

WARNING TIME FOR SHELTER OCCUPANCY

The advocacy of civil defense necessarily includes the advocacy of both expedient and permanent shelters. Although shelters do not constitute the entirety of necessary civil defense preparations, they are a very important part.

Many civil defense emergencies arise under conditions that do not permit evacuation or other time-consuming evasive actions. In those circumstances, the ability to put people in a blast-and-radiation-protected structure in which their air supply can be cleansed of chemical and biological agents is the only effective way in which to save their lives.

Also, in case of a generalized nuclear war affecting a country that is not equipped with fallout shelters, knowledge and ability to fashion expedient fallout shelters is essential. For a period of a few days, a large percentage of the entire country may be exposed to lethal fallout radiation. Even evacuated people would need to make expedient fallout shelters in order to survive.

Usually the best national civil defense preparations are considered to consist of modern blast, radiation, chemical, and biological protective shelter spaces within a short walking distance of all people where they live, work, or otherwise reside. In addition, a good national warning system should exist to notify the people that they should occupy the shelters. Where no public facilities exist, individuals can build their own private facilities.

As is discussed in Nuclear War Survival Skills for the case of nuclear attack, most Americans would receive their first warning of a nuclear attack by hearing and seeing the effects of distant explosions on military and other first-strike targets. Suppressing a military response is so important that an enemy would likely aim all of the initial weapons at military installations and other special facilities such as large airports. Civilian targets would be likely to have at least a 20 minute warning as ICBM targets or even several hours warning as bomber targets.

For some other sorts of dangers, however, the situation is worse. A terrorist attack with bacterial weapons where no civil defense monitoring system exists could fatally injure a large population as much as two days before the attack became known. By the time the symptoms of the disease were evident, no defensive response would be possible.

The most recent actual national civil defense emergency was that in Israel during the "United Nations" attack on Iraq. Israel has a nationwide blast shelter system, but, until the time of that war, had not required that the shelters be equipped with chemical and biological air filtration equipment. (They are now installing this equipment throughout the Israeli shelter system.)

In the photograph below, Major General Yaacov Lapidot, then head of civil defense for the country of Israel, is seen across the blast door assembly of the Arizona mobile