



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on June 14, 2013

Looters vs. Armed Homeowners After Tornado, Other Natural Disasters

The tornado that swept through Moore, Oklahoma, on May 20 left 23 people dead and destroyed hundreds of homes, schools, and businesses. But even while they were still grappling with the pain, loss, and suffering inflicted by Nature, the victims were faced with another affliction: looters.

The devastating Oklahoma twister demonstrated what almost every other disaster — whether natural or man-made — has shown: Some fellow humans respond as Good Samaritans, while others respond as barbarians. Looters come from near and far. According to a [Reuters dispatch](#) of June 13, police have arrested 17 looters, some of whom had come from as far away as Virginia, New York, and California to take advantage of the tragedy that had befallen Oklahoma residents.



“We are seeing people take everything from copper to pipes to scrap metal to all kinds of electronics,” Moore police spokesman Jeremy Lewis said.

Jon Fisher is a Moore resident whose home was flattened and whose neighborhood has been among those targeted by looters. “The houses are still standing and looters are kicking in doors and taking TVs and appliances,” Fisher said. “They arrested two guys in my neighborhood the night of the tornado who were carrying out a love seat and couch.”

Similar looting sprees have occurred in conjunction with other disasters. Hurricane Katrina, the 2005 mega-storm that ravaged New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast, unleashed widespread looting and violence. Large sections of devastated areas were left without police protection. Worse still, the New Orleans police were ordered to [confiscate the firearms of homeowners and residents](#), leaving many defenseless at a time when they most needed the ability to exercise their natural right of self defense guaranteed by the Second Amendment. Last year’s [Hurricane Isaac](#) brought out the looters again in New Orleans. It was much the same story on the eastern seaboard as Superstorm Sandy caused the evacuation of huge swaths of businesses and homes. Likewise, the wildfires currently underway in Colorado, New Mexico, and California have brought on incidents of looting, the same as last year’s round of wildfires.

As we write, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are being [deployed in Alberta](#) to prevent looting in areas hit by flooding.

Returning to one’s home only to find that what wasn’t destroyed by fire, storm, or flood has been ransacked by thieves, adds insult to injury. However, it can be even worse; sometimes looters encounter



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homeowners or business owners who either didn't evacuate or who have returned to check on their property. The would-be looting spree can then turn deadly. For residents who elect to stay and protect what's theirs, it is [wise to have a firearm](#); merely displaying a gun, or the sound of racking a shell into the chamber is enough to cause a looter to depart in haste.

This reporter saw first-hand the folly of citizen disarmament and the prudence of an armed citizenry during the 1992 Los Angeles riots. It became clear fairly early in the rioting that Korean-owned businesses were being singled out to be ransacked, vandalized, and burned. [Hundreds of Korean businesses were destroyed.](#)

The ones that escaped the destruction were the ones that had organized for self-defense. When the police were ordered to pull out of the area, the Koreans were left to themselves. As the [video below shows](#), Korean merchants armed themselves and their employees — with rifles, shotguns, handguns — and made a show of force that deterred looters, vandals, and arsonists.

The Koreans were not alone in defending themselves and preventing the spread of mayhem. As I walked and rode through the smoking, blazing ruins of South Central Los Angeles, it was apparent that homes and businesses on some streets had been completely ravaged, while other adjacent properties and nearby streets were left untouched. In some cases it was easy to see why: Armed individuals — not only Korean, but black and Hispanic too — were patrolling the sidewalks, parking lots, or roof tops to repel would-be invaders. Only a couple of blocks from the corner of Florence and Normandie, the “flashpoint” where the riots started, I noticed an entire street of neatly-kept homes that were completely untouched by any fire, vandalism, or graffiti. The homeowners on the street were all black. A few were standing around the corner observing the ongoing chaos, which was diminishing, as police and National Guard units began to reclaim control. None of the black, mostly middle-aged, men appeared to be armed. Why, I asked, were their homes spared. “When all this started,” one of them explained, “we pulled some cars here and blocked off our street, and we got out here with shotguns. Big crowds of looters came down the street, but they saw we meant business and they moved on to hit easier targets.” These determined neighbors had to stand guard over their homes for three days until police and National Guard restored order. “We still have our ‘protection’ close by,” the resident said, motioning with his head toward the parked car he was leaning on. A couple of other residents tapped their belts, indicating they had concealed weapons under their jackets.

According to these residents, they had not even fired a shot; merely brandishing their weapons had been a sufficient deterrent. This is not surprising, as many studies (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), along with numerous anecdotal accounts, convincingly demonstrate that a well-armed citizenry is one of the most effective deterrents to criminal activity. Trying to turn away a rioting mob or gang of looters with a baseball bat or a butcher knife is not likely to work as well as doing the same with a gun. But in many cities, where it is difficult or impossible to acquire a firearm legally — New York City, for instance — residents are reduced to arming themselves with whatever crude weapons they can get, as this article demonstrates: [“Residents arm selves with bats, machetes to protect homes from Sandy looters.”](#)

Photo of tornado damage to neighborhood in Moore, Oklahoma: AP Images

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