



# How to Survive Under Martial Law

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Reviewed

Three Methods: [Being a Good Citizen](#) [Hiding From Military Forces](#) [Resisting a Military Threat to Your Survival](#)

Martial law occurs when a military assumes the responsibility of governance. Instead of police officers, you would see soldiers. The rights of citizens are usually limited during martial law. Democratic processes are eliminated in favor of authoritarian power. Due process may also be limited or eliminated in the light of perceived threats to the government. In the worst case scenarios your survival depends on hiding or resisting a hostile military takeover. How you survive will depend on how prepared you are.

Method  
1

## Being a Good Citizen

**1 Prepare for the civil unrest.** Pay attention to current events. Know when potential threats are coming to the area. You may have no warning when another country invades yours.<sup>[1]</sup> However, you may know if a hurricane or tornado is coming your way. Websites like [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) are devoted to disaster preparedness.

- Stock your home with supplies.<sup>[2]</sup> Before martial law is enacted, you may be on your own during a breakdown of civil authority. Be ready to survive at least 72 hours<sup>[3]</sup> without help.
- Protect your home and business. After civil authority has broken down, people may become opportunistic. Homes and businesses may be looted.<sup>[4]</sup> Secure your home and business in advance. Board up windows and barricade doors. Stay in your home with your own supplies until military help arrives.

**2 Recognize the legitimacy of martial law.** For whatever reason, martial law has been declared and you are one of the citizens functioning under it. If your country has been invaded (i.e., your area is still under the protection of your country's military) or a major natural disaster has occurred you should recognize that martial law might be best for moment. The soldiers are there to maintain order and keep you safe until civilian authority can be re-established.<sup>[5]</sup>

**3 Show respect and courtesy to authorities.**<sup>[6]</sup> They are not perfect human beings and mistakes will happen. The best thing you can do is assist and obey. Keep your head down and don't draw attention to yourself. This isn't the time for political activism if you want to survive.

- Keep everything you can't live without on your person. If you are being moved there may be no time to go back for your things. Have everything you need on you at all times in case you have to move immediately. Anything you might be tempted to go back for, keep on you. If there is some object too big to carry around you may have to leave it.
- In rare situations you may be able to hide something special until you are able to come back for it. You may want to consider burying a "time capsule" in a waterproof container to retrieve when you return.

**4 Follow all directives given to you.** No matter how odd or strange it is best to do as you are told. If a curfew is set, be in your quarters by then. If you are given a meal time, don't think you will be served if you show up late even if you are hungry. If certain areas are off-limits, do not go exploring beyond the boundary. Your rights are greatly limited until civil order is re-established so don't push your boundaries if you want to survive.

- If you are under martial law in a country that you know intends to do you harm (e.g., Jewish Germans<sup>[7]</sup> or Japanese-Americans<sup>[8]</sup> during World War II) you may want to consider hiding from the government instead of being a good citizen.
- You may want to learn military time.<sup>[9]</sup> Some watches and phones can be adjusted to show military time automatically. In general, times are written out differently such that 9:00AM ("nine o'clock AM) becomes 0900 ("zero nine hundred) and 3:30PM ("three-thirty PM) becomes 1530 ("fifteen thirty). In other words, PM times are 12 greater than normal and times are described as if they are four-digit whole numbers without the colon with the hour always represented as two numbers (don't drop leading zeros). Hours may be referred to in "hundreds" but never "thousands".

**5 Obey orders as you are instructed.**<sup>[10]</sup> Orders are usually quick and fast and without explanation. Resisting or forcing an explanation may be dangerous. Military personnel may be given orders they don't even understand. They expect you to follow orders just as they are doing. Time sensitive orders they may not have time to explain or their explanation may cause a panic. Trust that their goal is to protect you and any failure they would take personally.

**6 Help others as much as you are able.** The military personnel may be short staffed. Offer to help as much as you can. You will garner their respect this way. You may then learn more about what's going on and why things are happening as they are. If you find out important information that you have permission to share, spread the word. Make sure other people know what's going on and hopefully everyone will be able to survive the event.

Method  
2

## Hiding From Military Forces

**1 Establish a survival bunker in a hidden location.**<sup>[11]</sup> This bunker should be able to keep you and your family safe for several years. The best bunkers are usually underground. Many are underground but in the sides of mountains or hills. The goal is to be able to get in and out but for no one else to be able to find you.

- Keep your bunker secret<sup>[12]</sup> by never carrying your phone or GPS enabled device with you when you visit. Even when you turn your GPS off, you may still be tracked with cell phone tower signals. Don't discuss your plans with anyone outside your family and resist the temptation to "show off" on social media.

**2 Stock your survival bunker with supplies.**<sup>[13]</sup> Everything you would need for several years worth of living. This will include food, water, and medicine. You can consult a survival guide or book to determine the best setup. Think about everything you and your family uses frequently over the course of a year and make sure you have everything you absolutely need.

- Some items such as medicines may be difficult to acquire by legitimate means. Proper storage may also be difficult. Favor solid form pills over liquids as their shelf life tends to be longer even after the expiration date.<sup>[14]</sup>
- Store medicine in a cool dry place to extend potency, and remember that taking drugs after their expiration date is rarely harmful.

**3 Get to your survival bunker as quickly as possible.** If you are going to stay ahead of the military you will need to move fast. As soon as martial law is declared you may not have time to discuss what to do next. You may think the military isn't there yet but local law enforcement may start implementing martial law beforehand. Have everything you want or need in your survival bunker and move there as soon as humanly possible.

**4 Keep a radio on hand to keep track of when martial law has ended.** Most likely you will not be able to stay in your bunker forever. You will need to keep contact with the outside world.<sup>[15]</sup> You need to know when it will be safe to emerge. Since batteries degrade, you may want to use a survival radio that incorporates a hand-crank for power.<sup>[16]</sup>

- Be cautious of pro-military propaganda. Know what frequencies local militias are broadcasting on and any code words. Don't listen to just anything but wait until the militias give you the OK that civil authority has been restored.

**Stay in your bunker until you are sure it is safe to leave.** The hardest part of hiding is the isolation. However, each

**5** time you step out of the bunker may risk the fate of your whole family. Someone may see you entering or exiting your bunker. You may accidentally leave tracks or human scent near the entrance. Search dogs may then be able to find you. Stay in your bunker as long as you possibly can before emerging.

- If you are in your bunker for a long time, prioritize your food based on expiration date. Eat whatever might expire soon first.

Method  
3

### Resisting a Military Threat to Your Survival

**1** **Have a go-bag ready for the day martial law is declared.**<sup>[17]</sup> If you think martial law is going to be enacted by any military force hostile to you then you should consider being ready. Will you have a better chance resisting or submitting? Have a go-bag with all the supplies you need to make it from where you are to where you are supposed to be.

- Your go-bag should be light but fully stocked. Estimate how far you may ever be from your bunker to determine what you need for your bag. You should favor small and light items as you may be carrying the bag. This includes basic survival gear and food in case you have to walk or hike to your bunker.<sup>[18]</sup>

**2** **Stash guns, ammo, supplies, and survival gear in a hidden bunker.**<sup>[19]</sup> This will be your family's rally point when martial law happens. Be sure to include everything you will need to wait out the storm. Your bunker should be equipped such that once you go in, you won't need to leave for supplies for months. If you have valuables you don't want to leave behind, go ahead and store them in your bunker in advance. You may not have time to go home to pack before the military rolls into town.

- Stocking your bunker with supplies can be difficult and cost-prohibitive. Start with a 72-hour setup for natural disaster preparedness.<sup>[20]</sup> Then move toward a two-week day bomb shelter.<sup>[21][22]</sup> Once you get the hang of it, increase to however long you think you'll need.

**3** **Know the rally point established by the local militia.** Most likely you are not the only person or family to see what's coming. Other people are likely getting ready for the military to take over. Become part of your local militia and find out what your plans are to resist a malevolent military. You may need to be quick in attacking local supply depots and establishing an effective resistance.

**4** **Group up with your militia as soon as humanly possible.** Once you have your own home base established with your family protected, be ready to move. Militias survive as long as there are enough people to protect strategic locations. Your militia will need all the manpower they can get. Take a few supplies and rations but leave most of it in your bunker. Your militia should have their own hidden stockpiles<sup>[23]</sup> of supplies if they will ever be successful.

- Be careful not to reveal your home base or inventory of supplies to your militia. If the militia crumbles you need a safe place to fall back to. If your militia is in danger, they may see your home base as a supply depot leaving you and your family in jeopardy.

**5** **Establish a chain of command and follow orders.**<sup>[24]</sup> Until now a military chain of command may have been hypothetical or loosely enforced. Now its time to follow orders without question. Establish the leadership structure and who you must report to and who reports to you. Most likely there will be people in your ranks with prior military experience. Their expertise will be crucial to maintaining order.

**6** **Stay with your militia as you move to a safe location.** If you survive and fight long enough, you may need to move to another safe location. This may be a retreat or you may be grouping up with other local militias to form a larger resistance force. You may be moving to re-establish civil authority. Regardless, if the supplies of your bunker are running out your options are limited. You will likely not be alone in this respect. You will need to move with the militia to a safe location to continue resisting the government long term.

## Community Q&A

What happens to government funds we are sent when money loses its value?

wikiHow  
Contributor

Money lost its value years ago. Get into bartering your skills and talents, and grow plenty of food and be prepared to dig toilets and clear sewage, all much needed skills people will barter for.

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### What if you run out of food?

wikiHow  
Contributor

You'll want to have hunting and gathering skills. Ideally you should have a book about plants that tells you which ones are safe to eat.

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### What would happen to my Social Security checks?

wikiHow  
Contributor

If the country is under martial law, chances are there will be no SS checks. Try to put some cash away. If an event like this becomes worse, money will have no value, and a barter system will be implemented. Items such as alcohol, gold/silver, food and ammunition will be the new currency.

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### Would people still work their jobs and pay their bills?

wikiHow  
Contributor

No, more than likely they would not because currency will be devalued or nonexistent so there would be no motivation to do so. Not to mention, people will probably be busy focusing on whatever has caused martial law to be implemented.

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### How well diabetics receive insulin if and when the UR supply is out?

wikiHow  
Contributor

It is best to stock up on insulin, because chances are, the military has more pressing matters than to give you insulin.

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### How can I train my young children in wilderness and survival skills?

wikiHow  
Contributor

Get them in the Scouts or other related organization. Sure it's a little cliché, but it does help. If nothing else it will help them learn how to work together better.

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### How should we make sure our pets survive?

wikiHow  
Contributor

Prepare the same way you would prepare for yourself. Store dry foods and medication for the pet, and make sure you have the pet's grooming and hygiene products. Add another gallon of water to your preps per day for your pet.

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### Do utilities stay on during martial law?

wikiHow  
Contributor

It depends on how bad it gets. Turning utilities off is the best way for a government to control the population during martial law.

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### How long would martial law last?

wikiHow  
Contributor

It depends on the martial law enforced. If there is a war going on and the area you are in is moved into and controlled by military (enemy or friendly), it can last for a long time. Martial law is enforced when civil authority can no longer govern the area or will not have/be able to control. Be prepared to last for weeks, months or even years. Martial law is no joke, and if a malevolent force discovers you, it is almost a 100 percent no-mercy policy for those who resist them. I recommend reading "The Diary of Anne Frank" for some insight on what it's like to hide from an oppressive force.

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### Are non-perishable food items high in carbs, protein and calories essential?

wikiHow  
Contributor

In short? Yes. You'll need all the food you can get, there's really no telling how long this would last so it'd be a good idea to stock up and stay healthy. Also, food would likely become a form of currency.

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## Tips

- Unless you have just lost a war or been invaded, military members are citizens, too, and though they may be intimidating, don't be afraid to approach them for help or to offer your own. In a major disaster, their main object to assist the civilian authorities establish civilian control under martial law.

## Warnings

- Do not bring your cell phone or any GPS enabled device with you to your bunker. If you are found to be missing, the military may decide to attempt to track you by using the signal from your device. Remember that you will not have power so these devices will be useless after a few days regardless.
- Resisting orders during martial law may land you in jail or worse. Remember that civilian authorities are well trained to deal with citizens and even they do poorly at times. Military personnel may be less tolerant and more forceful during an arrest or detention.
- Do not run from armed military personnel who have seen you. They may shoot you.<sup>[25]</sup>
- You may want to include a camouflage outfit in your go-bag.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3666&context=californialawreview>
2. <http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>
3. <http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>

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