

# **SURVIVAL**

## **How a Culture of Preparedness Can Save You and Your Family from Disasters**

In **SURVIVAL: How a Culture of Preparedness Can Save You and Your Family from Disasters**, General Russel L. Honoré uses his personal and professional background and experiences—with authority and humor—to demonstrate how our country once was, how we are now, and how we can do much better for ourselves in the face of danger. He is a born leader with all of the responsibility to give readers the straight talk on what he saw and learned during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and how to prepare for any type of disaster, be it natural or man-made.

General Honoré's **SURVIVAL** is a teaching tool for developing a culture of preparedness. The following are just a few among the many instructive and illustrative points and ideas he promotes about enlightened leadership—and enlightened individualism—*before* a crisis or catastrophe strikes:

- When a hurricane hits at the end of the month, the poor, elderly, and disabled people who depend on government checks will not have the money to evacuate.
- Police stations, hospitals, and fire stations should have generators large enough to provide power for the entire building.
- One of the biggest differences between hurricanes then and now is the access to information about the storm's strength and path. It is impossible in this age of instant and constant news to go more than a few minutes without receiving a radio, television, or e-mail update on a storm.
- If you're going to be a leader, you also have to be a teacher. Great leaders teach their ideas and get people to follow them.
- Red Cross debit cards should be issued to poor people in areas frequently hit by hurricanes, floods, or earthquakes. People should pre-register with the Red Cross and in the event of evacuation, money for food and gas can be put into their accounts.
- Education systems should teach the Red Cross disaster preparation modules in elementary and middle schools.
- National Preparedness Month should be in May, not September.
- The three basic rules about being interviewed during a crisis (according to Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr.):
  - ◆ Rule One: no matter what question is asked, respond with the most important thing you want to pass along to the public.
  - ◆ Rule two is that when the second question is asked, respond with the second-most important piece of information you want to get out.
  - ◆ Rule three follows the same pattern. Essentially, no matter the question asked, respond with what information you think is most important to get out.
- In any crisis situation it should be the leader who is out front speaking, *not* the public relations person. The leader should speak from the heart, not from a printed statement.
- There should be evacuation plans for pets and livestock. Families should not have to abandon their pets. Livestock should be removed from hurricane landfall area days before the storm hits. It is "cruelty to animals" to leave them to fend for themselves.

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- Weather radios should be required, just as smoke alarms are, in rental properties.
- Insurance companies should give weather radios to their customers or provide a rate break for those families that have them in their homes.
- Automobile dealers should allow people who do not have cars to drive their cars out of town so that they can evacuate rather than leave the cars to be caught in the floods.
- States and cities need a plan to evacuate their workers to a pre-designated location so that they can be quickly recalled.
- President Bush signed the disaster declaration for Louisiana on Saturday, August 27, 2005—two days before Hurricane Katrina struck. Future presidents need to continue to be proactive when dealing with potential disasters. Governors and mayors need to be given authority to spend money before the storm hits.
- The number one priority in any natural or man-made disaster is saving lives. The number two priority is evacuating people from the disaster area whose lives might be at risk. But in order to do either, the capacity to do them must first be there.
- Elected officials need media training. Being glib enough to get elected does not qualify anyone to deal with the media after a disaster.
- A real disaster will cause confusion and information gaps and will challenge you to catch up on what you don't know about what you should know about. Real disasters will break the communication system.
- Private contract security guards with assault rifles and shotguns should not be used to protect property. This is America, not Baghdad.
- Use life experiences to “adapt and overcome.” In the Army, it's a way of life. The poor learn to make do with what they have.
- Leaders must learn to adapt to the situation. Work with what is available. Praise people who take initiative to solve problems. The culture of most first responders is one of being able to adapt to most situations and save lives. Too many elected leaders and the media focus on who screwed up.
- The Department of Health and Human Services needs to develop a more effective plan to deal with human remains. Using contractors is expensive and not effective.
- Be careful with e-mails. The “e” in e-mail means “evidence.” If you don't want to see it again, do not put it in an e-mail.
- Leaders take responsibility for the good, the bad, and the ugly. You can try and pass the blame, but you cannot pass responsibility.
- Look at the media as a friend, like someone who will tell you that you have spinach in your teeth. Also expect the press to be like a mirror. It can give you a broad perspective of the situation: bad, ugly, and sometimes good.
- You must take time to talk to the press. If you don't speak to them, others will.

**“Ignorance can be fixed, but stupidity is for life. A disaster can make you look ignorant and stupid. The media will let everyone know which squad you are in.”**

**—Lt. General Russel L. Honoré**