

ULTIMATE SURVIVAL VS. A FLASH MOB



HOW TO ESCAPE AN "INSTANT RIOT"!

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Flash Mobs

“Flash mobs.” You’ve heard the term.

The trend in fast-formed, often coordinated near-riots, sometimes harmless, often very dangerous, seems to have come out of nowhere in the last couple of years, but it’s here now and it’s probably here to stay.



Aided by social networks and the mobile phone and tablet technology that lets people connect through these networks while they’re out and about, flash mobs are all the rage in the realms of political protest and activism.

All too frequently, however, a flash mob is not a harmless expression of free speech and the right to assemble.

Instead, it’s a MOB, and it is every bit as dangerous as that term implies.

What is a mob? A mob is a group of cowardly thugs.

A mob is a group of people who want to hurt you for no other reason than that

they can.

The reason I say they're cowardly is because every single one of these little thugs who make up a flash mob would not dare to confront you by themselves.

They've got false courage, because they've got the power of a mob behind them.

They've got a bunch of people who make them strong *collectively*.

In Philadelphia, a group of kids ranging in age all the way down from teenagers to eleven years old, coordinated using their phones and their social networking services.

They started attacking people almost at random at Wisconsin's state fair.

The motive? Simple racism.

The 911 calls were chilling.

People were calling in and saying, "Why aren't you people helping us? Get police down to the state fair right now. They're beating us for no other reason than that we're the wrong color."

THAT is a flash mob.

Today, with communication more readily available than ever to link the members of a mob, the Internet links people together in ways our law enforcement personnel couldn't have imagined thirty years ago.

Mobs represent the worst tendencies of human beings.

The courage of a senseless group of human beings just exposes our innermost violent leanings.

When we talk about self-defense, when we talk about training for defending yourself and your family, most of the time we're talking about crimes that, even if violent, are at least driven by an understandable motive.

In other words, you know what the criminal wants.

He wants money. He wants sex. He wants your car. You can understand these motivations.

A home invader, for example, wants to get inside because he wants to violate your family or take from you tangible goods.

The mugger wants your wallet.

Somebody who comes up to you at an ATM with a knife wants those little slips of green paper.

But what does a flash mob want?

It wants to be a mob. It wants to hurt and to maim and even to kill simply because it can do these things.



A mob is the most senseless, unpredictable danger you can encounter.

Another very great danger of the flash mob is the anonymity that such a group affords its participants.

Someone who walks into a store or a bank with intent to rob that place of business knows, at least on some instinctive level, that they can be singled out by a camera or an eye-witness.

The same is true for the mugger or any other individual criminal. He knows someone can identify him.

But in a mob situation, with all the adrenaline pumping, with hundreds of people involved (there were 500 people at the Wisconsin State Fair, in fact), who is a witness going to identify in a line-up?

What jury would even take as credible a witness trying to identify one or a dozen people from out of hundreds?

That kind of mob anonymity creates a feeling that you can do anything you want and not get caught.

We saw this in mobs in the U.K. not so long ago, in which people set fires, looting buildings, flipped cars, and just generally went berserk.



So why did it happen?

Some intrepid reporter took a couple of young women aside who were looting and asked them why they did it.

The women said, "Oh, we're just trying to get our money back from the people who have businesses.

In this case, it was some kind of weird, mindless class warfare, in which people thought they could strike back against capitalism by burning down Starbucks outlets.

In other cases, the riots are racially motivated, such as in Wisconsin.

In still others, it's something else... and this is important, because if you're a white guy in the middle of a group of black race rioters (or vice versa), or if you're wearing a suit in the middle of a financial riot against big banks, you've got a target painted on you.

(For that matter, you also don't want to be standing in front of the store that sells big-screen televisions, because that's the store that always seems to get looted in every riot and disaster.)

Whatever the reasons, when you channel the pent up rage of a mob, when you unleash it, it doesn't matter what has caused it.

It doesn't matter if that mob is racially motivated, politically motivated, financially motivated, or anything else.

You're facing a complete meltdown of the fabric of civilized society.

This brings us to our first secret of dealing with flash mobs, civil unrest, and riots.

1. GET OUT OF THERE

If you're in an area where something doesn't feel right, that's because SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT.

Don't waste time.

Get out of there.

I don't care how prepared people think they are.

When you go to a state fair you're going there for fun.

So immediately the brain goes into, "We're here for fun."

There are other places as well that we go into that we don't expect there to be any problems.

I don't think any of the people at the Wisconsin State Fair, other than the ones who were there and mobilized to cause violence there, knew what was going to happen that evening.

They were there to take their kids to have a good time, ride on the Ferris Wheel, and have a good time.

Even when you think you're just out and about to have fun, however, you can't afford to let your guard down completely.

Even if it's just in the moment when a riot breaks out, try to take a look and decipher what's going on, what the possible cause might be.

This is important, because if you can figure out what's happening, you can figure out what to avoid or what to disguise.

You might even be able to call for the authorities, but don't expect them to get there in time.

Instead, ask yourself: Is this a financial riot, and am I wearing a suit and tie?

Is this a race riot, and am I the wrong color for the angry crowd I'm facing?

Here's another example. Let's say you're at a movie.

People are using a social network and their phones so that at a given time in the movie, they all start yelling the word "ping," or something inane like that.

That's a harmless flash mob, the kind of prank people like to post to Facebook or YouTube or whatever.

That pre-coordination is important, because what if the act being coordinated isn't harmless?

What if at a preselected moment, they all stand up and start throwing bottles, or bodily waste... or bullets?



Looters rampage through a convenience store in Hackney, east London in August 2011. Photograph: Olivia Harris/Reuters

What if they simply start tearing the place apart to steal whatever they can get?

Think about these things. Be aware that they might happen.

When you walk into a public place, keep an eye out for people who seem preoccupied, or amused when there's no reason to be, or just acting suspiciously.

You may think you don't know what that looks like, but you really do.

Learn to trust your gut.

Also, make sure you know where the entrances and exits are.

Any parent of a recently potty-trained child can tell you that they always know, in public, where the closest bathroom is. Do the same for exits so you have an out.

Also, consider the logistics of that entrance or exit.

If you go for the main doors, are you going to be trampled by a huge crowd when you make the attempt?

Where are the less-used emergency exits, the ones that sound an alarm when used?

Most people will move like a herd toward the doors where they entered a movie theater, even though there are other clearly marked ways out.

That's because they're conditioned to consider those doors off-limits, and never mind that these are the very exits you're SUPPOSED to use in an emergency.

Nobody thinks clearly when the adrenaline of an emergency hits them.

Now, once you've left the hypothetical emergency in the hypothetical movie theater, where are you going to go?

Did you park your car in the front or at the side?

Are you cut off from it, or can you get to it quickly?

If you can, choose your parking spot so that it's more accessible to getting you out of there, either because it's close to where you'll exit, or because it makes it easier for you to get out of the crowded parking lot.

The Fairgrounds are another good example.

When you go to a Fair, a lot of times you get a map that tells you where different rides are and things like that.

If something should happen, you can use that map to pinpoint your location and where you need to go.

Now, let's return for a moment to the mental aspects of this, because if you're trying to get out of a public location, chances are you went to that location because you wanted to.

You're not thinking survival.

You're not thinking martial arts and self-defense.

You're thinking, "I'm out to have a good time."

If something goes wrong, your brain just might slip gears into, "What just happened here?"

Say you're watching a movie and enjoying it... and a fist fight breaks out in the row in front of you.

Your brain will sort of go, "What? Huh?"

Taking the time to game through such scenarios helps map the mental pathways in your brain so that you're less likely to freeze should something like this happen.

Anyone who has ever done any executive protection work can tell you that you have to think like a bodyguard when you're out in public.

A bodyguard doesn't go out protecting his client thinking, "Oh, nothing is going to happen today" — even though, most days, NOTHING is exactly what DOES happen.

The bodyguard, however, is always thinking that he or she doesn't know what might happen... and thinking about what to do if it does.

This allows you to take quick action in an emergency... the first order of business being to GET OUT OF WHERE THE DANGER IS.

With all that said, let's switch gears to hardware for a moment and talk about our second secret for dealing with potential flash mobs.

2. FLARE GUNS

Flare guns might like seem like kind of a random item.

If you're thinking of acquiring a tool for emergency self-defense, however, this may be one you've seriously overlooked.

Your average big-box discount store sells flare guns for under fifty dollars in their boating and sporting goods section.

That store doesn't have much of a firearm selection these politically correct days, but I'm willing to bet if the first store doesn't have a flare gun, the next one might.

It's often not even locked up under glass. It's just sitting on the shelf with the flares for anyone to guy.

Have you ever noticed that in a movie, especially a movie about survival, the first weapon everyone goes to is the nearest flare gun?

In these movies, nobody ever seems to own a gun or have a knife on them, but when ever danger lurks (from hockey-masked serial killers to random murderers in thriller films) the



flare gun in the car in the first act is invariably fired in the third.

The flare gun is to survival movies and thrillers what fireplace poker are to murder-mystery films.

Everyone uses one as a weapon.

Well, the reason this is true is because flare guns are really dangerous.

Now, I wouldn't want to count on someone going up like a human torch if hit with a propelled flare, but I know I don't want anything burning that hot and that bright flying at me at high speed.

And neither does anyone else.

Think of how frightening, distracting, and possibly even damaging a flying flare could be.

Now, keep in mind that if you're shooting fireballs at somebody, that's lethal force.

If you set a guy on fire, you may kill him.

You had better be justified in using potentially lethal force, and extremely so, before you fire a flare gun at a person.

It is for this reason that improvised self-defense sprays like oven cleaner and wasp spray are very dangerous to use.

These are chemicals that can cause permanent blindness, which is almost impossible to justify in a self-defense context.

If you intentionally and with premeditation blind a person, there isn't a jury in the world that won't barbecue you.

Flares, on the other hand, can be justified a bit more easily as a general emergency item (although this is not legal advice and I am not a lawyer).

Think about it:

Flares are good for emergencies.

Flares are good to have in a survival kit.

Flares are good to have in your car.

What if you went over an embankment in your car and you were trying to summon help?

There's nothing wrong with carrying flares with you for stuff like that.

In the case of using flares for self-defense, though, carefully consider what a "reasonable" person would do... and what a judge might think after the fact.

For example, if you have a marine flare gun in your car but you don't own so much as a row boat, it's harder to justify why you have that there.

This is similar to those situations in which people carry baseball bats in their cars; conventional wisdom is you should carry a ball and a glove, too, so you can justify the weapon's presence.

(During the U.K. riots, Amazon.com sold a phenomenal number of baseball bats to people in the U.K. One wonders what the sudden popularity of this American past-time might have been.)

Now, we've been discussing protecting yourself, and this directly related to protecting your loved ones. That's why the next secret of surviving flash mobs is...

3. HAVE A PLAN

You have an obligation to your family and loved ones.

You need to protect them.

You need to have a plan of action worked out for emergencies **AHEAD OF TIME**.

That's the only way to do that.



You've got to have a plan of action worked out ahead of time, before you experience an emergency situation.

The plan must be a simple one that kids can understand, if you have them.

This means things like places to hide if caught in the open, carrying a fully charged prepaid phone with your number preprogrammed in it, and identifying pathways to the nearest exits.

Let's face it: It would be very easy for you to be separated from your kids or spouse in a riot or mob situation.

They need to know where to go when it gets ugly.

Make your plan, practice it, and test it.

Ask your child, "If we were separated right now, where would you go to be safe? What would you do?"

That becomes a teaching opportunity. "There's a police officer over there," or "there's a shop owner there and I can ask someone to call for help," become hypothetical answers that could save your loved ones' lives in an emergency.

Now, let's once again go back to the Wisconsin State Fair.

Remember when you were a kid? It wasn't cool to hang out with your parents.

When that race riot broke out at the Fair, how many children and teenagers do you imagine weren't with their parents when things got bad?

There was a time when even young children were turned loose at events like that, left to their own devices for hours at a time.

That's less common now that all parents worry their kids will get snatched by child molesters and other predators, but it does still happen.

When you've got 500 people walking around, pulling people out of cars, and hitting them with construction signs, you do NOT want to be wondering where your kids are.

Even a little local fair or carnival could turn violent like that.

It's sad to say that we must be this vigilant and cautious, that we must arm ourselves with guns and knives and pepper spray and emergency plans just to enjoy a movie or a public event with our families.

The fact is, though, that times have changed, and refusing to acknowledge these dangers is not a solution to them.

When out with younger children, keep them with you, and if you can't or won't keep your loved ones by your side, make sure they have the ability to

communicate with you and a plan for regrouping with you should things become chaotic.

Your plans should ALWAYS involve a default location where they are to go to meet with you should all other plans and preparations fail.

This could be something as simple as, “When in doubt, go back to the car and wait there until we all arrive.”

Two-way radios, which have become increasingly popular (especially as their cost decreases) are another good means of staying in touch.

I’ve been at amusement parks and seen families use these to coordinate (instead of phones) several times, in fact.

A simple two-way radio is also a lot cheaper than your average wireless phone or smartphone, and some of them even have “panic buttons” to make a tone in case you experience a severe emergency.

These are just some of the options. Planning can be as complex and involved as you choose to make it. The key is to HAVE a plan... and to understand it BEFORE you need it.

Now, you may be thinking, “I have a plan. I carry a gun.” Well, I’ve got news for you...



4. YOUR GUN CAN BE A TARGET

We've said that it's kind of a shame that we should have to strap on guns, knives, flashlights, extra magazines, and Heaven knows what else just for a day out with the family.

Many people will respond by saying, "Why do you NEED all that just to do such-and-such?"



Well, the fact is, you probably won't need all that gear... but you don't get to know when you will need it and when you won't.

That is why people say even under-powered handguns like .25 and .22 caliber pistols are better when they're carried in your pocket than a .45 Automatic locked in a safe at home.

Equipment for emergencies, to be useful, must be with you when you need it... and the only way for that to happen is for you to carry it as a matter of habit and routine.

If you live in an area where you can get a concealed carry weapons (CCW) permit, there will be lots of people who don't understand you're making a lifestyle choice.

It's not that you think you'll need a gun everywhere you go.

Instead, you're carrying a gun everywhere because you don't know when, of all the places you go, when that rare emergency or self-defense situation will occur.

You're choosing to be prepared for an emergency just like you buy life insurance and hope you won't die anytime soon.

With luck, you'll carry all that crap around your whole life and never need your gun, your knife, your flashlight, your pepper spray, and your spare magazines.

If, however, you do eventually need to go for that gear, you'll have it... and you'll be very grateful you do.

What you may not have considered when it comes to your gun, however, is that especially in a riot situation, your gun may make you a target.

When a flash mob is erupting around you, a gun at arm's length in a two-hand hold is easy to spot.

A gun tight against the body, or inside a pack or a coat pocket, by contrast, is virtually invisible.

If you had to shoot from within a mob, shooting through a coat pocket (provided this did not jam your weapon) would help screen your actions from the rest of the mob.



Now, you're not going to walk through a riot quietly shooting people like James Bond or some kind of pocket-gun-toting ninja.

On many occasions, however, you may have to shoot from retention, which means shooting with the gun pressed against your body and not out in front being waved around.

When the gun is close to your body, you'll be using it to get people off you because you think you could DIE otherwise.

This is a lethal force situation and cannot be taken lightly. You will be tried and convicted for murder if you aren't justified in using that pistol.

You've got to make a choice in every situation like this.



If you're armed and you've chosen to defend yourself and your family, presented with the credible threat of serious bodily harm, you may have to act.

The alternative could be a flash mob saying, "Hey, let's stomp that guy until he's dead."

The problem is, the mob won't ever really be thinking that, at least not often.

More often, the mob ISN'T thinking.

The members of that group aren't thinking through the consequences of their actions.

They'll just stomp you, and if you die of it (as often happens when multiple people are jumping on you) well that's just kind of a fringe benefit that nobody considered.

There's a good illustration of this gun-as-target situation that you may have seen in a movie.

In the Tom Cruise remake of *War of the Worlds*, Cruise's character does two incredibly stupid things in rapid succession.

He has a handgun with him, and he's driving one of the few cars still operational after an electromagnetic pulse.

So what does he do?

He drives one of the few cars on the road that still works directly into a giant mob of people.

Then, when things start to go wrong, he pulls out his revolver and starts waving it in the faces of the tens upon hundreds of people who would like to take his car, his gun and his life.

He is quickly overwhelmed, and that gun has only painted a bull's-eye on his chest.

The fact is, many people think brandishing a weapon will hold people back, like a magic wand.

This might or might be true when you're facing one person.

I've seen it go both ways. Sometimes people back off. Other times they get hostile and say things like, "Oh, you're pulling a GUN on me, motherf---er?"

When facing a mob of people, they'll have the false courage of the group behind them, and they may just swarm you if the gun comes out.

Many mobs will resort to improvised weapons, and these could be anything from road signs to chunks of pavement.

If you're facing away from someone and they see you have a gun, they won't make themselves a target; they'll sneak up behind you and crush your skull with a fist-sized piece of asphalt.

Once you've gone down, that gun is of no use to you... and it may even be used to kill you.

Keep this in mind. Your gun is a tool. It isn't magic... and against overwhelming numbers, it isn't nearly as powerful as you might think it is.

One of the ways you can prevent the scenario from becoming a tragedy, whether you are armed or not, is to stay alert, which is why our next secret of surviving flash mobs is...

5. BE CONSTANTLY VIGILANT IN YOUR CAR

Do you know what it's like to live in a place like South Africa?

The average person there is constantly vigilant because of the risk of hijacking while out on the road.

When a South African stops at a stoplight, if he's smart, he's checking every window, and if things look suspicious, he just doesn't stop.

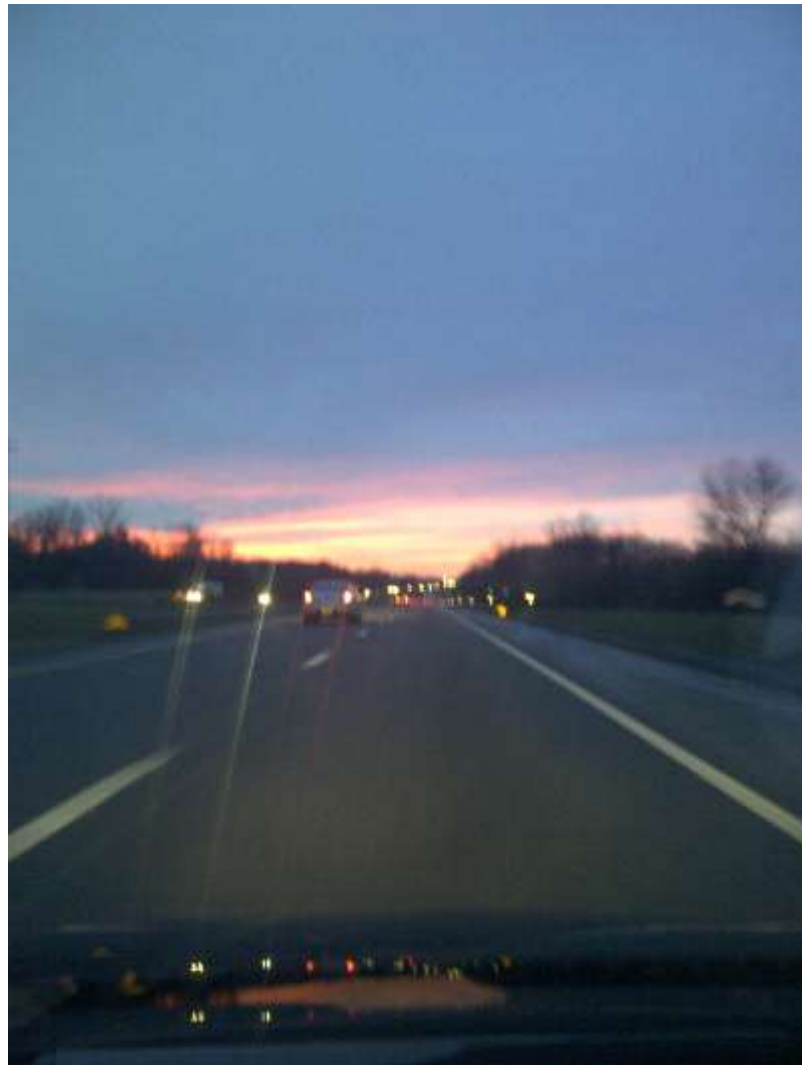
While things aren't nearly that bad for most of us, this is EXACTLY the kind of attitude you need to have during a time of civil unrest, riot, or during a flash mob when you're driving.

You must be
**CONSTANTLY
VIGILANT**, on guard at
all times for threats
you can't see.

If you're in the car,
secure your doors and
windows. Use the
locks. Use all your
mirrors.

Leave enough room
between you and the
car in front of you so
you can maneuver in
an emergency.

Any time at all that
you're in traffic, for that
matter, gauge how
close the other cars
are. Do you have
room to back up, to
drive to the side, to
bounce up over the
curb?



A good rule of thumb is to stay one car length from the car in front of you at all times, which gives you room to maneuver around them at a red light.

Are there pedestrians? How near are they? What are they doing?

If you see a group of people who make you worry you're about to be attacked, gauge the traffic and safely blow the light. Your life is more important than the possibility of a ticket.

In a real crisis, during a flash mob or other meltdown, if a cop does see you break a traffic law, he'll be much more concerned with the mob or riot and not what you're doing.

Just keep going.

And if there's a police officer even around, but if there's a meltdown, trust me, that police officer is not going to be writing you a traffic ticket.

Here's another tip: If driving in three lanes of traffic, don't use the middle lane.

You can get boxed into traffic in that middle lane. The side lanes allow you to drive out of there, even if it's over a curb and onto a sidewalk or median.

Now, let's go back to our Tom Cruise example again.

You might think, when facing a flash mob, that if you have a car and they're trying to take it from you, you'll just lay on the horn, put your foot down, and drive through them.

Well, that might work for one or two people... but after you hit a second or a third person, your car is not going to keep on going.

Either you'll be trying to drive through a pile of inert bodies, which is impossible to do, or much more likely, you'll incite a violent reaction in the mob.

Have you ever seen a mob swarm a car and shake it, even overturn it?

Human beings are extraordinarily powerful in large groups, and your car is absolutely no protection against a mob of a hundred angry people.

Several years ago in Chicago, a drunk driver hit a little girl on a flight of tenement stairs after jumping the curb.

The neighborhood people who witnessed the incident pulled that driver out of his car and beat him to death with bricks.

He was dead within a matter of minutes.

If you drive your car into a mass of people, you will eventually be pulled out and dealt with... possibly fatally.

It may seem like a stupidly simple solution, but if you see a large mob, **TURN YOUR CAR AROUND** and go the other way. Drive backwards if you have to.

If you have to, you can try to move at the same pace and in the same direction as the mob until you find a way to break out or cross to a new escape route. You might even be able to use your horn strategically... but this is a tricky situation.

Just remember: You can't simply floor it and drive through everybody. That will get you dead or, at the very least, result in you having to abandon a vehicle that can no longer go anywhere, either because it's been overturned or because you're driving through a wall of bodies.

Once you're on foot, you've got to apply the same principles. Put your head on a swivel. See anything and everything. Know what is happening around you.

Which means you have to know when it's time to escape on foot...



6. ESCAPING ON FOOT: THE RIPTIDE ESCAPE

When escaping a flash mob on foot, try to recognize the route that mob is taking.

Move at right angles to the trouble path. If you do this, you can walk out at 90 degrees to where things are falling apart.

Do this as unobtrusively as possible. A flash mob is an angry animal. You don't want to draw its attention.

Remember, you're not fighting a mob. At least, you can't do it and win... so you must not try.

You're not at odds with that crowd, any more than you would be at odds with a tornado.



You don't want to be carried along with it, and you don't want to try to plow through it.

Instead, go sideways to it, which is less likely to draw attention from it.

Here's another tip. Remember the episode of Seinfeld in which George learns that if he just looks irritated and preoccupied all the time, his coworkers leave him alone and assume he's working?

If you're walking down the street, if you look vaguely irritated about something, and you look, not at people, but PAST them as if you're fixed on getting somewhere to deal with something, many people will assume that whatever your deal is, it has nothing to do with them.

They'll instinctively ignore you.

It's as if you've got somewhere to be, and when you get there, you'll have to yell at somebody.

People will let you just walk on by and think, "I don't know what that guy's problem is, but it's obviously with somebody who isn't me."

Another thing you can try is the riptide escape.

The momentum of a crowd can take you off balance to a certain degree. There's a natural flow to a crowd, a forward momentum.

The riptide is a good example and illustration of this. If you're swimming and you're caught in a riptide, you can't swim straight back to shore.

That won't work, because the force pushing you back is too powerful.

If, instead, you swim at 45 degree angles to the shore, you can work your way against the current to where you want to go.

The same thing is absolutely true of a crowd.

Like a sailboat tacking into the wind, making zigzag after zigzag to work its way to the harbor, you want to keep your overall progress moving to your goal while seemingly moving at an angle to the crowd you're going through.

Now that we've talked about some principles and mechanics, let's return to hardware for our next secret. The answer may surprise you as much as "flare guns" did...

7. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

We've talked about the danger of carrying something in your car for which you don't have an obvious use, like a baseball bat without a glove and ball, or a flare gun designed for boating.

Well, one thing you can have almost anywhere that has an obvious and legal purpose is a fire extinguisher.

One of those ABC extinguishers that are good for chemical fires gives you the opportunity to put a face full of unpleasant, blinding gunk in a predator's face... and even if that doesn't work, you're carrying a heavy canister made of metal you can use to hit the guy in the head with.

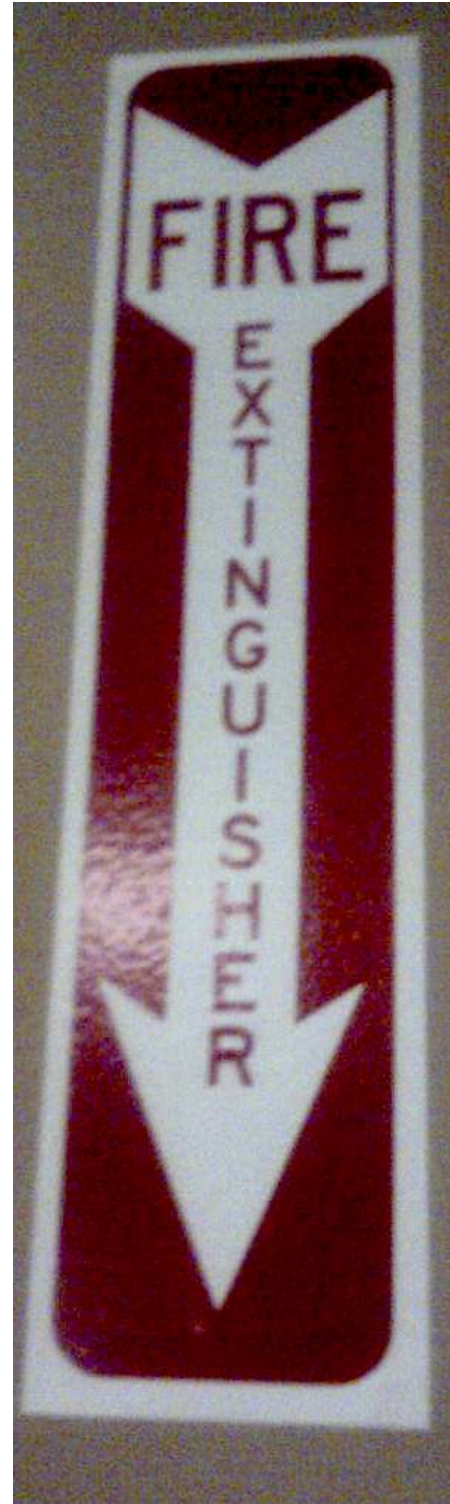
From a lifestyle perspective, it's a good idea to have fire extinguishers around anyway, because you never know when you'll have to put out a fire.

When you're driving through a crowd, cracking a window down a bit so you can poke the hose through, and then using the extinguisher to spray to either side of the car (carrying two for this purpose helps) can help keep crowds away from the vehicle so they can't easily flip it over.

The dry powder inside an ABC extinguisher is a very irritating chemical when breathed or when it gets into your eyes.

A person can't just stand there and get sprayed without reacting, especially if you surprise them.

This can be the distraction you need, something that creates an opening so you can escape.



Now, I DON'T recommend that you get out of your car, or wade into a mob on foot, wielding only a fire extinguisher... but it's a great thing to have, especially in the car.

You could also choose to use a pepper spray or pepper fogger device, especially the larger ones that are used for crowd control, but that's a bit trickier a prospect because of the potential of blasting yourself with the spray.



You might catch a little backspray from the fire extinguisher, but it won't be as debilitating as the pepper fog, which is a much greater irritant.

Remember, too, that pepper spray is most effective when it hits the eyes, and hitting a crowd of people in the eyes with a pepper spray device (even one with long range) is not easy.

That's a moving target, after all.

The fire extinguisher method, especially when used in a vehicle, is more of a short-range screening effort... and less likely to create hostility in the crowd, because it's not as nasty as the stinging pepper spray can be.

Where fogger pepper spray does shine, however, is inside a car when a mob has broken into the vehicle.

The fogger does not rely on pinpoint accuracy. It disperses like a fire extinguisher.

You'll get blasted a little bit, but not as badly as your attackers will be, and the difference is, you can drive out of there (or be carried as a passenger).

That's something you can do even through squinted, irritated eyes, if you have to.

Think about it: If you've got several people breaking into your car or trying to tip it over, a little fire extinguisher through a crack in the window isn't much of a deterrent anymore. (It's best for keeping them away in the first place.)

One thing you have to consider, though: You can't leave pepper spray in a hot car.

If you do, the canister could heat up and leak, which will make the interior of the car (especially because it's already baking in the sun) become almost uninhabitable.

At the very least, it could make you nauseous when you enter.

Just like they used to tell us about VHS tapes, don't leave pepper spray in direct sunlight in the vehicle, and in the heat of the summer, try not to leave anything in the passenger compartment to bake.

People forget that just spraying a little pepper spray into an enclosed space can make people feel very sick.

Even though you haven't sprayed them in the eyes in an enclosed space like your car, it can be extremely dangerous.

And I don't mean you're going to get a mouthful of it and fall over dead.

I just mean you've suddenly rendered your vehicle unusable.

This happens every once in a while in schools. Some kid will spray some in a hallway, and they'll be evacuating students who complain they feel sick.

It's a good idea, if you're going to carry pepper spray, that you also carry a bandanna and a bottle of water.

You can wet the cloth and tie it around your face to make a makeshift breathing mask, a poor man's gas mask.

Just any piece of cloth at all will help a little, if it's damp enough to filter some of the fumes.

Bandanas are an item of clothing that can conceal you or save you... and there are other items of clothing, and even behaviors, that can help you or hurt you. That's why our next tip is...

8. BLEND IN

A reader once wrote to me and explained that his wife was once caught in an anti-American riot in Bogota, Columbia.

He had her put her raincoat hood up to hide her blonde hair. He did the same with his own jacket hood.

When you're caught in a flash mob, you need to minimize any appearance of difference from the crowd.

You must do whatever you can to blend in, to avoid drawing attention to yourself.

That means minimizing any way that shows you as somehow different from the mob, from the rioters.

This could be as easy as taking off a cowboy hat, putting up a hood, and even altering your physical movements,.

If the mob is shuffling, you shuffle.

If the mob is running, you run.

Show no fear. Act like you belong. Be as inconspicuous as possible.

There are some people who say that when you're overseas, you should not admit to being an American, because America is often not well liked abroad.

These people say you should pretend to be a Canadian, because, right or wrong, there's the perception out there that fewer people are angry at Canada than America.

Now, I'm as patriotic as the next fellow, but there are times when you're in danger that you don't want to stand up, run the stars and stripes up a flagpole, and say, "I'm an American, and if you don't like it, up yours."

People, especially if they outnumber you, may choose to take this as a challenge, and you're not here to fight for your country's honor. You're looking to escape mob danger and violence before it hurts you or your loved ones.

You may need to look at your clothes and make sure you're not wearing something that could identify you as being of the target demographic.

This could be as obvious as a t-shirt with an American flag on it, but it might also be some piece of clothing, or brand of clothing, that the locals don't wear.

Look at yourself through the eyes of those around you.

Do you look different? Do you stand out?



Is your skin the wrong color? Are you the wrong race?

There are a lot of ways to disguise yourself if you ever get into a situation like that.

We mentioned the bandana as the poor man's gas mask. Well, in a flash mob, the people around you might assume you're covering your face because of tear gas or the fear of cameras and witnesses.

They might never know you covered up because you're concealing the fact that you don't look like they do.

No matter how hard you try, however, you may end up confronting a mob.

You may need to consider using violence to defend yourself. If that happens...

9. DON'T BLUFF

Remember that we said brandishing a weapon was a mistake, because your gun could make you a target?



Well, if you do draw a weapon, you desperately need to demonstrate your resolve to the crowd.

A warning shot might do that, but warning shots are very dangerous.

If you fire into the air, that bullet is going to come down, and in most places I know of, shooting into the air (or shooting a warning shot at all) will result in you being arrested for reckless endangerment or some other charge.

If the mob is advancing on you, however, you may need to fire into the ground (if you can safely do so without causing a ricochet, such as off pavement) as if to indicate that the next shot may be a lethal one.

What you're NOT going to do is just start blasting away.

Having the gun out makes you a target already.

Remember that when in your car, trying to plow through the crowd could provoke a violent survival reaction.

Well, shooting your way through a crowd can do the same. If the mob thinks you're just going to kill as many of them as you can, they're going to do the thing that is least dangerous to them, which is removing the threat you now represent.

It's no longer a viable option for them to back off, because you're shooting anyway... and you have only so many rounds in that gun.

You can go through a 30-round magazine in no time at all in a "combat" situation. Your pistol probably has half that, and maybe even a third that number or less.

Combat engineers have, for years, tried to find ways to get soldiers to use less ammunition.

That's why the three-round-burst mode was introduced in assault rifles.

Soldiers, under stress, tend to just pull the trigger repeatedly, or hold it down and spray out a magazine on full auto.

Under stress, once you start shooting, you may empty that gun before you realize what you're doing.

The adrenaline is flowing. You've GOT to keep your wits about you and find your escape route... and you've got to keep yourself from blowing through all your ammo and triggering the mob's survival reflex.

After all, when you start shooting, you may get five or six people, but once your weapon is empty, the rest of that mob will be on top of you.

We've seen this from the other side, during school shootings in which crazed animal criminals started gunning people down.

In many cases, these predators are captured... and it's almost always when they are between magazines. They try to reload and somebody (or a lot of somebodies) tackles them and holds them down.

You may have no choice, however. To save your life, you may indeed have to take one.

If you do shoot, make the shot count. Just as when fighting multiple attackers unarmed, you need your counter-strike to be as savage as possible, to take the wind from the attacker's sails.



If the mob is closing in, they're going to kill you, and you can take down one of their number, this may cause the others to back off, especially if they think by backing off, they can avoid being shot themselves.

When you look back at all our tips, what most of them have in common is that they direct you to move to a place of greater safety from a place of less safety.

You do this by remaining inconspicuous, using your escape routes, and moving toward these with purpose and intent, prepared to apply force when necessary to keep going.

You can't do any of that, however, without some very critical preparation before the fact. These are...

10. MAPS AND DIRECTIONS

You should know the area in which you live, in which you work, and where you are going to visit.

Study maps of that area. Have some mental concept of where you are and what's connected to that location.

Cellphones, smartphones, and GPS are very useful, but those devices can all fail, either because of a lack of signal or power, or because the networks connecting those devices don't always work.

You should carry real, physical maps. You should know where places like police stations, fire departments, and hospitals are located.

Know where public buildings are, too.

If there's a flash mob, get off the street. Walk into an apartment or an office building.

Stores are a bad choice, because these have valuables in them that the rioters will want... and this brings us back to the idea that the one place you don't want to be near in a mob or riot is a Starbucks or a Rent-A-Center.

Find, instead, a place people aren't likely to want to go that gets you off the street.

Knowing the general lay of the land is immensely helpful in doing this, especially when things start to get chaotic and confusing.

CONCLUSION

These are ten simple solutions to avoiding flash mobs.

AVOIDING is the key.

People tend to want to do something other than simply not being present. They want to do something special, some James Bond tactical crowd control secret.



They don't want to just go, "Well, common sense says if I can duck into that apartment building and get off the street, I should."

We tend to overcomplicate things.

We want to be able to tell sexy stories about the time we faced down a mob, and saying, "I ducked into a dentist's office until the riot moved down the street" just doesn't appeal to our egos.

Sometimes, however, the most obvious answers aren't the best ones.

If a place reaches out and grabs you by the eye, it's going to draw looters and rioters.

If, instead, you find a location that blends in, choose that one. Go where you need to go to escape the emergency.

Know how to get there... and try to avoid people and places that will draw attention.

When it comes to riots, when it comes to flash mobs, when it comes to all kinds of cowardly thug violence, JUST DON'T BE THERE is the best solution.

You can't always avoid every problem, but whenever possible, just get out of there.

That's the simple fact of avoiding these scenarios, and the only concern you should have is staying safe to protect, and go home, to your family.