

MODULE 0: ZERO HOUR READY — FOUNDATION

Lesson 1: Phases of the Disaster

The 4-Stage Cycle — What You're Actually Preparing For

WHAT THIS LESSON COVERS

This is your foundation lesson. Everything that follows in this course - the supplies, the networks, the bug-out plans, the medical protocols - is built on top of what you're about to learn here. Before you can prepare for a disaster, you have to understand what a disaster actually is. Not in the way the news talks about it. In the way that actually helps you survive it.

Estimated reading time: 20–25 minutes. Have your PDF handout Module 0 Lesson 1 Action Steps Resources — open alongside this guide.

The Way Most People Think About Disaster (And Why It'll Get Them Killed)

Here's the problem with how most people approach preparedness: they think about it like a weather event. A hurricane comes. A wildfire burns through. A flood hits. And then it's over, things go back to normal, you clean up the mess, and life resumes.

That mental model is dangerous. Not because it's wrong for small-scale events - it's fine for those. It's dangerous because when the big one comes, the one that actually reshapes civilization, that mental model leaves you completely unprepared. You're standing there waiting for things to go back to normal. They're not going back to normal. Normal is gone.

Since we are walking through a 3 Tier Disaster Preparedness preparation- What I want you to walk away from this lesson with is a completely different mental framework. One that matches what actually happens during large-scale, civilization-level events (Cosmological Tier Disasters). Once you have this framework, everything else in this course will make sense in a way it wouldn't without it.

We call this the Four Phases of the Disaster.

The Four Phases — A Map of What's Coming

Think of these four phases as a timeline. Not a precise one - you won't be able to mark dates on a calendar - but a sequence. These phases happen in order. Understanding where you are in the sequence, and what's coming next, is the difference between a prepared person and a reactive one.

PHASE	NAME	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	YOUR JOB
Phase 1	Clown World	The world is increasingly unstable - economically, politically, socially. Things feel off. Institutions are failing. This is where we are right now.	Prepare. This is your window. It won't stay open forever.

Phase 2	The Solar Killshot (Triggering Event)	The event that ends the current civilization as a functional system. The grid goes down. Supply chains collapse. Society begins its breakdown.	Execute your plan. The preparation window is closed.
Phase 3	The Main Event	The large-scale physical event - whatever form that takes. The environment itself becomes hostile in ways that dwarf the Phase 2 chaos.	Survive. Everything you built in Phase 1 is what keeps you alive here.
Phase 4	The Aftermath	The dust settles. A radically different world exists. The survivors begin the work of rebuilding.	Rebuild. Lead. Pass down knowledge.

Phase 1: Clown World - The Phase You're Living In Right Now

Look around. Does the world feel stable to you? Does it feel like things are trending in a good direction - economically, politically, in terms of social cohesion? Most people who find courses like this one are asking that same question. And the answer they keep arriving at is: no. Not really.

That's Phase 1. It's not the disaster itself. It's the long, slow deterioration that precedes it. And here's what makes Phase 1 so tricky: because things are still functioning - because the lights are still on, the grocery stores are still stocked, and the internet still works — it's easy to talk yourself out of preparing. "Things aren't that bad," you say. And you're right. They're not that bad yet.

But Phase 1 is a gift. It is the window - maybe the only window - in which you can build everything you need to survive what comes after it. The students who understand this are the ones who will be ready. The students who keep waiting for things to get bad enough to justify starting are the ones who will be caught completely flat-footed.

The most important thing to understand about Phase 1: it ends. Not "someday maybe". It 100% ends. Every single society in human history that has entered a period of major systemic instability has eventually crossed the threshold into collapse. The question is not whether. The question is when - and more importantly, whether you used the time you had.

How Much Time Do You Have?

Nobody can give you a precise number. If someone tells you they can, they're selling something. What we can tell you is this: the time between Phase 1 and Phase 2 is not unlimited. It may be years. It may be less. What you can control is how you use whatever time is left.

Here is the planning framework that drives everything in this course:

THE PREPAREDNESS FRAMEWORK: FOUR STAGES

- 1. PLANNING** - Decide what you need and design your approach. This is the thinking work.
- 2. GATHERING** - Acquire the supplies, skills, and people your plan requires.

- 3. PRACTICING** - Use what you've gathered. A skill you've never practiced is not a skill you have.
- 4. EXECUTING** - When Phase 2 arrives, you stop preparing and you act. Everything before this was for this moment.

You are currently in the Planning and Gathering stages. That's exactly where you should be. This course is designed to walk you through both.

Phase 2: The Solar Killshot - When the Window Closes

Phase 2 is the triggering event. It's the moment the current civilization stops functioning as a system. In this course, the primary scenario we plan around is a solar event - specifically, the kind of large-scale electromagnetic disruption that takes out grid infrastructure on a massive scale. We call this the Solar Killshot.

Why this scenario? Because it is the one threat that is simultaneously catastrophic enough to reshape civilization and credible enough to be taken seriously by anyone who looks at the science. The sun has done this before. It will do it again. The only question is the timing.

What Happens on Day One

The moment the grid fails, here is what goes with it - all at once, with no warning, no gradual ramp-up:

- Water purification and distribution stops
- Food transport and refrigeration stops
- Gasoline distribution stops - the pumps are electric
- All air travel, trains, banks, grocery stores: gone
- 911, internet, warning systems: gone
- Hospitals on backup power: a matter of hours to days

By day three, there is no food left in stores. No gas at stations. No more pharmaceutical refills. After five days, violence is almost certain in dense population areas. The timeline is tight and unforgiving.

This is not a scare tactic. This is the documented pattern of every major infrastructure collapse in history, compressed to a modern, technology-dependent society. The more dependent the society, the faster the collapse.

The Window Between Phase 2 and Phase 3

Here is something critically important that most people miss: Phase 2 and Phase 3 are not the same event. There may be a significant gap between them - potentially years. The grid going down is not necessarily the same moment as the physical, environmental catastrophe.

That gap matters enormously. It means that the skills, supplies, and community you build could be what sustains you through years of Phase 2 before the physical events of Phase 3 even arrive. Phase 2 is survivable. But not by people who were waiting to start preparing until it began.

Phases 3 and 4: The Main Event and What Comes After

Phase 3 is the large-scale physical event. Without going too deep into the science here — that's covered in detail later in the course - understand that Phase 3 represents environmental changes that

dwarf anything Phase 2 brought. This is not a power outage you're managing. This is the planet itself in upheaval.

Preparation for Phase 3 looks like: a defensible location, structural shelter designed for extreme conditions, the ability to be self-sufficient for an extended period, and a community of people who are pulling in the same direction. Every lesson in this course is building toward your ability to handle Phase 3.

Phase 4 is the aftermath. It's where the survivors begin building whatever comes next. This phase matters because it means there is a next. The work you're doing right now is not just about surviving the bad part. It's about being one of the people who helps rebuild something worth having on the other side.

A NOTE ON TIMELINES

The phases don't have fixed durations. Phase 2 could last a year or a decade. The key insight is not knowing exactly when each phase begins - it's understanding that the phases are sequential and that your window to prepare is Phase 1. That window is the only one that matters for your preparation work. Everything else is execution.

Big Picture Planning: What You're Actually Preparing For

Now that you understand the four phases, we can talk about Big Picture Planning - the framework for thinking about everything you need to do before Phase 2 arrives.

Big Picture Planning is not a supply list. It's not a checklist. It's a way of organizing your thinking so that every decision you make - what to buy, what to learn, who to bring into your network, where to locate — is connected to a clear understanding of what you're actually preparing for and when you're going to need it.

The Three Stages of Survival Planning

Within the disaster itself - primarily Phase 2 through Phase 3 - your needs change dramatically depending on where you are in the timeline. We break this down into three stages:

STAGE	TIMEFRAME	PRIMARY CHALLENGE
Initial Stages	Day 1 through first month	Chaos, immediate survival needs, avoiding violence and early threats. This is where your emergency supplies and your ability to get out of a bad area are critical.
Settling In	Month 1 through ~Month 6	Transition from emergency supplies to sustainable systems. Skills become as important as supplies. Community becomes essential.
Long-Term Success	Month 6 onward	Sustain and grow. Infrastructure maintenance, knowledge transfer, resilience against the unexpected. This is civilization-building.

Notice how different the challenges are at each stage. This is why "just buy a bunch of canned food" is incomplete preparation. The supplies that save you in the Initial Stage are different from what keeps you alive in the Long-Term Success stage. You need to plan for all three, and that's exactly what this course is designed to help you do.

The Big 4 - Your Four Non-Negotiables

Across all three stages of survival, there are four things that your ability to stay alive depends on. We call these the Big 4. Everything else in your preparation - every supply you buy, every skill you learn, every decision you make about your network and your location - connects back to these four.



Water

Not the most dramatic-sounding threat, but it is the most immediate. When grid infrastructure fails, water purification and distribution fail with it. You cannot go more than three days without water. And contaminated water - the kind you'll get from unmanaged sources once the systems that treat it are offline - will kill you just as surely as no water at all, just more slowly and painfully.

Your water plan needs numbers. Not "I'll store some water." How many people in your survival group? How much water per person per day? How many months of supply is that? What's your plan when that supply runs out? Those are the questions, and by the end of this course you'll have answers.

Food

Like water, your food plan needs to be specific to your group. Emergency supplies carry you through the Initial Stage. But emergency supplies have a limit, and they don't grow. Part of your food planning is understanding the transition - from what you have stored to what you can produce sustainably. That timeline is different for every family, and knowing yours matters.

Defense

This one makes some people uncomfortable, so let's be direct about it: in a collapse scenario, human beings will kill other human beings for resources. That is a documented historical fact from every major societal breakdown in recorded history. Pretending it won't happen in your situation is not idealism - it's a preparation failure.

Defense doesn't mean building a militia. It means having the tools, the training, and the protocols to protect yourself and your family when the systems that normally provide that protection no longer exist. For most Americans, that starts with firearms. But the rationale behind your choices matters as much as the choices themselves.

Health

Modern medicine is one of the most fragile systems in our infrastructure. When the grid goes down, the medical system goes with it within days. That means every person in your survival group who depends on a medical system to stay alive has a problem on day one.

Your health planning has two components: first, understanding the medical dependencies within your group and building a plan to manage them. Second, getting yourself into the best possible physical

condition before Phase 2 arrives. Strong, physically capable people survive at a dramatically higher rate than those who are not. That's not an opinion - it's a pattern.

DON'T SKIP THIS STEP

Before you move to Lesson 2, do the Big 4 exercise from your handout. Get specific. Write down how many people are in your survival group. Figure out your actual water and food numbers - not estimates, actual numbers. Have a rationale for your defense approach, not just "I have a gun." Know your biggest health vulnerability and what you're doing about it. The student who does this exercise with real numbers is several steps ahead of the one who reads through it and moves on.

The "C-Minus Standard" - The Most Important Philosophy in This Course

There is a trap that destroys most people's preparedness efforts, and it's a trap that catches smart, motivated, well-intentioned people. It's the trap of perfectionism.

You start researching water storage and you discover there are twelve different filtration systems and you need to understand all of them before you can decide. You start researching firearms and you fall into a rabbit hole of caliber debates and platform preferences that goes on for months. You want to do this right, so you keep researching instead of doing.

Meanwhile, Phase 1 is ticking. And you have nothing.

Here's the philosophy that will save you from that trap: aim for the C-minus standard. Not perfection. Not expert-level mastery. A passing grade. A C-minus.

Think about it this way: being an expert in 95% of everything still gets you dead if you fail on the remaining 5%. The student who has a basic level of competence across all the areas that matter will outsurvive the expert in one area who has ignored the others. You need water AND food AND defense AND health. A 95-percentile score in three of them while failing the fourth is a failing grade.

The goal is to be a C-minus student across all the areas that matter. That's a passing grade. That's what keeps you alive. And the beautiful thing about the C-minus standard is that it's achievable. An expert-level standard in every area of preparedness is not achievable - not in the time you have, not on the budget most people have. The C-minus standard is achievable, and it's enough.

You will hear this philosophy referenced again and again throughout this course. It's the lens through which you should evaluate every supply decision, every skill acquisition, every plan you make. Is this getting me to C-minus or better in this area? If yes, it's worth doing. If you're already at C-minus and this would take you to an A while leaving other areas at D or F, it's the wrong priority.

What's Coming in Lesson 2

Now that you understand the Four Phases and the Big 4, Lesson 2 is going to go deeper into the danger landscape. Specifically: how the threats you face change over time. What's trying to kill you on day one is not what's trying to kill you at month six, and knowing the difference changes how you prepare.

We're going to look at the risk curves - how medical system collapse, violence, famine, waterborne disease, and other threats track across the timeline of a civilization-level event. You'll come away from

Lesson 2 with a much more specific picture of what to worry about when, and a practical exercise for mapping your personal risk profile.

Before you get there, do the work from this lesson. Specifically:

- Complete the Big 4 exercise with actual numbers for your group.
- Write the 15-minute supply list from your handout - set a timer, don't stop, don't second-guess. We'll use it in Lesson 3.
- Think hard about where you are in the Phases right now, and what that means for how much time you have.

The student who does the homework is not just following instructions. They're building something real. Every exercise in this course is a brick. By the time you finish Module 0, you'll have the foundation of an actual plan. That's not something most people have. You're already further ahead than you think.

See you in Lesson 2.

4Ward Defense Personal Protection

ZERO HOUR READY: The Complete Preparedness System
Module 0 | Student Reading Guide