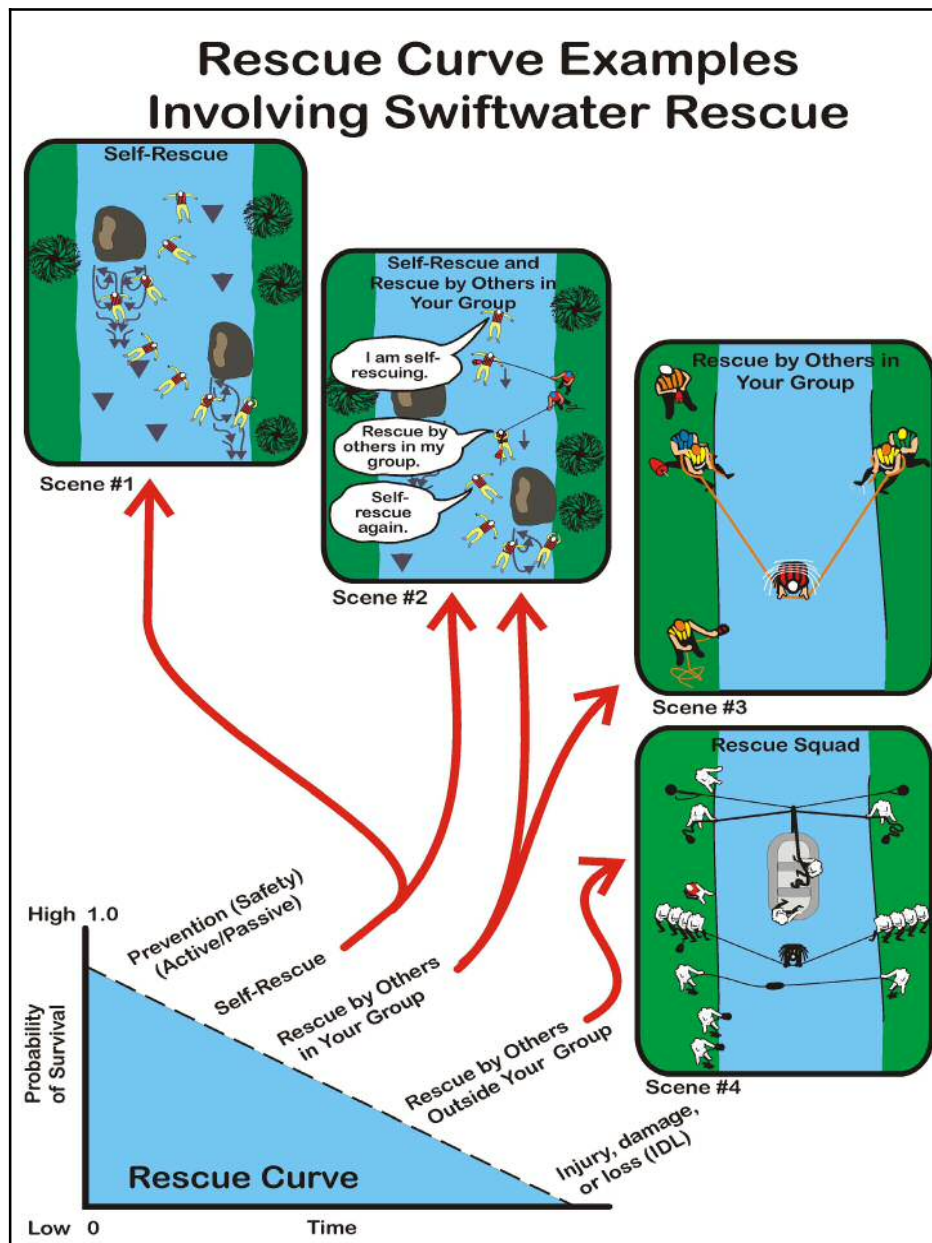


Figure 4.5: Rescue Curve for Swiftwater Rescue – The four diagrams indicate the difference between self-rescue, rescue by others in your group, and rescue by others outside your group for swiftwater rescue. Note in the second scene how a simple decision by the swimmer can move the swimmer from self-rescue to rescue by others in your group. (Source: Kauffman, 2015)

Rescue by Others in Your Group – *Rescue by others in your group* is the next line of defense. In terms of time, it is usually others in your group who can render assistance most quickly. If the climber is belayed, the belayer may lower the victim to a safe area. A member of your group throws a victim a throw bag line or paddles over and extends their stern and grab loop to the swimmer and then paddles them to shore. The passenger in your car helps you change the tire or perhaps assists by directing traffic.

In the second scene in Figure 4.5, a member of the group on shore throws a rope to the victim swimming (rescue by others in your group). It is interesting to note that this simple act transfers the swimmer from self-rescue to rescue by others in your group. Regardless, the victim is still responsible for his actions and safety. In the scenario, the victim realizes that swinging in on the rope is not in his best interest. He lets go and reverts back to self-rescue. Although there is a tendency for the victim to be helpless, the victim still has a responsibility and the ability to act on his or her behalf.

On the macro level, there is often not much difference between self-rescue and rescue by others in your group for preppers. The family rides out the disaster together. They hunker down together in their bunker, basement or home.

On the micro level, rescue by others in your group is what your family or others in your group do to rescue the victim. If there is an accident cooking, the family member renders first aid. If the ATV overturns, the family searches for the victim, rights the vehicle and renders first aid if needed. If the victim becomes lost or disoriented during hunting, the family may effect a search or simply call on a walkie talkie and provide directions.

As a sidebar note, it is important for preppers to have overlapping skills. If victim is the only person with first aid training, it may be difficult for the victim to render first aid. Comparatively, others in your group will only have the ability to render marginal assistance to the victim if an incident occurs.

Rescue by Others Outside Your Group – *Rescue by others outside your group* includes the rescue efforts of the rescue squad or EMS (Figure 4.6). Also, it includes people passing by, other family groups, or in other groups of people. The fallen climber is injured or the rescue escalates beyond the capabilities of the other climbers. A rescue squad with specialized training is summoned. Regarding the flat tire example, a tow truck is summoned. It arrives and the operator changes the tire onsite or tows the car to the local garage where the tire is fixed.

In a recreational setting, the rescue squad usually has large amounts of resources available to them in terms of equipment and personnel. In the whitewater rescue depicted in Figure 4.5, this is the primary difference between the rescues depicted in scene three and four. Both scenes are the same rescue. The difference is that the paddlers (rescue by others in your group) are limited by the rescue equipment available to them and personnel. For example, if there are five people in the group, four people are available to aid in the rescue. Four people can easily be used in setting up a stabilization line depicted in the second scene but not much else. If they carry two carabiners each, they have a total of eight carabiners to use in the rescue. In contrast, the rescue squad arrives on the scene with lots of equipment and personnel (scene four). It requires more coordination and control and the incident command model is usually employed.

On the macro-level, rescue by the rescue squad might occur if the bunker fails, the cache of food and water become destroyed or simply emptied. Some of the nuances are discussed further in the bugging-out chapter, Rescuers are there to rescue victims. Problems can occur when the rescuers are there to rescue the victim when the victim doesn't want to be rescued. Then there are problems associated with government run centers.



Figure 4.6: Rescue by Others Outside Your Group – A helicopter rescue during hurricane Katrina. (Source: AFP)

Also, rescue by others outside your group can include other families. It is not unusual for families to band together in emergency situations and assist each other in time of trouble.

On the micro-level, the cooking accident requires outside medical assistance. The ATV accident requires outside assistance. The same is for the lost hunter.

For preppers, there are several other lessons to extrapolate. For the prepper, rescue by others outside your group usually involves calling 911 and summoning EMS assistance. This assumes that in a time of crisis, EMS will be able to respond. The magnitude of the crisis may prevent them from responding. They may be overwhelmed with the number of calls, they can't respond in a timely manner. At least, they may need to triage their calls. Physically, they may not be able to respond. Bridges out, debris, flood waters, unplowed snow and other impediments may physically impede their movement. Or as noted above, their task may be to rescue large numbers of people and transport them centers where they are warehoused.

For preppers, this situation ties back directly to the prevention and safety phase. Intuitively, preppers recognize that in a time of crisis rescue squads and EMS may not be forthcoming. This is stated with no disrespect to them either. This is why preppers emphasize the prevention and safety phase. This is why they prep in the first place. It is because they recognize that in a time of crisis, they are most likely on their own. In addition, preppers believe that in a time of crisis, self-sufficiency can aid in your survival. Part of this attitude is derived from the fact that the rescue squad and EMS may not be available and in part, it may be due to their prevailing attitude that it is their job to rescue you, even when you don't want to be rescued. Over reliance on the rescue squad is discussed later in this chapter under the 911 Syndrome.

Injury, Damage, or Loss – If no one rescues the victim, *additional injury, damage, or loss* normally occurs. If severe enough, death can result. If the climber isn't injured from the initial fall, they will experience additional injury or even death without intervention. The same is true for the paddler. They may eventually flush through the rapids and naturally wash up on the shore. In Figure 4.5, if no one rescues the foot-entrapped victim in scenes three and four, the victim will most likely drown. If no one intervenes on behalf of the driver, they too have few alternatives available to them.

For preppers, this is why preppers prep in the first place. An incident can very quickly escalate into a situation where no one can render assistance and some form of injury, damage, or loss occurs. For this reason, knowledgeable people in the field start their preparations by being heavily invested in the preparation and safety phase. They seek to prevent the incident before it happens and if it does occur, they seek to handle it quickly and efficiently. By the very act of preparing, preppers have already front-loaded their preparation efforts by being prepared in the safety and preparation phase.

As noted, through no fault of their own, EMS and rescue squads may not be able to act in a time of crisis. They may be overwhelmed and somewhat helpless themselves. This emphasizes the need to front load preparations in the earlier phases of the rescue curve. In addition, potentially not having EMS and rescue services emphasizes the need for self-sufficiency and for thorough pre-preparation.

Available Resources and the Rescue Curve

The rescue curve is useful in helping to explain the resources available to or impacting the rescuers. Generally, there are initially fewer potential rescuers available for the rescue. For the climbers, you might have two instructors and ten youth. Although you may have twelve people, only two are well trained unless one of the instructors is also the victim. A paddling group of five or six is not an unusual group size. That leaves five people to conduct the rescue assuming one person in your group is the victim. This is not a lot of people for a whitewater rescue. In contrast, changing a tire by yourself is doable.

Also, there is usually a difference in the amount of equipment available as well as the type of speciality rescue equipment available. Although the climber takes a lot of equipment with them, they usually don't have the rescue pulleys and stoke's litter with them. The rescue squad does. The paddler group is lucky to have two carabineers per person and several rescue bags available for a rescue. In contrast, the rescue squad usually arrives with large amounts of specialized rescue equipment. Open the back of your car trunk and look at your spare tire and the jack. It is minimal. If the lug nut was put on too tightly, the short wrench provided with the jack may be insufficient to remove the lug nuts. As a sidebar, this is why this author carries a half-inch breaker bar and socket in the trunk. Compare this to the amount and type of specialized equipment on the back of the tow truck that arrives to help rescue you.

In contrast, preppers strive to be prepared for an eventual crisis. They understand the need to have sufficient emergency resources available to them and they prepare accordingly. They understand that the rescue by other phase may not be available to them, they may be overwhelmed and not able to respond, or their response significantly delayed because the crisis prevents them from traveling. Where the recreationist may not have a lot of rescue equipment resources because it increases weight and bulk and limits their performance in the activity, preppers are not normally encumbered with these type of constraints. In a very real sense, this point underscores the purpose for prepping. And this is why preppers prep, to avoid the last alternative of having to rely on governmental agencies that may not be able to fully provide the services to which people are accustomed.

911 Syndrome

The rescue curve has additional implications. The “*911 Syndrome*” focuses on the difference between inexperienced or “activity for a day” participants and the more serious or more specialized participants. It is called the 911 Syndrome because the victim starts their rescue efforts by calling 911 on the telephone. In prepping, the 911 Syndrome the prevailing approach of many people in our society today. They wait

for the government to tell them what to do in time of an emergency. It is like calling 911 and waiting for help to arrive.

The more specialized participant tends to start their rescue efforts with safety and prevention. They focus on their equipment, developing their skills, and rescue techniques. They know that if a potential incident occurs, their first line of defense rests with their self-rescue. For the kayaker, it may be the Eskimo roll or for the climber it may simply be on-rope. The more specialized participant knows that if they don't self-rescue, they can often move very quickly through the rescue curve stages and quickly run out of options. For this reason, more specialized or experienced participants tend to front load their experience with safety and prevention. They know their survival is dependent on it.

In contrast, inexperienced or "activity for a day" participants tend to begin their rescue efforts with rescue by people outside their group. In terms of the rescue curve, they begin their rescue efforts with their last option, rescue by others outside of their group. For them, they have few options left if they aren't rescued. They rely almost totally on the resource manager or the rescue squad for their survival. Hence, the term "911 Syndrome." They call 911 and hope someone comes and rescue them.

Because of their lack of planning, they quickly skip over the first three phases of rescue (i.e. safety and prevention, self-rescue, and rescue by others in your group) and immediately go to the fourth phase, rescue by others outside your group. They don't have the skill, knowledge, or training. Most likely they don't have the rescue equipment nor do they know how to use it. Last, their attitude is one where it is the responsibility of someone else to rescue them (Kauffman and Carlson, 1992, Kauffman, 2003, Kauffman et.al. 1991).



Figure 4.7: Probable 911 Syndrome – The group sits on the roof top waiting for rescue by helicopter or boat. From the lack of resources on the rook, this group most likely qualify for the 911 Syndrome. Also, note the oil slick in the water from the cars. (Source: AFP)

A similar parallel applies for prepping (Figure 4.7). Unfortunately, it may be the rescue by others outside your group that might not be available to the non-prepper, the very group from which the non-prepper is expecting help. Non-preppers quickly skip over the first three phases expecting EMS and rescue personnel to assist them in time of a crisis. As previously noted, they may not be able to provide assistance. In this case, the non-prepper quickly passes into the last phase where injury, damage, or loss occurs. With few evident resources, the group sitting on the roof in Figure 4.5 are waiting for rescue during hurricane Katrina. They are waiting for someone else to come and rescue them. If no one comes, they will most likely perish. In contrast, by the very act of prepping, preppers have made a concerted effort to avoid the 911 syndrome. Some of these reasons are described in the next section.

Rescue by Others Outside Your Group

For preppers, rescue by others outside your group has additional implications (Figure 4.8). As previously noted, EMS and rescue squad services may not be available. In terms of the rescue curve, non-preppers and preppers can easily pass over this phase and go directly to the injury, damage, or loss phase.

Preppers may voluntarily choose to pass over this phase which is why they prep. Second, there may be significant differences in

the goals between the rescuers and preppers that can easily lead to conflict. Third, for well prepared preppers, the services offered by government providers may be less than adequate and marginal at best.



Figure 4.8: Rescue by Others Outside Your Group – Living arrangements in the Superdome during the hurricane, Katrina. Authorities had their hands full simply maintaining order and feeding people. Note the people sleeping sideways on the seats. (Source: Reuters)

In his post game analysis of surviving Katrina, Fr Frog (2008) notes the difference in goals between preppers and the rescue squad and how it can easily lead to conflict. Rescuers arrive on the scene with a mind set to rescue helpless victims who appreciate being saved. In contrast, the preppers may have no desire to be rescued. They are self-sufficient and not in need of rescue. Rejecting rescue can lead to conflict. In the view of the rescuers, the victim is not playing the game according to the script. The rescuers can become insistent on your rescue. That is what they are there for, and you like everyone else, needs help. They can even become hostile because you are not doing what they want you to do. For preppers, the corollary is that if you don't want to be rescued, don't make yourself known to rescuers flying overhead or passing by. In this case, avoidance is a good strategy for avoiding potential conflict.

In time of a crisis, if you didn't prepare for the crisis and if you don't bug out to a safe location, you may quickly slide into the third phase where you rely on governmental services. You may find this experience less than satisfactory. This is not to demean what they do. They have their problems also. They need to maintain order. They need to warehouse large groups of people for which they know very little of anything about anyone. It can be a daunting task. Temper the following account with this in mind. Fr. Frog is writing about his lessons learned after Katrina. Regardless, it strikes a certain truth.

13. **Don't rely on government-run shelters if at all possible.** Your weapons WILL be confiscated (yes, including pocket-knives, kitchen knives, and Leatherman-type tools); you will be crowded into close proximity with anyone and everyone (including some nice folks, but also including drug addicts, released convicts, gang types, and so on); you will be under the authority of the people running the shelter, who WILL call on law enforcement and military personnel to keep order (including stopping you leaving if you want to); and so on. Much, much better to have a place to go to, a plan to get there, and the supplies you need to do so on your own.....

.... I hope that these "lessons learned" are of use to you. I'm more and more convinced that in the event of a disaster, I must rely on myself, and a few friends, and never count on Government or relief organizations for the help I'll need. Also, I'm determined to bug out for a fairly long distance from a disaster in my home area, so as to be clear of the post-disaster complications that may arise. Once again (as it has countless times throughout history), we see that to rely on others (let alone Government) for your own safety and security is to invite complications at best, disaster at worst. (FrFrog, 2008)

Also, what Fr Frog (2008) echos in his passage is the need for self-reliance and the avoidance, if possible, of rescue by others outside of your group. You may not know the quality of the experience being provided to you in a government run shelter. In contrast, you may find being prepared with an emphasis on prevention and safety a better alternative.

Summary

The rescue curve was developed for outdoor recreationists. Its message is one of being prepared because once an incident occurs it can quickly escalate to the last phase where injury, damage, or loss can occur. Intuitively, preppers understand the rescue curve and the need to be self-reliant in time of a pending crisis. The rescue curve provides a conceptual framework for and a reason why preppers prep. It provides a reason why preppers might not want to rely upon governmental services and rescue by others outside their group. Why rely on others when you can rely on yourself and on your preparations? The first proposition of self-reliance is what can a person and their family do for themselves. It is what prepping is all about.

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