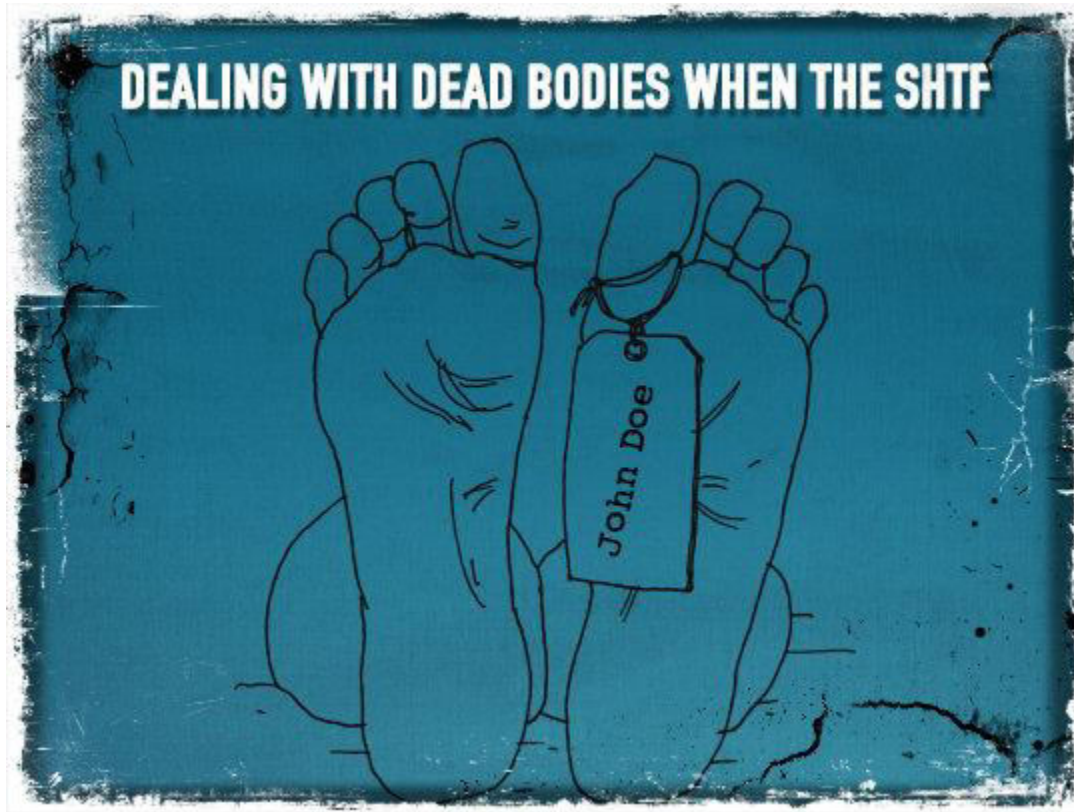


Dealing With Dead Bodies When the SHTF



It Is Something We Have To Think About Once the SHTF

It may be something we have to deal with during any crisis, and let us all hope it is not someone we know, or is a family member. That being said, there are precautions that we will have to take to protect ourselves against the spread of diseases caused by dead bodies.

You not only have to deal with the physical effects, but with the psychological effects on you and others, as well.

First, How Did They Die

Scavengers, insects, and diseases are a major concern, when there are dead bodies present, not to mention the actual cause of death. Was it murder, or accident or are there biological, or chemical contaminants to worry about?

In other words, if you approach the scene of death are you in danger from the very things that killed the person. Will you contract a disease or encounter a four legged predator lurking in the area.

Depending on the crisis it may be evident how they died. If there were a chemical or nuclear attack on your city or town, then cause of death may be obvious in many cases. An earthquake, flood, or wildfire will cause many fatalities, and again the cause may be readily apparent. Then again, it may not be, so you do have to consider other possibilities to make sure you do not succumb to the same fate.

If the person was killed by someone else, and not due to the crisis, is that person there, did they bobby trap the scene. Are you next? Is the site itself the cause? Are there chemicals leaking, which may have been caused by the calamity, are there poisonous gases, or some biological contaminates nearby. These questions should be running through your mind if you come upon a dead body during a crisis.

Handling and Disposal

In years past, before embalming was a common practice, the families of the recently deceased held services in their homes, and then usually buried the person after a day or even two of viewing and usually in a family plot.

In some cases, if the person did not have a family, the community itself buried the body in a local cemetery or even church yard. There were not as many, if any at all, organized services such as there is today, so every person, from children on up faced the task of dealing with dead bodies.

There, of course, are several reasons for doing it quickly as you can imagine, so we will not needlessly become graphic here. The point is bodies start decomposing immediately after death.

Most pathogens require a living host, so disease is not as big of a concern, but still a concern nonetheless, if the person has been dead for a week let's say. The pathogens find either a new host after the body dies or they die with the host body.

Bodies can of course, contaminate water sources, and this is something that has to be handled quickly and properly. During the Middle Ages when the Black Death (bubonic plague) raged unabated corpses infected with the plague were used as biological weapons. The bodies and their excrement were sometimes catapulted over castle walls, put in water sources, or left close to encampments of opposing forces to infect the fighters and civilians alike (CDC, n.d.).

Corpses have to be handled carefully, because the risk of infectious disease is there for days after the body dies.

Wear gloves, rubber boots, face protection and body protection. In the case of extremely contagious diseases you can disinfect the body, as is the practice for Ebola victims for example. The corpses cannot sneeze or cough but you still want your eyes, nose, and mouth protected, and you certainly do not want any bodily fluids making contact with any cuts or abrasions on your skin, or getting in your eyes, nose, or mouth.

In The Ground or Fire

If there are not mobile morgues or refrigeration available then the bodies need to be buried or cremated quickly. It simply is not acceptable in most people's minds in a modern society to allow bodies to lie in the streets to be picked over by predators. They have to be dealt with, and you have to have the mental capacity to handle the task.

Rally others together to help, the community may be devastated, but those living must live on, and the first step is proper treatment of those that have died. It may come down to just you in some cases, dealing with dead neighbors and strangers near or on your own property.

It takes several hours and roughly 2000° F to reduce a body to ashes. The ability to dispose of a body in this manner is not something you would likely have in a SHTF scenario. Simply setting a house on fire with bodies inside is not enough. The corpse after the fire would still have to be dealt with.

Cremation is now an accepted practice in many cultures, which has actually been around for hundreds if not thousands of years. At one time in Europe it was done in the hopes of stopping the spread of diseases.

Burial in the ground is the best option, while at the same time, the most difficult to accomplish. One or even two bodies would not be a problem, but dozens would be, because either you would have to dig a mass grave, or individual ones. Either way the task would be monumental.

Family members may have something to say about how you handle the body of their loved ones. Is there any family alive, who are the dead people, and should you try to mark the graves and try to identify them? No one can answer these questions now. We simply do not know what we would do.

This article assumes that society has broken down and that law and order as we once knew is absent. It would take a nationwide if not worldwide catastrophe to cause this to happen, but if it does happen, you will have to deal with the corpses of friends, family, and strangers alike.

Do what you know is right, based on your upbringing, culture, and even religious beliefs, and in the absence of any of that, then deal with the bodies for practical reasons.

It would be a daunting task for anyone, but it must be done to ensure you can go on living. Brace yourself psychologically, and deal with it quickly, because the alternatives are not something you want to deal with down the road as it were, so step up and do what has to be done.

Your community, your property would be overrun with predators, diseases and pests like rats, and any number of insects, if you do not deal with the problem quickly. Nature would take its course, but it would be a long course, and not something you would want to witness.