**Top 20 Places to Scavenge for Supplies After Collapse** [Alan Urban](https://urbansurvivalsite.com/author/admin/)

Some of you might be thinking, “I’m a prepper, I won’t have to scavenge for [supplies](https://amzn.to/2zjaNhh). I already have everything I need.” Maybe, maybe not. Even if you’ve been prepping for years, it’s still possible you forgot [a few things](https://urbansurvivalsite.com/?p=3325). But even if you didn’t forget anything, you could still end up in a situation where you need something you never thought you’d need.

What if you have to take in a pregnant woman or a parent with a small child? You may have to go looking for baby formula. What if your mother’s prescription medications are lost or destroyed? You may have to go looking for replacement meds. What if a crucial piece of gear is damaged? What if you need parts for your shelter or vehicle? These are just a few possibilities off the top of my head. There are dozens of situations you won’t think of until you’re in them.

The point is, you might have to scavenge for supplies after the shit hits the fan. If someone’s life is on the line, you’ll have no choice. But before I explain how to scavenge, I want to clear up some confusion about the difference between scavenging and looting.

**Scavenging is Not Looting -** After hurricane Katrina, we all saw videos of people running down the street with arms full of jewelry and electronics. Were they scavenging or looting? I think that’s pretty clear. Looters are not looking for things they need to stay alive; they’re just taking advantage of the situation.

Looters know someone is going to miss the stolen items. They know the owner will eventually return and find out what’s missing. For these reasons, looters are no different from common thieves.

Scavengers are completely different. They only search for things after the end of the world as we know it, and they only take things that have been discarded or are unlikely to be missed.

There could be a situation where you have to take food or medicine that will be missed, but I believe this is justified if someone needs it to live. Taking food or medicine right out of someone else’s hands is another matter.

I know of some legalists who insist that stealing is stealing no matter the circumstances, but in my opinion, morality is not a simple list of do’s and don’ts. And frankly, people who are squeamish about morally gray areas will not do well after the SHTF.

Moving on, here’s how to scavenge after the SHTF.

**Send a Scout -** If you know the area you want to search, it’s a good idea to send a scout with *binoculars, a radio, and a gun*.

Scouts should use their binoculars to watch the area for a few hours and make sure no one is living there and that there are no bandits lying in wait. It might sound paranoid, but some people become very dangerous when there are no police to keep them in check.

The last thing you want is to get robbed or possibly killed while scavenging for supplies.

The radio is so your scout can stay in touch. If the area is compromised or not worth the trouble, the group’s leader can instruct the scout to return or to check another area. If you lose contact with your scout, you’ll know something is wrong and can send reinforcements. But the reinforcements need to be careful not to wander into a trap.

The purpose of the scout’s gun should be obvious.

When surveying the area, the scout needs to note any obstacles that might make the area more trouble than it’s worth. Examples include barbed wire fences, high walls, ditches, streams, and so forth. All these things might make it too difficult or dangerous to lug back supplies.

The scout should also note whether any buildings in question have been damaged by things such as bombs or earthquake. You don’t want the stairs you’re climbing to collapse or a ceiling to fall on your head while you’re digging through the rubble.

If you have local maps, you should study them carefully to figure out all the ways in and out of the area you want to search. Plan your route carefully, and know alternate routes in case your main route gets cut off.

You and your group will have to weigh the costs versus the benefits and the risks versus the rewards before searching an area. Is the thing you want to search for necessary to save someone’s [survival](https://fb1a8msqkbao2v77wf5esrxjp1.hop.clickbank.net/?tid=AUTO), or is it just something that would make you slightly more comfortable?

**Make a Plan -** Once you’ve decided where to go and what to look for, you’ll have to decide who to send. Never send someone alone. He or she could twist an ankle or something and need help returning to camp. Also, there could be heavy obstacles or supplies that require at least two people to move.

And remember, one person is far more likely to be robbed or killed than two or more people. Ideally, you would send several people, but that depends on how many you can spare. You don’t want to leave children alone at your camp.

Your group should take a [vulture toolkit](https://urbansurvivalsite.com/urban-survival-vulture-toolkit/) with them. This is a kit with things you might need for scavenging, such as bags, cordage, [lock picks](http://sevin.srvvlfrog.hop.clickbank.net/?p=lpv1&tid=auto), cutting tools, a siphon, water jugs, and so forth. I also recommend bringing respirators and goggles in case the location’s air is full of dust or smoke.

If you have several areas to search, you’ll have to decide the order in which to search them. It’s better to start further out and work your way back toward camp so you don’t waste energy carrying supplies farther than necessary.

If you know the heaviest items are going to be in a particular place, go there last. If scavenging your area is going to take several days or weeks, you should get a map and mark the locations you search so you don’t accidentally visit the same place twice.

**Where to Look** Pretty much everywhere! Here are some possible targets and what you may find within them.

**1. Automotive Shops -** You have a better chance of finding the part you need here than in a department store. It’s true now, and it will be true after the SHTF, too.

**2. Cars -** You’ll want to check the glove box, under the seats, and in the trunk for snacks, tools, and other useful items. Parts of the car itself might prove useful, too. The mirrors could be used for signaling, the wiring for cordage, the upholstery for bedding and insulation, the battery for power (if someone in your group is mechanically inclined), and of course the engine parts if you need them for your own vehicle.

Here’s a list of [13 things you can scavenge from cars](https://urbansurvivalsite.com/13-things-you-can-scavenge-from-cars-after-the-shtf/).

**3. Churches -** I know, stealing supplies from a church is pure evil, right? But again, it’s not stealing if you’re in an end-of-the-world type scenario and the church has been completely abandoned. Churches that give food to the needy might have lots of canned food in the kitchen and closets.

**4. Distribution Centers -** Most people will hit grocery stores first, so it will be a little longer before the warehouses are picked clean. Even then, there may be a few things that were overlooked. Also, check the semi-trailers. You may find non-perishable foods and other supplies.

**5. Dumpsters -** It won’t be fun, but you might find some hidden treasures in dumpsters. There’s a book worth checking out called [The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving](http://amzn.to/2wPeqMB).

**6. Fire Stations**

You may find food, supplies, and clothing. Plus, the fire engine has a tank with hundreds of gallons of water. It will need to be filtered, though.

**7. Gas Stations -** These will probably be picked clean, but you never know. It’s worth a look.

**8. Government Buildings -** Most federal installations have commercial grade [solar panels](http://trk.mdrtrck.com/aff_c?offer_id=8747&aff_id=1219&source=auto). You may also find backup lighting and emergency supplies.

**9. Grocery Stores -** These will probably be picked clean, too, but you may find food in less obvious places such as under shelves, behind displays, and beneath cash registers. Also check the bathrooms, the offices, the stock room, and the loading dock.

**10. Hospitals -** Obviously these should have lots of food, clothes, and medical supplies. Check every single closet and every single drawer.

**11. Houses -** Check everywhere–rooms, garage, basement, attic, [backyard](https://d48c5lggo8dtbmd87gs2hmui2q.hop.clickbank.net/?tid=AUTO), storage sheds, the garden if there is one, etc. The water heater has up to 70 gallons of drinking water. Better yet, look for houses with swimming pools. Also keep an eye out for metal mailboxes which [can be converted](https://tinyhouselistings.com/build-a-do-it-yourself-tiny-woodstove/) into wood stoves.

**12. Manufacturing Facilities -** They may have fuel, [batteries](https://39e68gjhu77q2p0c3yhs6-6p85.hop.clickbank.net/?tid=AUTO), tools, first aid supplies, and all kinds of useful items.

**13. Marinas -** Check abandoned boats. They usually have supplies like emergency rations, communication equipment, fishing equipment, and possibly guns.

**14. Office Buildings -** Check break rooms for vending machines and check desks for snacks and small tools. There should be fire extinguishers in most rooms and cleaning supplies in the janitor’s closet.

**15. Pawn Shops -** If you’re lucky you’ll find weapons, ammo, and other miscellaneous gear. You might even find some working electronics such as walkie-talkies or a [ham radio](https://amzn.to/3hpPVcc).

**16. Pet Stores -** If your pets are still okay, a pet store might make it possible for you to keep feeding them without giving up any of your own food. You could also eat it yourself, but I wouldn’t recommend that unless you’re very desperate. There are no FDA regulations on pet food and it could make you sick if you eat too much.

**17. Restaurants -** These will probably be empty, but check anyway. There may be a few cans or bags of food that were overlooked. Anything that was in the freezer will have gone bad, though.

**18. Retail Stores**

See “Grocery Stores” above. Consider grabbing some non-electric entertainment such as books, cards, board games, sports equipment, etc.

**19. Schools -** There’s a lot to be found in schools–tools, fire extinguishers, [first aid](https://bea3amjfkk6r5x6m0p1dfm4kc4.hop.clickbank.net/?tid=AUTO) kits, cleaning supplies, and possibly food in the cafeteria. If you have time and can get them open, you might want to check the lockers as well. There may be some snacks with a long shelf life in them.

**20. Self-storage Facilities -** If you have time to pry open all of them, it might be worth it. You probably won’t find any food or perishable items, but there’s a chance you’ll find some clothes or useful gear and equipment.