

by Scott_LaFee

WHAT WOULD JACK DO?

In the popular TV series "24," Los Angeles is nuked with a small bomb detonated by a terrorist. The likelihood of such a thing really happening is relatively remote, but the U.S. government, through Web sites like Ready.gov, does offer advice in how to prepare for such threats.

Two researchers at Carnegie Mellon University wondered just how practical that advice was. They asked some basic questions: Is it worth the time and effort to stock supplies needed for a home shelter? How quickly should one seek shelter in the event of a nuclear explosion? How long should one remain in the shelter?

Writing in the May issue of the journal Health Physics, Keith Florig and Baruch Fischhoff suggest the government's recommendations are neither wholly realistic nor complete.

"A number of emergency management organizations recommend that people stock their homes with a couple dozen categories of emergency supplies," said Florig, a senior research engineer. "We calculated that it would cost about \$240 per year for a typical family to maintain such a stock, including the value of storage space and the time needed to tend to it."

The Carnegie Mellon professors concluded that for many families the investment probably wasn't worth it, especially given the low probability that the stocked supplies would actually be used in a nuclear emergency.

NUCLEAR THREAT - The U.S. government, through Web sites like Ready.gov, offers advice in how to prepare for nuclear attacks and natural disasters. CNS Photo.

MEDTRONICA - The AMA Doctor Finder Web site at www.ama-assn.org provides professional information on more than 690,000 physician-members in the United States. CNS Photo.

Government guidelines also recommend people take shelter or evacuate following a nuclear blast. Evacuation is best, but not always possible.

"If you are within several miles of the blast," Florig says, "there will be no time to flee and you will have only minutes to seek shelter. If you are 10 miles from the blast, you will have 15 to 60 minutes to find shelter, but not enough time to reliably flee the area before the fallout arrives."

If you seek shelter, Florig says, how long you stay depends upon the shelter and circumstances.

"Those who have poor shelters, limited stores and no access to a vehicle will need the most help to escape," he says.

MEDTRONICA

AMA Doctor Finder

www.ama-assn.org

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BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

The hardest bone in the human body is the jawbone.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

The percentage of American adults held in either a prison or a mental institution in 1953 was 0.67 percent; today it's 0.68 percent, according to the federal Department of Justice. In 1953, 75 percent of those incarcerated Americans were in mental institutions; today, 97 percent are in prisons.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Taphophobia - fear of premature burial

BEST MEDICINE

Hospital administrator: Do you mind telling me why you ran out of the operating room?

Patient: Because the nurse said, "Don't be afraid. An appendectomy is quite simple."

Hospital administrator: So?

Patient: She was talking to the doctor.

STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

In 1667, members of the Royal Society in England gathered to observe a pioneering medical experiment: the transfusion of 12 ounces of sheep's blood into a human patient, the Rev. Arthur Coga.

Samuel Pepys, the famous English diarist, recorded the event, writing after the transfusion: "The patient speaks well, saying that he finds himself much better, a new man."

Unfortunately, the importance of blood-type compatibility was not yet appreciated by medical scientists, and Coga died a short time later.

OBSERVATION

A hospital bed is a parked taxi with the meter running.

- Groucho Marx

LAST WORDS

Are you sure this thing is safe?

These last words were spoken by William Palmer as he was escorted up the gallows in 1855 to be hanged. Palmer, a physician, had been convicted of killing 14 people.

SUBSTITUTE WATER FOR SODA

Want to drop a couple of pounds? Then put down that can of cola and pick up a bottle of water. Dieters who swap sugary drinks for good old H₂O lose an average of three pounds a year compared with those who diet but continued to consume the sweet stuff, says a study at Children's Hospital and Research Center in Oakland, Calif. Cutting out soda saves calories, but water also helps rev up your metabolism, since well-hydrated cells process carbs and fat more efficiently.

DEPRESSED? DON'T GIVE UP

"Try, try again" may be the motto for beating depression. According to the nation's largest study on depression treatments, it's important to keep trying new options until you find the right fit for you.

Only 37 percent of sufferers found relief with the first method. It took more than three tries for a total of 67 percent of the patients in the study to recover. It pays to be patient, because most treatments take up to 12 weeks to kick in.

WellNews: Being prepared for a nuclear disaster by Scott_LaFee