

How to build an Urban Escape and Evasion Bag



Table of Contents

Understanding Why Preparedness Matters	2
What is an E&E Bag?	4
Escape	5
Evasion	5
How to Choose the Right E&E Bag?	7
Carry Style	8
Size	8
Organization	9
Concealed Carry Support	9
What to Pack into Your Urban E&E Bag?	12
Documentation	12
Communication	13
Navigation	15
Tools	16
Security	18
Medical	18
Cash	19
The Skillsets of a Survivor	21
The Reality of E&E Survival	23

Understanding Why Preparedness Matters

We live in a dangerous world with constant threats around us most of the time.

While some choose to push these threats to the back of their mind and pretend that terrible things cannot happen to good people, the reality is disaster can strike at any moment.

Whether it is an act of God, pure misfortune, or from a minority of people with a never-ending desire to do evil, the danger is out there and the only true way to protect against it is to prepare.

Even for those of us who have the luxury of living in remote areas relatively free of threats such as terror attacks or active shooter events, natural disasters such as wildfires, earthquakes, and floods, remain very real and ready to destroy our lives in a matter of seconds.

Although not all of us will experience the trauma of a terror attack, the reality is not “if” a disaster will happen, but rather “when”. Those who value preparedness understand this reality, and while we may have been given a poor reputation with shows such as *Doomsday Preppers*, the world is not a kind place and there are threats all around us.

Defining what “prepared” means is a very subjective process. Some build huge bunkers underground, some dress up camo and pretend they are something they are not, and others simply carry extra cash for unexpected emergencies. But, thinking about contingencies for problems you may run into and how you will respond is the first step to addressing any threat you may face in your life.

The ability to see the world in a new light is a skill that is developed over time, through both education and experience. Any attempt to prepare for the dangers of modern life is a step in the right direction.

However, there is a fine line between being prepared to deal with the challenges life may throw at you without overpreparing and welcoming such conflict. Many people within the preparedness community struggle to walk this line.

Being over-prepared out in public with a huge backpack is not only likely to weigh you down and get in the way of your daily life, but also draw unwanted attention. This means when the worst does strike and society briefly begins to tear at the seams, an outwardly prepared individual is at an increased risk of being attacked, their gear stolen, and potentially left for dead.

Even in cases free from disaster, appearing overly prepared can still draw unwanted attention from individuals such as law enforcement and security personnel, running the risk of increased questioning and scrutiny in your day-to-day life.

The attention that being overly prepared can bring is the fundamental guiding force of what is known as the Gray Man Principle.

The Gray Man Principle can be defined as being prepared for any situation, blending into the crowd, avoiding any unwanted attention, and most importantly not making yourself a target.

Simply put, a gray man is a person who draws little to no attention. On the most basic level, it means you can carry yourself in a state of vagueness or in a condition that draws little to no attention. You need to have the ability to be gray when needed, but it is not something that needs to consume your thoughts and actions.

As we continue, we'll explore exactly how we can walk this fine line. However, the most important lesson to take away is you need to be prepared without broadcasting it to the world.

What is an E&E Bag?

There is no singular way to be a prepared gray man in today's world, and while a well-built everyday carry (EDC) kit is a great place to start, an urban escape and evasion bag goes one step further to keep you safe during a disaster.

To understand exactly what makes up an E&E bag, it is first important to understand the guiding principles that make up Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape training. This acronym, also known as SERE, is the basis of these bags.

SERE is a form of training available to most military forces around the world, various law enforcement agencies, as well as some civilian personnel in high-risk environments. It is aimed to help individuals survive the harshest conditions with minimum tools and gear while making their way to safety.

While there are many aspects of this training not addressed within an urban E&E bag, such as resisting enhanced interrogation techniques and gathering resources in the wild, the general concept transfers incredibly well to the urban jungle we often find ourselves in.

Survival training is arguably the least important consideration when it comes to urban environments, as many important necessities are already taken care of within these settings, including:

- Shelter
- Access to water
- Navigational aids

Additionally, resistance training (while important) is less significant when looking to build an escape and evasion bag. Resistance is primarily focused on fighting back once you have already been captured and an individual is trying to obtain what they are looking for.

With that said, it is also not considered for an E&E bag because resistance is not something you can easily build a kit for.

Resistance is a mindset!

This mindset is certainly something that can be taught and developed over time. An example of this is pushing yourself to extremes to show your body what it is truly capable of withstanding. In this sense, it is not something that can be neatly packaged up and stored for an emergency.

However, it is a character trait everyone should aim to develop throughout their lifetime. I would argue that in emergencies in an urban environment, it is less critical than the sheer will to

survive. This is especially important when it comes to addressing the kinds of threats we may face in an urban environment (whether they be natural, foreign, or domestic).

Finally, we come to the two most critical components of SERE that make up the very basis of an urban escape and evasion bag.

Escape

Escape in this sense means equipping you with the tools and skills necessary to make your way out of a city or away from a disaster. You are simply removing yourself from danger and finding a way to safety.

In SERE, it is taken to mean escape from capture, which is an integral part of any E&E kit. While this form of escape may not be necessary for every disaster, it is a very real possibility during hostage or kidnap situations where you may be restrained.

While compliance can be the best solution in some scenarios, having the means to escape gives you the options necessary if you need to fight to keep your life.

Evasion

Evasion is remarkably similar in this regard and aims to provide you with the means to avoid threats in urban environments (in this case). As with escaping from restraints, it's true that in not every disaster, there will be someone hunting you or wishing to do you harm. However, the reality is that people are targeted on a near-daily basis, and having the tools to evade someone searching for you can dramatically increase your chance of survival.

Finally, it's worth touching on how an Urban E&E bag differs from any other survival kit you may find online.

Many people talk about "bugging out" during an emergency to live out in the wild. The reality is the vast majority of people (>54% of the world) live, work, or visit cities and other developed metropolitan areas, for most of their lives.

Being well prepared for one specific environment can leave you dramatically unprepared for another. Although it may be a nice dream to escape to the wild away from other people during an emergency, the reality is that for at least some time following a disaster, we will need to survive in an urban setting. The right E&E bag can help us do just that.

As we move through this guide we'll examine exactly what components are critical in making an escape and evasion bag, however, these areas of SERE are not just categories on a shopping list.

Each area of SERE highlights an essential skill set that should be developed over time and should be curated to meet your environment and its needs. Possessing the tools for an urban environment will certainly make escape and evasion easier during an SHTF event. But, in unskilled hands, or if being used by someone without the will to survive, they can be all but useless.

We'll touch on this topic more thoroughly later, but for now, it is important to remember that preparedness is not just about owning fancy gear, but developing yourself as a person, ready to face anything, and more importantly, survive anything.

How to Choose the Right E&E Bag

Any kit you are building needs to have a strong foundation, and with something as portable as an Urban E&E kit, that can only come in the form of a bag.

There is nothing wrong with the larger tough boxes, such as those available from Pelican or Plano, especially for more long-term storage. However, if you are on the move, a bag is the only way to go.

So how do you choose the right bag for an urban E&E kit?

As with all things in the world of preparedness, no one bag shines brightest above them all. Rather, there is a set of principles and requirements that can guide you in purchasing the right bag for your needs.

The first and most important principle that should be considered is your bag's outward appearance. Bags come in all shapes, sizes, and designs for special use cases. With that in mind, it is important to narrow down your search to one that will blend in with your environment, a choice that is heavily governed by the gray man principles.

Bags are often one of the first things noticed by those around us, especially by security forces or law enforcement. It's important to choose one that outwardly looks like it belongs in the area you find yourself in.

Too colorful in a professional work environment, or too militaristic in an urban metropolitan area, and your bag is almost guaranteed to draw attention. This can potentially lead to unwanted trouble both during and outside of emergency scenarios.

It is important to note however, that appearance is a dynamic thing and just because a bag may draw too much attention in one environment, it may leave you perfectly camouflaged in another.

For example, the bag that is too colorful for an office may blend in when acting as a tourist or on a college campus. Knowing exactly how to choose the right bag aesthetic for your environment is a skill that can be developed over time, but copying the appearance of those around you can be of great help when it comes to picking how best to dress.

A lot of folks call this the environmental baseline. That's just a fancy way of describing the details of what is going on around you. When you are in a situation, or if you feel the need to blend in, you are simply taking a detailed look at what those around you are doing. You then simply mimic those behaviors, mannerisms, and dress. This includes bags, backpacks, and other outward-facing clothing and gear.

Once you've selected the right general appearance of your bag, the next important decision is to decide on what you are looking for from a functionality standpoint.

Functionality is a huge topic, however, for our purposes, it can generally be broken down into four categories to help find the right bag for you, including:

- Carry Style
- Size
- Number of Pockets
- Conceal Carry Support

Carry Style

Carry style refers to whether you are looking to carry an over-the-shoulder messenger style bag, sling pack, or backpack. Each has its strengths and weaknesses; however, backpacks work especially well in this role.

While messenger bags and sling bags are incredibly popular among EDC folks, they tend not to fare well in high-stress environments such as when you are running or climbing through confined spaces. This is largely because of the fact a single strap leaves them free to swing around your body and get in the way as you move.

Backpacks reduce this problem by offering a much more stable platform to hug your body and keep your gear in place when on the move. Accessing the contents of a backpack is indeed slower than a sling bag, but as long as you choose a well-fitting bag, the ability to move more freely is well worth the trade-off.

I also prefer a pack with a robust grab handle on the top. This comes in really handy if you have taken off your backpack and placed it beside you while sitting down. In the rare scenario, you have to leave in a rapid fashion, you may not have the opportunity to don your pack. However, you can easily grab a top-mounted grab handle and take off. Once you have removed yourself from the area and the conditions are favorable, you can properly put it on.

Size

Size and organization capabilities are heavily related and ultimately come down to how much gear you need to carry. We need our bags to be large enough to comfortably carry all of our gear in an accessible way, but there are limitations on exactly how large our bags should be.

Too large and not only will our bags draw attention to ourselves but they run the risk of getting caught up in our environment or on other people. If you ever find yourself needing to run with your backpack for whatever reason, it's much easier to accomplish with a compact pack that

hugs close to your body rather than a huge 100L rucksack that swings with each movement, hitting everything you pass.

It's difficult to state the exact size bag that will work perfectly for you, but for most people, a bag in the range of ten liters on the bottom end to twenty-five (ish) liters on the top end will often be more than sufficient. Again, it depends on needs, body size, environment, and more.

Bags within this range will still give you extra room for storing larger items (such as jackets or a spare change of clothes) while allowing you to maintain mobility.

Bags of this size are also able to comfortably fit hydration bladders and even short-barreled rifles or pistol caliber carbines, in most cases. The additional space of a 30+ liter bag can be nice, but for most people, smaller options are likely going to be more than sufficient for an urban E&E bag.

Organization

Similarly, there is a fine balance between having too few and too many pockets. Organization is obviously an important consideration, as having a home for each piece of gear makes it much easier to quickly find in an emergency. However, too many pockets can overcomplicate your system and add unnecessary weight.

This means you run the risk of having to search through various pockets and compartments to find the right tool or piece of gear when you need it. This is a personal decision, but it's often better to err on the side of caution and go for fewer pockets than you need. Organizational capability is something you can always add later thanks to a range of cases, inserts, and EDC organizers.

Concealed Carry Support

On the topic of organization and pockets, we come to our final decision. This comes down to whether you need a bag with concealed carry compatibility or if you can do without such a platform. Various companies offer such integration, but most commonly, CCW integration can be found in the form of a Velcro-lined pocket hidden somewhere within the bag that is sealed either with a zipper pull or Velcro opening.

Even if you choose to not use these pockets for their intended purpose, they're still a great resource as they make it much easier to hide sensitive material (such as E&E gear, confidential documents, etc.). This is especially true when passing through security searches and checkpoints.

Using these criteria, it should be possible to narrow down your choices to a handful of options that blend well into your environment. This will allow you to easily stow and conceal the gear necessary for escape and evasion, and most importantly, go about your daily life in the gray.

Even with that said, there are still a huge number of companies out there providing great options for our needs.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to selecting a bag and they depend on your circumstances and requirements. The first argues that you should have a dedicated urban E&E bag staged at a convenient location, such as in your car or workplace. The other argues you should combine your urban E&E kit directly into your everyday carry to have instant access to your equipment no matter what you are doing, or where you are in the world.

Staging or caching gear in your workplace is a great option, especially if you choose to carry larger items within your E&E bag that might slow you down as you go about your day. But, for the vast majority of people, integration is arguably going to be a better option. You do have to be more careful regarding the size and weight restrictions of your bag, but the reality is having to make your way to a cache of gear only adds time and complications to your response plan during an emergency.

Additionally, keeping your gear with you throughout the day can dramatically help reduce the risk of someone stumbling across it in the wild and emptying your supplies. This can potentially save you a world of hurt as you reach for a critical piece of gear only to find it stolen.

It's also important to understand that keeping your gear with you helps your day-to-day capabilities. An urban E&E kit is built with the assumption that you already have access to the tools you carry daily as part of your EDC, but there is no reason why you cannot do the reverse and use the contents of your E&E bag during your regular day. The only thing to remember is if you dig into the contents of your E&E kit, such as using your emergency cash, you need to replace it as soon as possible.

Integration seems like the better way to go, so how do you go about augmenting your EDC gear with an E&E kit?

Some may choose to keep a dedicated pouch or organizer within their EDC bag loaded with supplies. For our purposes, it is often better to fully integrate the two kits, distributing gear around your bag of choice.

Having a dedicated pouch can be great under the right circumstances, especially as it allows you to quickly access all your gear in one neat and convenient package, which explains why they are so popular for gear such as:

- Fire kits

- Cooking kits
- Water purification kits

If using organizers or pouches in the interior, you may consider incorporating colored paracord onto the zipper pulls or other easily identifiable places. For example, you could use red for first-aid, orange for your fire kit, blue for hydration, etc. Again, make sure there is enough color contrast to distinguish certain items. Keep in mind, more organization equals more weight. You need to find the right balance for you and your needs.

One of the problems with E&E gear is that it will often need to be concealed to not have critical pieces of kit confiscated in the unfortunate event you ever have to go through a security search. While it is undoubtedly more convenient, having all your gear in a single location substantially increases the risk of it being discovered during a search and potentially losing all of your gear in a single moment. There's a chance you may still have some gear seized during a search, but it is better to lose a single item than have your entire E&E kit taken in a matter of seconds.

We'll touch more on concealment later as we look at the skills necessary to survive with an urban E&E kit. But for now, let's take a look at what we should pack.

What to Pack into Your Urban E&E Bag

Selecting the right pack is the first decision to make, and arguably one of the most important, but now comes the long journey of selecting the right gear for you to build your Urban E&E bag with.

Each item you select to include within your E&E bag should be carefully chosen to meet your environmental requirements, be suitable for the size limitations of the bag you have selected, and most importantly, complement your skills and ability.

This isn't an easy task to accomplish, especially as gear curation typically comes with years of experience as you learn what gear is useful in certain situations. But, the items explored here can be a great starting point to get you going before you have the knowledge to truly customize your E&E bag.

We'll start by looking at the gear you should have prepared to get you out of life's little emergencies and then move on to the gear you need during an emergency. Then we'll cover the items that can get you out of a bind before finally discussing the one single piece of gear you should never leave home without.

Documentation

Almost all adults will carry some form of identification on them throughout their daily lives. Whether it be in the form of a driver's license, work ID, or even passport, we all agree that having some proof of who we are makes life easier.

There are obvious exceptions to this, such as among select individuals operating in non-permissive environments. But in the real world, being able to prove who we are and that we belong in an environment will make life much easier, and can save us from potential trouble.

For this reason, the first item worth keeping inside your E&E bag is a spare copy of any potentially important documents to serve as backups if you lose your 1st line gear.

Exactly what these documents are will depend on your needs, especially when traveling overseas. But as a general rule, it is typically worth considering backups of:

- Passports and any associated Visas
- Driver's license
- Proof of residency
- Important family documents (such as marriage certificates and birth certificates)
- Travel documents (tickets, hotel reservations, etc.)

These can not only help you in the wild, such as if you are stopped by police or require assistance from an embassy abroad but also offer you an incredibly important insurance policy should anything happen at home (fires, theft, etc.).

Back-ups are important, but there are a huge number of ways you can go about doing this.

Physical copies are arguably the most convenient method since they can be pulled out of an E&E bag at a moment's notice, but it is important to know paper copies are prone to the same damage and loss as the original documents. This is where digital backups come into play, offering you an additional layer of protection from damage.

While it's typically worth keeping additional backups on a cloud service, they can lose the convenience of accessing your documents on any computer without the need to log in.

For this reason, it's typically better to store your backups on a secure encrypted medium such as a USB flash drive or microSD card. While USB drives are typically more convenient, especially as they do not require an adaptor to be plugged into pretty much any computer around the world, microSD cards are much easier to conceal such as within your clothing, around your bag, or even in more covert locations (such as hidden within morale patches and imitation half dollars).

Communication

Adding to the simple documents that can keep you out of trouble comes communication. Being able to communicate and coordinate with those around you is already critical during your day-to-day life, but becomes even more important during emergency scenarios. These are the times when the situation is constantly changing and it is almost impossible to have a clear picture of everything happening in the world.

Fortunately, this is an area that most of us already have a solid start. Pretty much everyone is carrying some form of a smartphone in their pocket at all times.

Whether it be an iPhone or Android, or even a \$20 burner phone, having the ability to call, text and access news as it's happening (either through news websites or even social media) is one of the most powerful tools you can have at your disposal.

Phones are already an integral part of many of our EDCs, but that does not mean they cannot be augmented within your Urban E&E kit to help you through an emergency.

The best way to add more functionality to your current smartphone is through an emergency power bank. During an emergency, there is no guarantee when you will next be able to charge your phone reliably so having access to an additional portable power source when you need it can be critical to get those lifesaving calls out when you need it. These don't just come into play

when things start seriously breaking down but add a much-needed convenience for life's little emergencies (such as car breakdowns, traveling, and power outages).

Although not for everyone, it can also help dramatically to have either a spare sim card or even a spare burner phone in some cases. Having access to additional sim cards can help keep you more secure, as prepaid sim cards have less information linked to your identity but can also act as a great insurance policy in the event something happens to the towers your primary network provider relies on.

Similar to a spare sim card, a backup burner phone can be incredibly versatile. Whether it's because your primary phone becomes damaged, you believe it may be infected with malicious software, or even in cases where you simply need to loan a phone out to someone in need, they're a great resource to have available.

Most burner phones can be purchased for less than \$30 and since they typically weigh only a few ounces, they can disappear almost instantly without ever getting in your way until you need it.

Phones are great for their convenience, ease of use, and capabilities, but they are not a guaranteed communication method. Networks can go down for a range of electrical or physical reasons, so you may also choose to include an alternative means of communication as a backup.

HAM radios are especially popular in this role as they can both transmit and receive broadcasts without the need for any real infrastructure. As long as there is someone out there to pick up your transmission, and you are licensed to broadcast under the FCC, there is nothing to stop you from communicating critical information during an emergency. Within certain guidelines, you can also operate without a license if the emergency meets specific criteria.

The simplicity of these devices has made them incredibly popular among those in the preparedness community; however, it's important to understand their range and the limitations built around that. As with everything, it should be taken into consideration.

Alternatively, satellite phones offer a much larger broadcast range to almost anywhere around the world and function very similarly to your standard cell phone. While these do rely heavily on infrastructure, all data transmitted through these devices are handled by satellites orbiting the earth. For this reason, they are much less likely to be affected by local disasters and man-made emergencies and offer you much more reliability than can be achieved with a \$2000 smartphone.

It is also important to note that these alternatives can be limited in densely populated areas as the large buildings block and interfere with incoming and outgoing signals. Natural obstructions will do the same.

If you have a line of sight with the sky, this should be less of a concern with satellite phones. But, it is important to understand that especially with ham radios, your ability to communicate

may be severely limited within an urban environment compared to more open rural environments.

Even with that said, both HAM radios and satellite phones are great options when your main phone goes down. Even with those options, it can be a good idea to include more primitive means of communication in your bag in the event all electronics are knocked out, such as in the event of an urban electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack. A simple signal mirror can still be enough to attract the attention of rescuers or even signal between those around you when absolutely all else fails.

Navigation

Communication is one of the best sources of information you can utilize during an emergency. But, to start building a plan you can put into practice, you also need to know your way around a city, which is where navigational tools come into play.

Navigational aids may seem like an obvious consideration when operating in new environments, such as when traveling, but even within your town or city, they are still one of the most valuable tools you can have. When the worst happens, you may likely need to navigate roadblocks or closures, take obscure routes to avoid someone tailing you, or in the best-case scenario, simply find the shortest route out of a city.

Even in cases where you are confident you know your way around the city, the ever-changing nature of a disaster can easily leave you distracted and disorientated. Having the tools necessary to get a clear understanding of the path you are on can be critical to ensure a safe and effective escape from an urban environment.

As with communication, this is an area that phones have largely taken care of with a range of navigational apps including:

- Apple Maps
- Google Maps
- Waze

If this is the only navigational tool you intend to carry in your urban E&E bag, at the very least it's important to download maps of areas you intend on navigating frequently to ensure you have access to your maps even without cell phone reception.

In addition to downloaded maps, it's worth having physically printed maps as well. These can be either from a commercial supplier or printed straight from Google Maps. They can serve as an insurance policy to ensure you can still navigate, even in the event your phone dies or becomes damaged during a disaster.

It's also worth mentioning that although GPS devices can be a great navigational aid, it's important to understand they are not always guaranteed to work effectively in densely populated areas. High-rise buildings can block communication with satellites and prevent the GPS from locating you. This is less of an issue with so many satellites overhead, but it highlights the importance of having and being able to use traditional maps and landmarks to navigate your way through an area.

Navigation is a critical tool, especially to make sure you do not get lost in the chaos of an urban disaster. Its importance should not be understated, but it is also worth mentioning that navigating a city is much easier than compared when compared to finding your way through nature.

Most cities, especially large densely populated ones are packed with navigational aids, landmarks, and signs that help you orientate yourself and find your way. It's still possible to get lost in these environments, especially if you start taking backstreets, but if you know where you are it is much easier to figure out where you are going.

Tools

In a perfect world, having the ability to prove who you are, build and execute your escape plan should provide you with all of the tools you need to escape a city and find your way to safety but if you are ever digging into your E&E bag, the world is likely as far away from perfect as you can get.

No plan will survive first contact with the enemy, so you need to have the means to navigate contingencies as they present themselves.

Although tools are arguably the most important area of your E&E, they can also be the most difficult to work into your bag.

There's the temptation to try to prepare for every possible scenario and before you know it, your E&E bag is adding over 30lbs to your everyday carry, drawing attention to yourself and slowing you down. We'll talk a lot more about how you can do more with less later, but for now, let's look at the bare essentials you should consider placing into your E&E kit.

A good high-quality knife can get you out of more situations than you can count, and deserves its place within your everyday carry. It's for that reason we aren't going to recommend you carry a fixed blade or a folder in your E&E kit, but instead a multitool. Not only do these provide you with potentially two backup blades (a straightedge and a serrated blade), but a full tool kit to help you make repairs, improvise equipment on the go, and generally get out of any bind you may find yourself in.

Next, a good flashlight can be a lifesaver during an emergency. During SHTF, whether from a natural disaster or a bomb going off, there's a high chance power may be temporarily lost in an urban environment. Being able to produce light is essential.

Not only does a flashlight help you find your way through buildings in the dark, but it can also be a great signaling tool as our eyes are naturally drawn to light. If you find the right one, it can even act as a self-defense tool either to disorient an attacker or as a blunt impact weapon.

Finally, no E&E bag would truly be complete without having the tools necessary to escape.

It's difficult to select just a single item from this huge category, so instead, we'll highlight a few critical items from which you can select based on your skills and ability. It's also important to note that while you should be able to carry a multitool or flashlight almost anywhere in the world, certain states and countries have very tight restrictions on a person's right to own and carry escape tools. Punishments can range from confiscation to actual jail time, so it's important to do your research when traveling with these in your E&E bag.

The first and most obvious escape tool that can be applied in a huge range of conditions is a simple set of lock picks. Even just armed with a couple of hooks, rakes, and some tension wrenches, you are already equipped to deal with the vast majority of locks you may encounter in the wild. Lock picking kits are available for as low as \$15 and for the functionality they add in navigating a city of locked doors and inaccessible areas, they're a great addition to any kit you may be building.

Lock picks are a great solution when you come across a locked door or gate, but if you ever need to dig into your E&E bag to escape from someone, there are much better options out there than a lock pick. From Kevlar cordage and padlock shims to compact saws and handcuff keys, these kinds of items are built with the sole purpose of breaking out of restraints and they ultimately deserve a place in your bag.

The exact scope of the escape and evasion world truly cannot be understated, but almost all of these items are incredibly small with almost no weight to them. For this reason, you really can build out an easily concealable kit to add to your urban E&E bag without adding any significant weight to it. This can be done at an affordable price.

It is important to understand that not everyone is going to need, or is going to be able to use, these escape tools in the same way someone can use a flashlight. Lock picking and restraint bypassing are skills that take time to fully master. This goes for how you use them and how you can deploy them correctly to avoid detection. If you strongly believe you may never face the kinds of situations that could see you reaching for these kinds of tools, there is nothing wrong with choosing to omit escape tools from your E&E bag. But for those who include them, it is crucial you practice and understand how they work as to not make your situation worse.

Security

In our daily life, we are always at risk of experiencing some kind of violence. This can be from road rage, random mugging, or intentional terrorist attacks. This reality is only increased during times of uncertainty as people panic and our instincts of fight or flight take over. During an emergency, violence can come from the original perpetrators of an attack, but also from innocent bystanders so desperate to survive they are willing to sacrifice you in the process.

It only makes sense that as part of your Urban E&E bag, you have some means of defending yourself from any threat that may present itself to you. The problem with this is there is no one size fits all solution to how you can defend yourself and it entirely depends on your life and the situations you find yourself in.

There's no doubt a concealed firearm is one of the best options you can have in this role. They're reliable, effective, and give you the edge in almost any fight you may come across. But, you find yourself carrying your E&E bag into some places where a concealed firearm is not welcome. There may not only be local restrictions, such as at your place of work, but international travel is almost impossible with a firearm. So, in some of the cities, states, and countries you most need your Urban E&E bag, there is a good chance you are left without one of the main tools to protect yourself.

The same limitation holds true for most self-defense items we could recommend, such as pepper spray, blunt impact weapons such as batons, and even knives.

If your environment permits it, these are always going to outdo the competition. But if you are abroad with your E&E kit, there are still options you can carry for non-permissive environments that will get you through a fight and keep you moving forward.

The list of these items is almost endless, but some examples include tactical pens, flashlights, and even coin purses. By having a purpose other than self-defense, it becomes much easier to explain these items if you are ever questioned by officials. Most can even be carried onto airlines in your carry-on, meaning no matter where you are in the world, you should always have something on hand to defend yourself.

As with escape tools, these are not miracle solutions. Simply carrying an impact pen, or even a firearm, does not inherently make you safer. Instead, it is having the knowledge and ability to use these defense tools correctly that can help you survive any conflict you may face as you escape from an urban environment.

Medical

Knowing how to make holes is key to winning any fight you may find yourself in during an emergency, but as those who have experience fighting know too well, it is unlikely you will walk away completely unscathed. For this reason, you not only need to be able to make holes but also patch them.

Exactly what this kit looks like depends heavily on your knowledge. For an average person without years of medical training, it is generally worth including some form of boo-boo kit and a trauma kit accessible within your Urban E&E bag.

A general boo-boo kit contains the essentials for small accidents, such as cuts, burns, and other minor injuries. It will keep you operational and moving forward. For these kinds of kits, it's worth including items such as:

- Band-aids
- Burn Gel
- Superglue
- General medication (such as aspirin and paracetamol)
- Alcohol wipes

These kinds of items are great for general injuries that can get in your way, but it is also important to have the equipment to deal with more serious injuries in the form of a trauma kit. These more developed kits are built to deal with more severe injuries, such as gunshot wounds and other major bleeding wounds. They may include:

- Tourniquets
- Pressure dressing
- Hemostatic agents
- Chest seals
- Gauze
- Wound flushes

Medical gear is another area where it's tempting to pack as much as you possibly can to account for every single eventuality possible. With these two relatively simple kits, you should be able to deal with a huge range of potential trauma you may face in the world. The important thing is that you are confident in its usage and know how to properly treat a wound to effectively stay in the fight for as long as possible.

Cash

All of the items we've discussed so far can help you build an incredibly functional Urban E&E bag, but if you choose to ignore all of the gear previously listed, there is still one item that belongs in any loadout you are building.

Cash!!!

While it's true throughout long-term disasters, such as civil wars, currency loses almost all of its value. In short-term emergencies, physical money can still buy, bribe, and negotiate your way out of a huge number of situations.

Money keeps our society going and in an emergency, can keep you going until you reach safety. It's important not to just load thousands of dollars into a single place in your kit. Instead, aim to hide money around your body as an insurance policy to ensure that even in the event you lose your bag or are robbed, you still have a good amount on you to bail yourself out of any dire situations.

It seems obvious to keep a substantial amount of the currency for the country you are operating in on your person (in the range of \$500 to \$1000 USD). But wherever you find yourself in the world, it is still worth keeping US currency on you. From Mexico and Canada to even remote parts of the Middle East, the value of the US dollar is understood and can help you survive almost anything, for the right price.

The Skillsets of a Survivor

The right gear is important in an emergency and will dramatically increase the likelihood of walking away with your life. However, it is not the only factor that plays a role in this outcome. Nor is it the most important one.

We've hinted at this as we've gone through our gear selection. It is not only important to carry certain tools, but also to know how to use them. The truth is the more you know about your tools, the less you need them.

Take lock picking for example. A beginner may need to carry a set of 5 picks for each type of lock they may face, maybe more if they are expecting to attack specialty locks. Someone with experience may only need a single hook and a true master may choose to carry no picks at all because they understand how easily picks can be improvised in the wild.

Simply put, the better understanding you have of how your gear works and how it can be used, the more capable you will be when things go sideways and you have to improvise on the fly. This goes far beyond simply knowing the operations of a piece of equipment, such as how to pull the trigger and fire a weapon.

Knowing this information is important, but if you can take a step back and look at the bigger picture to learn how your gear works, what each part does, and how they interact, it becomes much easier to repair and improvise gear as you need it. This concept can be applied to everything, from firearms and radios to even simple medical gear. Generally, it is worth starting with the gear you consider most critical and gradually build up your knowledge from there.

Possessing the skills necessary to use and maintain your gear is only half the battle, however, and there are many other soft skills you should look to develop as you prepare for the worst. For example, one of the best skills you can develop as a gray man is the ability to conceal your gear. This will allow you to not only carry potentially restricted gear in non-permissive environments but also can help keep your gear secure during any conflicts. It is unlikely that a thief will be willing to conduct a thorough full-body search during an attack of opportunity.

Whether this means hiding your gear around your body, such as in a waistband or shoe, or within hidden compartments of your bag, the better dispersed your gear is, the higher your chance of retaining mission-critical equipment during an emergency.

Additionally, being competent in how to communicate and navigate effectively will allow you to build better escape plans during stressful situations. This not only increases the likelihood of being able to execute your plan when the time comes but also allows you to adapt and improvise your plans as the situation changes and new situations present themselves. This is a huge section,

and can only be developed with repeated practice but the basics of good communication and navigation should include:

- Knowing how to easily communicate information in short verbal messages
- Being able to acknowledge information to verify it is correct (such as reading back critical details)
- Having the ability to give directions between two or more points

Finally, one of our last soft skills is arguably the most important and that is situational awareness.

To most gray men, this refers to your ability to read an environment to not only detect threats before they directly present themselves but also to provide you with the most information from which you can build your response. For some people, this may simply mean not having both headphones in while out in public to better hear the world around them. Others may choose to run through a checklist whenever they enter a new building, identifying the closest entrances and exits and strategically choosing their seating position to gain the best vantage point. No matter how seriously you take situational awareness, it is one of the most valuable skills you could hope to develop and goes a huge way to keep you safe whether it be in your hometown or an unnamed town 10,000 miles away.

Ultimately, while gear is an integral element for anyone getting ready for the worst, you should always place a much higher focus on preparing your mind and body to respond to emergencies.

The Reality of E&E Survival

In almost every disaster that happens in the world, we hear miracle stories of people who had no special bag full of survival gear walking away with their life.

These people aren't gods, or immortal, and while it's true they undoubtedly had a huge amount of luck on their side, it is more often than not the sheer will to survive that pushed them through the worst and ensured they made it back home safely. This is a desire within all of us, but there are ways you can dig into it when the worst strikes and need that extra motivation to push you through.

While each person has their way to reach into this inner strength, the most common reason people choose to fight is the people back at home who you would leave behind if you simply accepted your fate and gave into a bad situation. Whether it be a child, a spouse, or even a pet, you need to have something as a reminder of what is waiting for you to return to.

There is a fine line with this. While an unwavering will to survive may help you do the impossible, such as push through immense amounts of pain or go days without food, it will not turn you invincible and allow you to accomplish inhuman feats. This is why you need to augment your mindset with a strong skill set. This ensures that any challenge you come across, you not only have the willingness to push through it, but also the technical knowledge we discussed.

Even with the will to survive, the reality of emergencies is often very different from the scenarios painted in books. They often have a way of making survival seem like a simple 10 step process, where you can instantly build a fire and walk freely out of a dangerous situation. The reality is nothing during a disaster is easy and you will have to do exceptional things to walk away with your life.

This is the most important thing to remember during any form of SHTF scenario. You are not looking to walk away in perfect conditions without any bumps, grazes, or even broken bones. You are simply looking to walk away with your life.

That means you need to be prepared and ready for an already bad situation to turn even worse and have the mental preparedness to deal with these problems as they appear. If a bomb goes off and chaos instantly surrounds you, you should understand that secondary explosions are extremely common (either from a secondary bomb or damage to infrastructure).

Until you are safe at home or another location, you must understand these situations are extremely dynamic and can quickly become ten times worse in a matter of seconds.

In the real world, threats can quickly present themselves and just because you believe the worst may be over, it is not a reason for you to let your guard down. Books tend to deal with each kind of disaster as if they are isolated incidents, but there is often a huge amount of overlap between events. Terror attacks can lead to natural disasters and situations can quickly grow out of control. You need to be ready to react.

No matter how exhausted, wounded, or desperate you are, you should always stay alert and switched on to your environment, and most importantly, be ready to respond at a moment's notice.

The reality of an E&E situation is not only challenging because of how fluid these environments are, but also because you will never be 100% physically prepared for anything the world can throw at you. No matter how much gear you have with you, you must understand that it is more than likely you will be missing some form of gear that may come in useful. It is up to you to work the problem, find a solution, and keep moving forward.

Part of this is because it is not practical to carry every single piece of gear you would ever need. For example, if you work on the upper floors of a high-rise building, some people recommend you include rappelling gear or even parachutes in your E&E bag to make your escape much easier.

Unquestionably, something like that would come in useful during an emergency, and while it may work in movies, it simply isn't practical to carry that sort of equipment in the real world. Size and weight limitations simply don't allow us to carry everything we may need during an emergency.

In addition to a lot of the gear you may need or want simply not fitting in an urban E&E bag, it is also not possible for you to plan for every possible situation. The items listed here certainly make up the bulk of the gear you may need during an urban disaster, but as each of us are individuals, there are personal contingencies that we may face that we should hope to plan for but simply overlook. For example, your gear list will likely look very different if you are forced to escape an urban environment with children compared to an individual.

Not only are you at risk from simply not having gear on you when you need it, but there is always the possibility your gear may break in the field. Whether it be from incorrect use, manufacturing issues, or simple wear and tear, gear always seems to break at critical moments. During a disaster, you have no other choice but to push forward and work around the problem. The risk of this can be dramatically reduced by purchasing high-quality and reliable gear from reputable brands you can trust. More importantly, you need to take care of your gear with regular cleaning and maintenance as is necessary. Even with this, gear can still break at the worst possible times. Again, this highlights the need to be mentally prepared and have the knowledge of how to improvise essential gear quickly to keep moving forward.

A well-equipped E&E bag will undoubtedly make escaping from an urban disaster much easier when the time comes, but no matter where you find yourself in the world, a true sense of preparedness can only come from being prepared yourself.

In a disaster, you will be mentally and physically pushed to extremes. These kinds of situations easily break people, leaving them to shut down and suffer at the hands of others. The only way to prevent this from happening to you is to be prepared as an entire person. Whether it be from fight or flight, panic attacks, or even shell shock, hard times can make even the best people break down and freeze up. Gear makes things easier, but when it comes down to the wire, you can only ever truly trust yourself.

Self-confidence and self-reliance may come naturally to some people, but by pushing yourself to uncomfortable places daily and training consistently to better yourself, it is a feeling that almost anyone can develop as long as you are willing to put in the work and grow as a person.