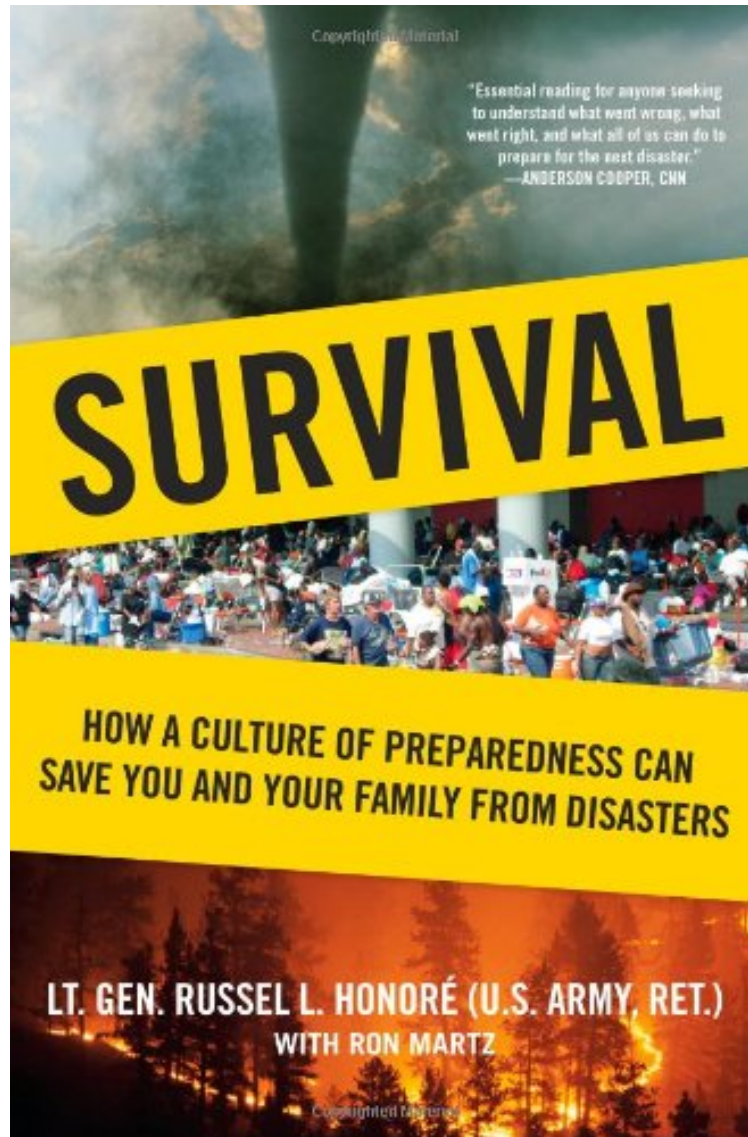


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Survival: How a Culture of Preparedness Can Save You and Your Family from Disasters

Lt. Gen. Russel Honor (U.S. Army ret), Ron Martz

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Lt. Gen. Russel Honor (U.S. Army ret), Ron Martz : Survival: How a Culture of Preparedness Can Save You and Your Family from Disasters before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Survival: How a Culture of Preparedness Can Save You and Your Family from Disasters:

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In this riveting call to action by one of the leaders who managed the recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, General Russel Honor famously called the John Wayne Dude by New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin encourages Americans to adopt a culture of disaster preparedness. It seems as though the frequency of natural disasters occurring around the nation and the world is increasing. Every day, there are new stories about earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and forest fires ravaging some part of the globe. There's also the threat of terrorist attacks at home and abroad. More than ever before, we need to think about the unthinkable and not depend on government to protect us from harm. Highly regarded as a hero during the Hurricane Katrina disaster, General Russel Honor was the right leader at the right time. Combined with his extensive and impressive military background, his rugged upbringing in rural Louisiana gave him the experience and know-how in a hurricane-prone environment to lead the Katrina recovery effort. Survival is part personal memoir and account of the events of Hurricane Katrina, but all in service to providing a useful guide filled with practical suggestions on how each of us can effectively respond to catastrophic events. The potentially devastating effects of natural disasters and terrorist attacks should not be taken lightly, and General Honor explains how our culture has moved far away from a mind-set to protect our communities from the harm that nature and our fellow humans can do. But we can learn from our experience and history and change our culture into one of preparedness as long as we have the will.

"[Honor] is not only a national hero, but an expert on how we should all prepare for natural and man-made disasters." -- Kyra Philips, CNN Newsroom
"Essential reading for anyone seeking to understand what went wrong, what went right, and what all of us can do to prepare for the next disaster." -- Anderson Cooper, CNN
"Lt. Gen. Russel Honor's *Survival* reminds us why America must forge a new culture of preparedness to address emergencies at home. In this candid account of the efforts to respond to Hurricane Katrina, Honor dissects our lessons learned and illuminates the measures leaders must take to effectively protect and defend the American people from future calamities. This is an important book by a good and able man who has rendered great service." -- President Bill Clinton
"The American Red Cross shares General Honor's passion for preparedness and applauds his leadership in helping families and individuals get ready for emergencies." -- Bonnie McElveen, Chairman of the American Red Cross
"[Honor's] message is that we can do better by each other and he suggests pertinent and feasible ways to do just that -- this is an important book, especially now." -- Gregory Fontenot, Col., U.S. Army, Retired
"General Honor, a true action hero, writes a national homeland security and well-being 'how-to code' for all sectors of U.S. society." -- Jim Clifton, Chairman CEO of GALLUP
About the Author Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honor (U.S. Army, ret.) is CNN's lead expert on disaster preparedness. He has served in a variety of planning and response operations, including Hurricane Floyd in 1999, Lili and Isidore in 2003, and Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne in 2004. He has also planned and supported U.S. military response operations abroad.
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The Patience of the Poor
The slate-gray Navy SH-60 Seahawk helicopter came in fast and low over New Orleans. Rushing beneath me were rivers of dark, stagnant water that three days earlier had been the streets and alleys of this vibrant city. In some areas only the roofs of houses were visible above the waterline. Elevated portions of Interstate 10 rose out of the murky water like the bleached spine of some elongated humpbacked sea serpent. People who had been chased from their homes by the floodwaters were scrambling to reach the highest levels of the highway overpasses in search of islands of dry concrete. It was shortly after 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 31, and what could be seen from the air was not good. But much worse was waiting just a few minutes away at the Louisiana Superdome. As the helicopter approached the business district of downtown New Orleans and the hulking round mound of concrete and glass that is the Superdome, thousands of people packed together and looking up at the helicopter from the upper plaza level outside the building that bills itself as "Louisiana's Most Recognizable Landmark" came into view. Just a few feet below the crowd, at street level, were the rising waters flowing into the city from nearby Lake Pontchartrain. My initial reaction to the scene was to mutter to myself, "Oh, my God!" This was my first view of the situation here. All my knowledge to this point had come from reports written by my staff. Their words failed to describe adequately the magnitude of the disaster that Katrina inflicted on New Orleans. But, in their defense, no one could have done justice in words to what was unfolding that morning. Some of the thousands of people standing outside the Superdome had come there over the weekend when New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin ordered the first-ever mandatory evacuation of the city after it appeared Katrina was going to score a direct hit. Many of them were poor and African-American, their only means of transportation the buses and streetcars of the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. They had no way to escape the storm's fury, no way to get out of the city ahead of the hurricane. And those on welfare had little money to buy their way out of town because it was the end of the month and the subsistence checks would not arrive for another few days. The Superdome, which can seat more than 72,000 football fans for New Orleans Saints games and the Sugar Bowl,

was converted into a temporary shelter and became their refuge of last resort. By Monday morning that refuge was a double-edged nightmare. Sunday night and early Monday morning, as about 9,000 city residents and tourists and more than five hundred Louisiana National Guard soldiers huddled inside, Katrina's winds began peeling away the rubber membrane that covers the roof. Holes opened and torrents of hurricanedriven rainwater poured in. People moved quickly to find dry spots. Some of those who came early to the Superdome were encouraged by city officials to bring food, water, and sleeping bags so they could ride out the storm with some amenities since few would be available at the stadium. But when the storm violated the roof and knocked out power throughout the city, the lights went out and the toilets stopped working. This refuge of last resort quickly became a foul-smelling, water-soaked place of suffering instead of a safe haven. Then, when the levees failed on Monday morning flooding much of the city, the homes of many inside the Superdome became uninhabitable and those people had nowhere else to go. Many came believing they would simply ride out Katrina in the safety of the Dome and go home the next morning. Katrina had other ideas. She not only took their refuge, she took their homes and all their possessions. As the waters rose throughout the city, thousands more were chased from their homes and came looking for shelter and help. But these latest arrivals were chased from their homes on short notice and had not prepared to evacuate. They came with only what they wore and what they could carry. They were unprepared for the disaster that had descended on New Orleans. The numbers of evacuees grew throughout Monday and Tuesday from the original 9,000 to more than 15,000. Some estimates ran as high as 20,000. Despite gate checks at every entrance for those early arrivals, in which National Guard soldiers searched for weapons and alcohol among those allowed into the Dome, there was no accurate head count, although most estimates had the total at around 16,000-17,000. By Monday morning, when the crowd inside began moving outside to get away from the fouled toilets and dark, water-soaked interior, the new arrivals whose homes had been inundated by the levee breaks were crowding onto the already jammed plaza. By Wednesday morning people were standing elbow to elbow and hip to hip. They were surrounded by water with no place to go and no way to get there. They were trapped, with the fouled inside of the Dome to their back and the National Guard and floodwaters all around them. They had no working toilets. Their food and water were dwindling. Their only hope was in the government that had encouraged them to come here. But what we were all about to discover was that Katrina was so massive and so destructive that even the federal, state, and local agencies that might have come quickly to the aid of these poor souls were terribly overmatched and had themselves become victims of the storm. At about 1,500 feet the helicopter made two quick turns around the Superdome before dropping into a steep dive for a small, concrete landing pad on the northwest corner of the upper parking lot near Poydras Street. The clatter of the Seahawk's rotor blades echoed and reverberated off the nearby buildings and water. It seemed abnormally loud, like a helicopter on steroids. Despite the noise, I could hear in my headset calls from the pilots of other helicopters talking to one another about people they had seen standing on their roofs, trapped by the water, waiting to be rescued. The pilot threw the helicopter onto the landing pad with a solid thump and I quickly deplaned and headed for a small white security trailer to meet with Mayor Ray Nagin and officials from FEMA and the Louisiana National Guard to get their assessment of the situation. A wall of humidity hit me as soon as I was clear of the helicopter's rotor wash and I broke out in a sweat. This was summer in Louisiana, just as I remembered it as a child growing up on the farm. The overpowering stench of brackish water and human waste was thick in the air. It was a collective smell of noxious odors that reminded me of the smell of a full garbage can when the lid is lifted on a hot summer morning. Just a few yards to my left were the masses of people. They looked at the helicopter and at my uniform hopefully, expectantly, pleading with their eyes to be rescued. Many of the faces were faces of color, like mine. Except for the grace of God, I might have been among them. These were the people I had grown up with. Now they were looking for help. They had that look of people who were trapped and had lost their freedom of movement. They wanted in the worst way to get out but knew there was nothing they could do but wait. They looked at the helicopter as if to say, "Maybe that's our ride out. Maybe they'll take us with them." But they stood quietly behind the flimsy metal barricades, with only a few National Guard soldiers between them and the helicopter, and they waited with a patience that only the poor know. Turning to walk up the few steps to the security trailer, I looked over a low concrete retaining wall to the street below. A young African-American woman was wading slowly but deliberately through waist-deep water along West Stadium Drive near Cypress Street pushing a grocery cart with a child standing in it. They were searching for an entrance ramp to the Superdome, searching for shelter and rescue. Already in the trailer were Nagin; Major General Bennie Landreneau, The Adjutant General (TAG) of the Louisiana National Guard, whom I had known for many years; Scott Wells, FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) for Katrina (and later Hurricane Rita); and Wells's deputy, Philip Parr. In addition, members of Landreneau's staff and mine crowded into the trailer along with Coast Guardsmen handling the FM radios and coordinating helicopter search-and-rescue missions throughout the city. Those radios were the only communications systems working in New Orleans at that time except for satellite telephones, because the storm had knocked out virtually all cell phone towers and downed electrical and telephone lines in much of southern Louisiana. It was stifling in the trailer. The single toilet was fouled and unusable. Only one small generator was working. But the Coasties had somehow managed to scrounge up a coffee pot and hooked it up to the generator and had fresh coffee brewing. It was one of the few obvious signs of initiative, but it was a good sign. Nagin looked like a man under a

great deal of stress, which was understandable. He was tired, edgy, and in need of a shave. It had not been a good few days for him or the city of New Orleans. But he was the senior elected official on the ground and nominally would be my boss, or one of them, for the duration of this mission. It was not my intent to give him the impression that JTF-Katrina was the cavalry riding in to rescue him or that we were coming here to take charge. JTF-Katrina was in a support role and would do what it could to assist him, other elected officials, and the FEMA representatives while working in coordination with Landreneau's Louisiana National Guard soldiers. For the first thirty minutes I simply sat and listened as Nagin, Wells, Parr, and Landreneau talked about their concerns and their needs and how they thought the numerous problems confronting them should be addressed. The mayor's focus was on getting people out of the Superdome. "We need to start some flow," he said more than once. "We need to start moving peopl..