

## 5 Steps for Making a Personalized Threat Analysis

Whether you are just beginning with your preparedness or are a seasoned prepper, we have all experienced how overwhelming it is to plan for all the different possible events. [Preparedness books](#) and the internet can be a great tool for discovery and information, but it can also be a distraction. One of these distractions is the amount of information available and, along with that, the need one feels to be prepared for every possible disaster or disaster that might occur.

### Why Do a Threat Analysis?

An accurate assessment of potential hazards and situations gives those just starting out and as well as those reviewing their plans valuable insights on **what to plan for first**. Once you know this, you can focus your attention where it needs to be. This saves both time and money.

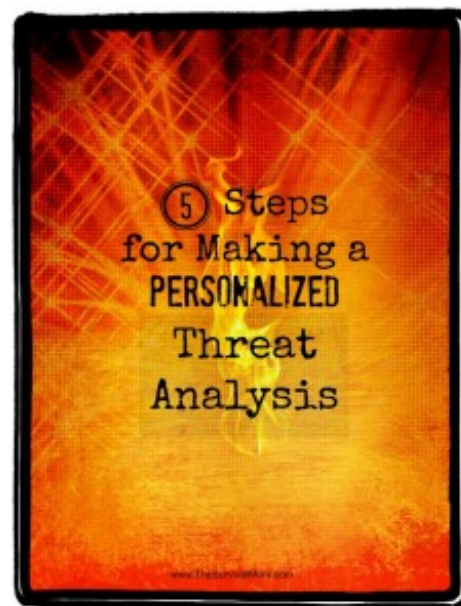
The premise of a threat analysis is determining which events are most likely to occur so you can mitigate their effects as much as possible. By starting with the most likely disasters and events, you will be better prepared to meet these challenges. As you continue down your list, becoming better prepared for each event, your overall preparedness level will increase.

For example, a threat analysis will help you see that you should prepare for natural disasters like floods, storms, and earthquakes before less-likely scenarios like asteroid collisions, pandemics, and nuclear war. This is not to infer the latter are not possible, only that you are **far more likely to be affected** by the former. And if you are fully prepared for the first group, you are much closer to being prepared for other, less-likely events.

### Proximity and Threat Analysis

To start your threat analysis, make a list of all the disasters, events, and situations that might occur in and around your location. Be sure to include applicable work and school locations for all your [family](#) members. For this part of the exercise, do not sort, group or organize – simply explore and **write down everything** you can think of. You can always add to your list later.

As you look over these potential threats, you will begin to see patterns emerge. There are several ways you can sort these threats and most people tend to sort them based on their type, such as natural disasters, man-made disasters, and so on. This type of grouping is easy to understand and remember, but does not lend itself to knowing which of these threats **are most likely** to occur.



At this point, consider which events will affect you more. This is best illustrated with an example. Let's say there is a large [earthquake](#) in California and at the same time, your basement floods in Illinois. Which of these events is more likely to have a **direct impact on you**? Many people are suffering due to the earthquake in California, but you are much more affected by the flooded basement. In other words, proximity is everything.

It is important to keep in mind that proximity can lessen or increase the impact to you personally. Now, group your threat list based on which occur closer to you and will have a greater impact on you and your [family](#). A good proximity list would include:

- **Personal** – person, house, family, school, workplace
- **Local** – neighborhood, town, city
- **Regional** – county, state
- **National and beyond** – country, neighboring countries, global



Now is probably a good time to put your list into a spreadsheet. You will soon be adding a few more columns of information to help you make decisions on which potential threats to focus on first.

## Onset

Once you sort your threat list into the the above proximity list, create a new column and title it “Onset.” Then, for each item, mark it as either:

### ***Rapid Onset*** or ***Slow Onset***.

The onset of a threat is **how fast it occurs**. An earthquake occurs with no warning, while you may have several days notice of an approaching ice storm. Some disasters, like drought and currency collapses, can take years to occur. It is important to know the onset, as slow onset events allow for more time to prepare, while you will need to prepare differently for rapid onset events.

This step may take some research if you are not familiar with the onset of a specific event, but it is not time wasted. The more you know about disasters and crisis events, the better informed your decisions regarding them will be. Some people **assign a numerical value** to the onset with one (1) for slow and two (2) for rapid.

You may be tempted to add a “medium onset,” meaning an event that may or may not have a warning period. You are trying to avoid vagueness in your analysis. It is better to choose either rapid or slow, as marking an event as either “medium” or “possibly rapid” does not help with your **decision tree** on what to be prepared for. If in doubt, err on the side of caution.

## Likelihood and Severity

There are two additional columns of information to add to your analysis sheet:

- **Likelihood** of occurrence near you, personally
- **Severity** of impact to you, personally

There are a number of ways of denoting this information, and you will need to chose which works best for you. Some people rank them from 1 to 10, some 1 through 5, and others 0 to 4. However you decide to rank these, make sure you **implicitly understand the ranking** when you look at it. You do not want to be referring to a legend or cheat sheet to remember what the scoring means, as the threat analysis needs to convey

information intuitively *to you*.

## Impact Score

The last column is the Impact Score. This is a number that is **derived from the other information**. In the example below, 1 is used for slow onset, as this will not change the score (Onset x Likelihood of Occurrence x Severity of Impact to You), and a 2 for rapid onset, as this will double the score, making that event stand out more.

Below, the impact score is obtained by multiplying the three scores together, creating an indexed score which is easy to visualize those events that will:

1. Have a high likelihood of happening
2. Greatly impact you or your family
3. Give little or no warning before occurrence

When you finish with your threat analysis, it might look something like this:

## My Threat Analysis

Category	Event	Onset	Likelihood of Occurrence	Severity of Impact to You	Impact Score
<b>Personal (person, house, family)</b>		1 = slow, 2 = rapid	1-5, 1 = Unlikely, 5 = Likely	1 = Low, 3 = Some, 5 = Severe	L x S
	Home Fire	2	3	5	30
	Vehicle Accident	2	3	5	30
	Property Crime (theft, robbery, burglary, etc.)	2	3	3	18
	Health Problem (injury or disease)	1	2	5	10
	Job Loss	1	3	4	12
<b>Locally (neighborhood, town, city)</b>					
	Power Outage	2	2	3	12
	Water Outage	2	1	3	6
	Tornado	2	4	4	32
	Storms, Winter	1	5	4	20
	Storms, Summer	1	5	3	15
	Resource Shortage	2	2	3	12
	Fuel shortage	2	1	3	6
	Industrial Accident	2	1	3	6
<b>Regionally (county, state)</b>					
	Wild Fire	2	3	2	12
	Drought	1	2	2	4
	Flooding	1	5	3	15
	Volcano	2	1	3	6
<b>Nationally and above (country, global)</b>					
	Economic Events	1	3	3	9
	Terrorism	2	2	2	8
	Asteroid collision	2	1	5	10
	Pandemic	1	2	4	8
	Trucking Strike	2	1	3	6
	War	1	3	2	6
	Global Thermonuclear Warfare	1	1	5	5

Please note that this is only a sample analysis. It's likely your assessment will have **many more events listed**.

In the example above, a scale of 1 – 5 was used for both the event's Likelihood of Occurrence and for the Severity of Impact to You. Feel free to use whatever makes sense to you, though using letters should be avoided because it would be difficult to obtain an indexed score.

### Prioritize Your List

Once you have the Impact Score, there are a couple of ways to prioritize your list. One quick way to find out

which events to prepare for first, is to group the events by their score in descending order. When doing this, the top five events in this example are:

1. [Tornado](#)
2. Home fire
3. Vehicle accident
4. Storms, winter
5. Property crime

Another way of look at the data is by **arbitrarily setting a threshold** on the score, say scores 21 and above are the highest priority, 11 through 20 are medium priority, and 1 through 10 are low priority. If we were to group the events along these boundaries, you would have the following three groups;

#### **High Priority:**

- Tornado
- [Home fire](#)
- Vehicle accident

#### **Medium Priority:**

- [Storms, winter](#)
- Property crime
- Storms, summer
- [Flooding](#)
- [Job loss](#)
- [Power outage](#)
- Resource shortage
- [Wild fire](#)

#### **Low Priority:**

- Health problem
- Asteroid collision
- [Economic events](#)
- [Terrorism](#)
- [Pandemic](#)
- Water outage
- Fuel shortage
- Industrial accident
- Volcano
- [Trucking strike](#)
- War

- Global thermonuclear warfare
- Drought

Notice it is the common, everyday type of emergencies that are at the top of the list and not the often overly-hyped events that are often talked about on the internet. As it happens, these everyday emergencies are exactly the disasters and events you need to **be prepared for first**.

Making a threat analysis isn't difficult, but it does take some time. The time spent should directly translate into being better prepared for the most likely problems, and wasting less time on highly unlikely ones. This will leave you better able to protect and provide for your family during times of disaster and crisis.

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