AI for the End of the Internet: Why Open-Source Models Belong in Your Go Bag

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From the Southernmost Point

I am from a small town called Buras, Louisiana. Some people know it as the furthest south you can go in the state. From my childhood home, you could walk, though it would be a long walk, all the way to the end of the road, where a big sign stood: “Congratulations, you’ve reached the southernmost point in Louisiana.”

When people talk about Hurricane Katrina, they usually talk about New Orleans because it is the most populous city. But Katrina did not just hit New Orleans. It almost erased my hometown. Buras was ground zero, the first thing storms hit because we stuck out into the Gulf like a sore thumb. We were used to “hurricane days” the way other people are used to snow days. I grew up with hurricane parties, hurricane evacuations, and hurricane recoveries.

I never returned to the high school I graduated from because it no longer exists. Much of my childhood home is gone. My parents moved farther up the parish after Katrina, only to lose their new home a few years later in Hurricane Isaac. Before that, my family's homes were destroyed in Hurricane Betsy and Hurricane Camille. You might say we could never catch a break.

Buras never truly recovered. That reality shaped the way I see preparedness, not as an abstract plan but as a way of life. It is why I still teach Homeland Security and Emergency Management today, even though I teach many subjects across different schools and programs. This subject is close to my heart. I have lived through disaster after disaster, and I know how fragile our access to information can be.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." – Charles Darwin

The conversation around preparedness often focuses on living without technology when the grid goes down. That is important. But I believe we also need to ask another question: how can we make technology work for us when we do not have the Internet? It is a strange idea, but one that could change how people respond to emergencies.

We live in a world where most people wait until the moment they need an answer to look it up. We YouTube it. We Google it. That is reactive, not preparatory. It is a culture of responding, not a culture of readiness. Maybe we can fix that by giving everyone a way to access knowledge instantly, even when the Internet is gone.

When the Grid Goes Quiet

The heat feels different after a storm in South Louisiana. It is thicker, heavier, almost clinging to your skin. The air smells of wet earth and salt, mixed with the sharp scent of splintered pine. Roof shingles lie scattered across the street. Every few minutes, a generator coughs to life somewhere nearby, and the crank radio offers a hopeful reminder that the rest of the world is still out there.

The hurricane passed less than 24 hours ago. Power is out. Cell towers are silent. Roads are blocked by fallen oaks and knee-deep floodwater. The steady background noise of daily life, cars, air conditioners, text alerts, is gone. If you need to know how to disinfect a bucket of drinking water, stabilize an injury, or find a passable road, you cannot Google it. You cannot text for help. You are on your own.

I have been in these moments before. Long before my current occupation, I worked as a paramedic. I have treated heatstroke victims in parking lots where the asphalt shimmered and driven flooded roads wondering if the water would reach the ambulance floor. For more than a decade, I have taught emergency management and homeland security. Those experiences taught me that preparation is not just for extreme survivalists. In South Louisiana, it is a seasonal responsibility.

One day, looking at the familiar checklist of knives, maps, and matches, a new idea clicked. We train to live without technology in a crisis. But what if there is a way to use technology to survive without the Internet? Most people pack water filters and fire starters in their go bags. But the most powerful survival tool you could carry might fit on a flash drive.

"Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice." – Anton Chekhov

There is only so much you can memorize. In emergency work, the question you never thought to prepare for is the one that comes up in the field. I realized you could prepare for the absence of the network by carrying a local mind that does not need one. When you cannot Google it, you had better have already packed it or stored it on a flash drive.

The solution is surprisingly simple. You can download an open-source, open-weight large language model and run it entirely offline. No connection. No cloud. Just a model on your device, ready to answer questions from the knowledge it carries. The first time you try it, it feels like a quiet magic trick. You type, “How do I purify water with charcoal, sand, and a plastic bottle?” and seconds later you have a clear, step-by-step plan while the nearest cell tower sits silent.

Offline AI is the first technology that makes us less dependent on technology. A self-sufficient AI is a self-sufficient you.

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