

FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

BUG-OUT LOCATION SITE SURVEY

Score the site in this order: reachability, hazards, water, distance from help, legal access.

0. DECIDE IF LEAVING IS THE PLAN

- ☐ **List the 2–3 hazards actually plausible here**
A site that solves for wildfire is often a poor answer to flooding
- ☐ **Plan for BOTH staying and going**
Ready.gov: the first important decision is whether you stay put or evacuate

1. ROUTE TEST (THE FIRST REAL TEST)

- ☐ **Drive the primary route in the worst season, loaded**
Record the real time, not the mapping app's time. Real: _____
- ☐ **Count every chokepoint**
Bridges, tunnels, passes, single-lane sections, low water crossings, rail crossings. Count: _____
- ☐ **Drive one full alternate that avoids those chokepoints**
An alternate is only an alternate once you have actually driven it, last mile included
- ☐ **Confirm the trip fits in one tank**
Assume no station on the way is open
- ☐ **Pick a second destination in a DIFFERENT direction**
Ready.gov: choose several destinations in different directions so you have options
- ☐ **Half tank at all times; full tank when evacuation looks likely**
Ready.gov: stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump during power outages

Both instructions, not one. Ready.gov: know your alternate routes and other means of transportation BEFORE you go. Then, when you go, follow recommended evacuation routes and do not take shortcuts, they may be blocked. Be alert for washed-out roads or bridges and downed lines. Never drive into flooded areas.

2. HAZARD MAPS BEFORE THE WALKTHROUGH

Flood	FEMA Flood Map Service Center, msc.fema.gov/portal/search . Enter the address, pull the official flood map
Wildfire	Wildfire Risk to Communities, wildfirerisk.org . USDA Forest Service maps of risk to homes, likelihood, exposure, vulnerable populations
Terrain	USGS topographic map of the parcel. What is uphill, upwind, and upstream all eventually arrive

- ☐ **Low or moderate flood risk is not no risk**
FEMA: in low/moderate risk areas you are 5x more likely to flood than have a home fire in the next 30 years
- ☐ **On site, look at roofs, eaves, decks, vents**
USFA names these as key components of construction risk in its community wildfire-risk guidance
- ☐ **Dead/dry vegetation, overhanging limbs, roof and under-deck litter**
USFA landscaping risk list, same guidance

3. WATER DECIDES EVERYTHING

- ☐ **Identify the actual source and whether it works without power**
Electric-pump well with no backup = water only while the grid is up
- ☐ **Verify flow in the DRIEST month, not spring runoff**
Everything looks abundant in May
- ☐ **Surface water needs treatment before you drink it**
- ☐ **Test the well annually: total coliform, nitrates, TDS, pH**
EPA baseline for private wells. Use only a certified drinking-water lab
- ☐ **Test immediately after any of these**
EPA: known ground water or drinking water problems in the area • flooding, land disturbances, new construction or industrial activity nearby • replacing or repairing any part of the well system • change in odor, color or taste
- ☐ **Ask the local health department about free testing**
EPA notes it may provide private well testing for free

A flooded well (EPA). Start by contacting your local or state health department or environmental agency for advice on inspecting and testing, using a contractor experienced with drinking water wells if you can. Then: stay away from the pump while flooded, shock risk. Do not drink or wash from the well. Get a well or pump contractor to clean and disinfect BEFORE the pump goes back on. Once it is back on, pump until the water runs clear. Not clear? County or state health department, or extension service.

4. PRICE THE DISTANCE FROM HELP

- ☐ **Nearest hospital and the REAL drive time**
Minutes: _____
- ☐ **Career fire department or volunteer?**
- ☐ **Cell coverage on the property, or only at the road?**
Walk it and check, do not trust the carrier map
- ☐ **What the nearest real town actually stocks**
Fuel, feed, hardware, propane, tires
- ☐ **Equip for the distance you chose**
Trauma kit plus the training to use it is the compensation, not optional gear

5. LEGAL & HUMAN ACCESS

- ☐ **If it is not your land, get an explicit YES from the owner**
Who is coming, for how long, and what you bring in return
- ☐ **Check zoning and county building code**
Confirm with the local authority having jurisdiction, not a forum
- ☐ **Check septic and well permitting**
- ☐ **Check occupancy limits on unpermitted structures and RVs**
Some counties cap how long you can stay
- ☐ **Budget taxes, insurance, and vacancy risk**
Theft and slow damage nobody notices until it is expensive
- ☐ **Show up in normal times and be a known quantity**
Buy fuel and feed locally. Learn who plows the road and who owns the tractor

Final gate. Answers all five → build around it. Answers three → keep it on the list, and be honest about which two are missing. Then go sleep a night there and cook a meal while the stakes are still zero.

Full guide: tacticalbox.com/blogs/tacticalbox-blog/choosing-a-bug-out-location

Sources: Ready.gov evacuation guidelines; FEMA Flood Map Service Center; U.S. Fire Administration WUI community risk; USDA Forest Service Wildfire Risk to Communities; EPA private well guidance; USGS topographic maps.

GEAR UP BEFORE YOU NEED IT. NEW GEAR MONTHLY.

TACTICAL BOX