

Surviving the Collapse of Society

Skills to Know and Careers to Pursue



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Introduction

It's the Summer of 2015. In that strange and amazing "technology is everywhere" sort of way, it's the year I've deemed as officially being "THE FUTURE." There are self-driving cars. There is a robot exploring Mars. There are helmets that when worn can make you happier and more focused. There are microchip implants that allow you to control computers with your mind. There are organs grown from scratch. There are amazing advances in medicine, nanotechnology, and agriculture. 2015 is even the year they went to in *Back To The Future*. It's also the year that scientists, environmentalists, activists, and your everyday citizen all agree that the human race has severely screwed up the environment and is headed toward some very difficult times with rising ocean levels, severe weather, and polluted waters. No one knows for sure what's going to happen in the years to come, but I have a few guesses:

- We're still going to have the means of powering electronic devices. Oil, coal, natural gas, geothermal, hydro, solar, and wind power are not going away anytime soon. These sources of power may become more limited but by no means are going away.
- Since our means of producing energy will still be present, most technologies will continue to be used, though will be made more energy efficient.
- While I personally believe our current crisis is caused by scientific inquiry, capitalism, disconnection from the cycle of life and death, individualism, poor government leadership, and religious dogma, I believe that there is a chance that these various factions may help

create solutions. That is, scientists will create solutions and these other factions will support them in applying their solutions.

- The nation state and capitalism will still exist, but hopefully with a more sustainable and localized slant.
- There may be international war. There may be civil war.
- There may be famine caused by the unpredictable weather.
- There may be energy shortages.
- There may be water shortages.
- There may be disease.
- Many roads may become inaccessible due to a limitation of materials to repair them. This would cause difficulty in travel and trade.
- Local production of goods will become very important.

There are a lot of maybes, but humans are resilient and adaptable creatures with a knack for survival. I know that we have the ability to make it through this with existing technologies and with technologies being actively developed. It's just a question of whether or not scientists, government, and citizens can find a way to work together within a reasonable timescale.

Realizing that the culture we grew up with is no longer a viable option for the future, 2015 brings confusion of what to do next. It is a time of culture shock as we navigate the fine details of the future. We try to balance passions with the realistic need of being prepared to deal with these problems, but it is a very difficult road. I am writing this as a sort of meditation on what I want to do with my life and where I want to fit into this whole conundrum called 21st century life. That's where I've been at, so for the past few weeks I've been making lists of the skills and careers that might be useful no matter what happens to the economy, the environment, culture, or society.

Surviving a Societal Collapse: Skills To Know and Careers to Pursue

There will be several phases of change before either humans find a stable way of living or go extinct. Most careers aren't going to disappear overnight. Even ones that do disappear will have components that can be transferred over to other skills and careers. If you pick something that seems to be phasing out, you should have adequate time to find another skill or career to pursue. One option is to keep your day job but in your free time start producing something like soap or other useful items. The first new phase we are entering into is localized production of specialty products with 3d printers, but who knows if that will last.

When learning a skill, be sure that you know how to do it from scratch. Some skills are currently taught with readily available products from the store, but you should know how to create those products yourself or be able to use alternatives.

Humans already have a lot of existing infrastructure. Some of it isn't very efficient and some of it takes a lot of effort to be maintained, but nonetheless, that infrastructure will be useful in times to come. It is generally more economical and sustainable to reuse rather than build new. In other words, living in small towns and cities may be safer than in intentional communities out in the woods.

Out of necessity certain specialized skills will be known by a large portion of the population and may not be viable as career options. For instance many people will learn enough plumbing, electrical, and construction skills to get by.

The following careers and skills follow no particular order. Of course you do not need to know how to do all of the items listed, but having a hand in a few would do you well in not just being able to survive in a turbulent economic scenario, but also be useful in a world that desperately needs certain skills.

THE WORLD IS
CHANGING...
ARE YOU READY?

Medical Personnel



Medical personnel will continue to be highly valued no matter what happens. However, fewer medications will be synthesized and instead be locally grown and prepared from plants. General practitioners will have more security than specialists. For instance, dietitians and nutritionists may have difficulty finding work.

- doctors
- nurses
- veterinarians
- dentists
- midwives
- naturopaths
- herbalists
- therapists



School will transform from being academic to being experiential and skill-based. Teachers and students will share responsibility for the administrative work. There will also be more apprenticeships and family trades. More people will start their own businesses rather than being an employee.

- children
- adults
- trade skills
- sustainable and local farming apprenticeships

Teachers

Community Organizers



Communities may have to fend for themselves with the state and nation being unable to maintain power with limited resources. Communities could take shared responsibilities for community organizing, or elect individuals to handle it.

- city council
- public planners
- government
- land trusts
- events



Humanity will continue to use electricity and utilize a variety of methods to keep the lights on. Renewable energies such as solar, wind, hydro, and bicycle power will outlast natural gas, nuclear, oil, and coal.

- solar
- wind
- hydro
- natural gas
- bio-diesel
- ethanol
- nuclear
- oil
- coal
- bicycle power
- geothermal
- electrician

Energy Production and Distribution

Small Farms and Gardens



Small farms and urban gardens will feed the population. The raising of cows and pigs will be replaced by goats, chickens, and insects for sources of protein. Everyone will compost their food scraps, pee, and poop.

- vegetables
- herbs
- small livestock
- insects
- orchardists
- seed saving
- plant breeding
- compost
- rooftop gardens
- bee keeper
- aquaculture (raising fish)



The food that small farms and gardens produce needs to be processed into usable forms for consumption. Each community needs a centralized place to do this in.

- butchers
- bakers
- chefs
- grain mills
- oil press
- brewers
- distillers

Food Processing

Food Preservation



Most food will go bad without some form of preservation. Since electric refrigeration and freezing may be limited due to their massive energy requirements, evaporative refrigerators, underground food cellars, and various kinds of long-term food preservation will be needed. Solar dehydration is the most energy efficient option for preserving food.

- fermentation
- packaging
- canning
- dehydration



Shoe makers, or cobblers, will create all sorts of shoes and accessories for shoes. Canvas, leather, and recycled rubber and plastic will be common materials used.

- boots
- sandals
- sneakers
- laces
- soles
- insoles

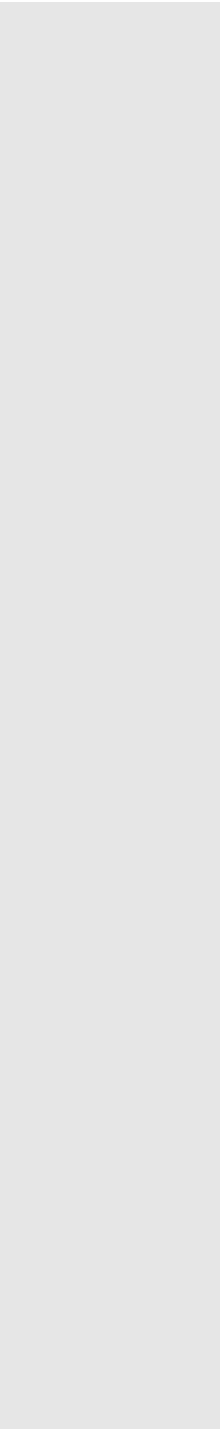
Cobblers (Shoe Makers)

Fiber Crafts



Clothing helps keep us warm and safe. Baskets and bags help us carry our belongings. Used clothing will be less available and more clothing will need mending or resizing.

- seamstress
- tailor
- weaver
- spinner (yarn)
- felter (wool)
- hats
- bags
- clothes





Soap keeps us clean. Thankfully anti-bacterial soap will no longer be breeding super bacteria and instead soap makers will create traditional soaps that work s by mechanically removing unwanted debris and organisms.

- hand soap
- dish soap
- heavy duty soap
- lye producer
- essential oil extractor

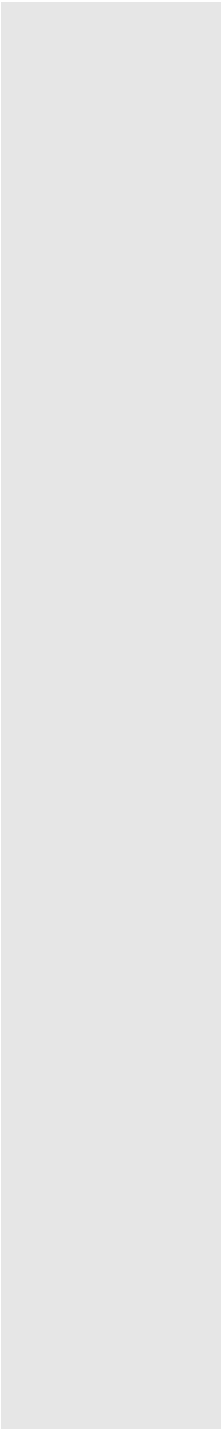
Soap Maker

Candle and Lantern Maker



Light keeps us safe from the darkness. While electricity will probably still be around, candles are good alternatives. Most candles will be made from beeswax in the future.

- wick maker
- essential oils
- beeswax
- lantern bodies





Since the population will decrease and many areas will become uninhabitable, scavengers will become important for recycling and upcycling the materials within abandoned houses and industrial sectors.

- houses
- industry
- sell goods to recyclers

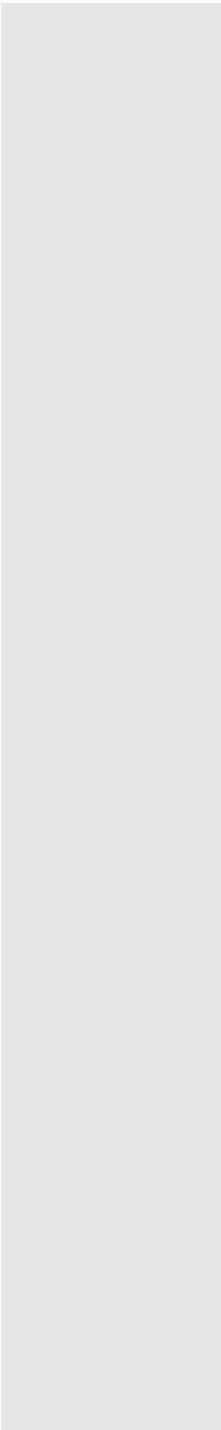
Scavengers

Construction Trades



Building, retrofitting, and repairing structures will continue, though different materials may be used, and the structures may be smaller or forgo repairs for awhile longer than typical.

- carpenters
- stone masons
- road workers
- cob and adobe
- tile
- engineers
- railroad workers





Wood is an amazing natural resource. If managed properly it can be used indefinitely for all sorts of stuff. If there ever is an energy crisis, forests may become victim to illegal logging for people needing a source of heat or construction materials. Hopefully communities can agree on a sustainable forestry plan that is fair for everyone, utilize efficient rocket stoves, and insulate homes well.

- lumber jacks
- tree planters
- wood mills
- paper mills
- sustainable forestry plans

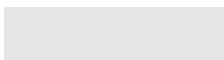
Forestry

Wood Workers



You can build quite a lot out of wood if you know the right tricks. So long as wood is being sustainably harvested and responsibly used, then plenty of wood crafters will be needed.

- boats
- doors
- posts
- shingles
- tool handles
- paper products
- boxes





Plumbers will be needed to keep various liquids flowing through tubes.

- waste
- water
- commercial
- residential

Plumbers

Mechanics



Creating new robots, machines, and tools will be harder and more expensive with fewer resources, so we'll need plenty of mechanics to fix up everything and anything.

- cars
- bicycles
- farm equipment
- local industrial equipment
- energy infrastructure



There won't be much new metal being mined, but there will be plenty of metal around for recycling into new forms. Most forms of metal work consume a lot of energy and may become limited to softer metals. Welders will use biogas (methane) captured from composting human and animal waste and electricity produced from renewable energy sources.

- blacksmiths
- welders
- machinists
- metal fabricators
- 3d printing
- charcoal making

Metal Workers

Glass Fabrication



Glass has many functions from improving natural lighting to holding liquids.

- window glass
- bottles
- tubes
- cookware
- light bulbs
- stained glass
- reading glasses



Established forms of power such as police and military factions may dissipate as money becomes obsolete. In the case that these bodies become tyrannical or fade out of existence, communities will need some form of security to defend themselves and uphold any laws they establish. There will be an increase in violent crime and theft.

- **combat training**
- **martial arts**
- **shooting**
- **archery**
- **assassins**
- **ninjas**

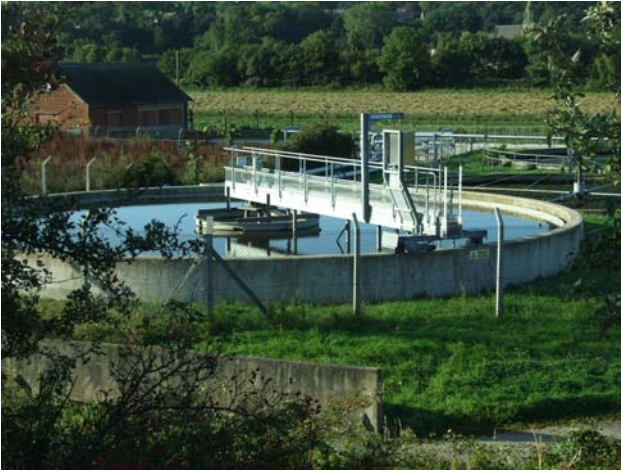
Security Guards

Food Gathering



With the shape of the environment drastically changing, it is difficult to know how many animals and plants will survive for humans to hunt or gather. If the human population decreases then some natural areas may transform into spaces of abundance. Otherwise most food will need to be grown within climate controlled spaces.

- hunter
- trapper
- fisher
- gatherer



Water is abundant on Earth, but with rainfall patterns changing and new areas experiencing droughts, special measures will be taken to obtain clean water. Every house will need a large water holding tank. Water may need to be piped in from areas with copious amounts of rainfall to areas with little rainfall.

- collection of clean water
- chemical/natural filtration
- humanure
- methane capture
- watershed management
- rainwater storage
- greywater systems
- well digger/driller

Water and Waste Treatment

Bioremediation



As humans destroy the environment, it will be important for them to figure out how to repair it. Habitat restoration, or bioremediation, uses various methods to do just that.

- habitat restoration
- fungi
- bacteria
- chemicals
- plants
- insects
- wildlife
- carbon sequestering



People need a way of hunting and defending themselves. Bullets may become scarce, and so skilled archery will rise as an alternative.

- guns
- bullets
- bows
- arrows
- knives and swords
- body armor

Weapons

Miners



There will be plenty of metal to recycle, but other substances will still need to be mined fresh out of the Earth. There are alternatives to mining substances, but they are very helpful to have.

- concrete
- lime
- rock
- salt



Many different animals can be processed into hides and furs for a variety of uses.

- saddles
- gloves
- shoes
- jackets
- drum skins
- clothing

Tanners and Leather Workers

Spiritual and Religious Guides



The rise of science, globalization, and cultural imperialism have brought religious and spiritual minds to an all time low. However, these minds will likely flourish as small communities develop and media is not so readily available.

- churches
- priests
- fellowships
- leaders
- teachers
- gurus



Large livestock may not be able to survive in the future, but either way, strong and resilient animals will need to be bred to assist humans in their struggle for life.

- horses
- dogs
- goats
- sheep

Animal Breeders and Trainers

Traders



While local commerce will be big, there will still be middle dealers for helping people distribute goods. Traders can also bring goods common in one area to a place those goods are rare.

- food
- wool and cotton
- clothing
- weapons
- parts



People need to get around. Personal transportation will not be as affordable and so public and private transportation will thrive, along with bicycles. Bicycles and horses may become the dominant form of transportation as roads degrade and petroleum products become scarce.

- taxis
- bicycle pedicabs
- horse drivers
- buses
- subway operators
- train operators

Transportation

Entertainment



Entertainment and art keeps many people happy. People love a good distraction.

- musicians
- artists
- television
- video games
- board games
- theater
- sex workers
- bars
- casinos
- propaganda
- drugs



Many other products will need to be made in order to support the careers and skills listed above.

- bicycle machines
- parts
- tires
- automobiles
- 3D printers
- greenhouse plastic
- birth control
- medicine
- ceramics

Production of Various Goods

Instrument Makers and Repair



Music is enlivening and will always be an essential aspect of humanity. It may become more difficult to make a living as a musician, but instrument makers will still be needed.

- guitars
- flutes
- drums
- violins
- pianos
- banjos



Materials and nutrients can easily be reused or recycled. Since acquiring new materials and nutrients will be difficult, "trash" will be very rare.

- plastic
- metal
- wood
- ceramics
- glass
- vegetable compost
- humanure

Recyclers, Upcyclers, and Waste

Inventors and Researchers



Much of human adaptability relies on technology. Climate change will bring about unique problems that will be solved with the help of inventors and researchers combining old and new knowledge.

- efficient technology
- human powered tools
- disease prevention
- resilient food crops
- anthropologists



National currencies will become limited in use and replaced by local currencies, work trades, or material trades.

- hour exchange
- barter
- local currencies

Alternative Currencies

Computer Technology



Computer related technology consumes a lot of energy but has been indispensable to the growth of human knowledge. Energy efficient computers and phone devices are essential to continuing their usage.

- computers
- internet
- servers
- programming
- software
- phone



There are many resources already available for coming times. Here are just a few that I've found:

opensourceecology.org

Creates open source blueprints for everything you need to run a human civilization. Mostly farm tools.

instructables.com

Provides a space for people to share and provide instructions to replicate their DIY adventures.

ic.org

A listing of thousands of intentional communities worldwide seeking members.

farmhack.org

A place for farmers to share their unique inventions and tools.

dystopian, ecotopian, and climate change fiction

Fiction can give a good idea of what life might be like.

Resources

Conclusion

While I wish that we were heading toward an ecotopian society, it is more likely that everything will remain relatively the same, but with extra hardships. Now is a time for the human race to shine in its ability to adapt to new situations. We have lost a great amount of survival knowledge to our reliance on modern technology, but that knowledge can be relearned, and that modern technology can help us adapt to even harder situations.

There are a lot of options of how to be useful in the coming years. Specialize in a few skills and know the basics of a few others. Make friends who fill in the skills where you are lacking. Move somewhere that has a community already exploring sustainable solutions and has people interested in do it yourself (DIY) skills. Petition your city to be prepared for climate based change. Do not buy homes in areas that will be consumed by the ocean rising. Most of all, mentally prepare yourself for the strange times to come!

I still don't know what I'm going to do with my life. I guess I'll write another zine and think about the million businesses I want to start and million places I want to go to and million people I want to meet and the million skills I want to learn. Thanks for reading.

THE WORLD IS
CHANGING...
ARE YOU READY?



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