

A Long-Term Survival Guide – 101 Uses For Ammo Cans:

I like military surplus, and own a lot of useful surplus equipment. Mostly what is known as individual field gear, which is coats, hats, boots, and rain gear (clothing), packs and harness (load-bearing gear), sleeping bags and tents (shelters), shovels and axes (tools), and military knives and rifles (weapons).



Ammo cans come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and have many possible uses.

I also own a lot of ammo cans, because they are such useful containers. There are dozens of possible uses for ammo cans, so I decided to make this illustrated list, to prove it. The exact number of potential uses depends on how you define a separate use. If you use an ammo can as a camp sink, to wash your dishes, and use one as a washtub, to clean your clothes in, this could be considered one use (improvised sink), or two uses (washbasin, and laundry tub). I don't consider the exact number to be important, but wish to show as many different uses as possible here, so bear with me if there appears to be some overlap:



Ammo Storage: Keep your ammunition clean and dry. Works just as well for storing your reloading components, primers, black powder, blasting caps, fuses, and explosives. Best results are obtained by keeping a desiccant pack in the can, to keep the air inside dry.



Lunch Box (This use is making me hungry).



Flare Gun Storage: Store emergency signaling devices, such as flares and flare guns.



Deadman Anchor: Dig a hole large enough to bury your ammo can, with a trench for the anchor rope. Position the can sideways to the direction of pull, with the broad side facing the direction of pull, to make maximum use of surface area. Tamp fill tightly around can.



The deeper the ammo can is buried, the stronger the anchor will be.



Patio Fire Box: Remove lid and one side of can, and add bolts for legs.



Drill holes along the top, and add metal rods to make a pot support, if desired.



Lamp Storage: Small lamps fit in 50 caliber cans. Larger lamps require larger cans.



Cache Containers: Keep your cached survival equipment and supplies clean and dry. Ammo cans make excellent cache containers, and can be used in hidden aboveground cache locations, or secret underground cache rooms. They are sturdy enough for direct underground burial, and they can even be used for underwater caches, if the seals are ok.



Trailer Storage: Mount ammo can on the trailer tongue, for extra storage.



Some mounting methods allow room for extra storage between the ammo can and trailer.





Pet's Food and Water Dishes



Geo-caching: An ammo can also makes a good container for geo-caching games.



Lockable Storage: Use an ammo can, and an eye bolt, to make a sturdy lock box, which could be chained to a secure anchor point, or bolted to the floor, or to a vehicle bed.



Sand Well Casing: When digging holes to collect underground water in dry river beds, the sand tends to slump into the hole. Use a long ammo can with the bottom cut off (or with holes drilled around the bottom) as a well casing, to keep the hole from collapsing.



To use, dig until you reach the water level, then dig another foot deeper. Place the ammo can in the hole, and fill in around it. If the top of the can is below ground level, leave a funnel-shaped depression around the can, so that the lid can still be used as a well cap.



Remove any sand in the bottom area of the can, to allow room for the water to collect.



Use an improvised dipper, to collect the standing water.



Replacing the lid keeps bugs and other contaminants out of the well.



Rear Rack: Add a pair of ammo cans to vehicle's rear rack, for extra storage.





Seed Storage: Use as a Seed Storage Vault, with a Desiccant pack



Raft Boxes: Use ammo cans as boating or river rafting boxes, to keep supplies dry.



Gun Storage: Use ammo cans to store your guns. Large cans will hold long guns with folding stocks, or collapsible stocks, or long guns that break down into two parts easily.



Longer surplus cases (used for rocket storage), can hold your full-length rifles.



These surplus mortar tubes may hold some shorter rifles, or a field-stripped rifle.



Speaker Boxes: Mount your stereo speakers in ammo cans, for a unique look.



Speaker boxes can be mounted in your 4X4, for use with your car stereo.





Deadfall Trap: Long ammo cans make good deadfall traps (Shown with toggle trigger). Fill can with sand or gravel, for extra weight. Smaller cans may also be used as hanging weights and activators for other trap designs, such as twitch-up snares, net traps, etc..



Ballast Weights: Use cans filled with sand as ballast weights, for your vehicle or boat.



Emergency Equipment Storage: Use to store emergency gear, such as gas masks.



Gun Accessory Storage: Use an ammo can to hold magazines, and other gun parts.



Humidor: Use an ammo can as a cigar humidor.



Mail Box: Keeps your mail dry.



Lamps: Ammo Cans make unique and amusing lamps.



25 CARTRIDGES, 20 MM
LINKED 3 HEIT XM599-2 APIT M601
FUNC LOT HS L 42

Nest Box: Use as nesting boxes, for your chickens



25 CARTRIDGES, 20 MM
LINKED 3 HEIT XM599-2 APIT M601
FUNC LOT HS L 42

25 CARTRIDGES, 20 MM
LINKED
3 HEIT XM 599-2 APIT M601
FUNC LOT HS L 33

3 HEIT XM 599 LOT HS L 31
2 APIT M 601 LOT HS L 34

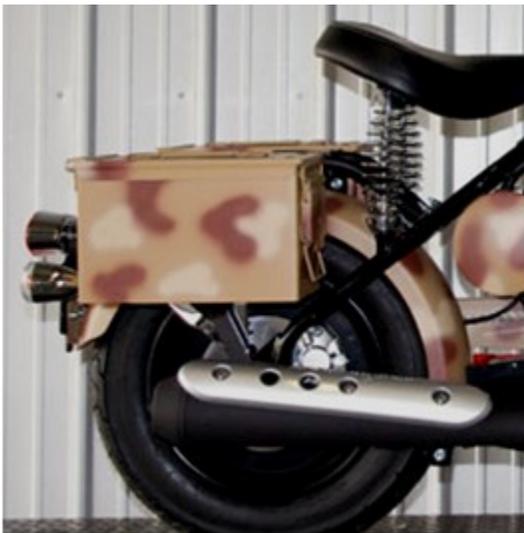
USE IN M139 GUN



First Aid Kit: Use ammo cans as first aid kits.



Motorcycle Saddlebags: Use as custom motorcycle saddlebags.





Hunting Blind Storage: Use ammo cans when hunting in wet areas.



Bicycle Saddlebags: Use ammo cans as bicycle saddlebags.



Gun Cleaning Kit: Keep gun cleaning items stored and sorted, using organizer trays.



Dessicant Storage: Store dessicant (desiccant) packs, to keep them dry and active.



Sink: Use can as an improvised sink. (This one is mounted on an off-road trailer.)



Umbrella Stand: Use as an umbrella stand, or to hold swords, golf clubs, pool cues, etc.



Gift Wrap Storage: Use to store your rolls of wrapping paper.



Exercise Equipment: Use ammo cans as a dumbbells, for weight training.



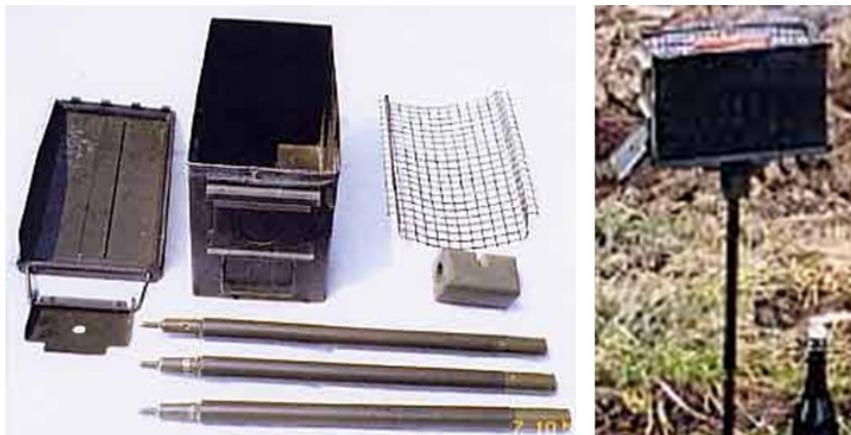
Pack Boxes: Use as waterproof boxes, on the packsaddles of your pack animals



Wood Stoves: Use ammo cans for the stove body, chimney, legs, or all three.



Camp Stove: Drill half inch holes along the bottom for air vents, and a 2 inch hole in one end to add fuel, and quarter inch holes along the top for wire skewers, to make a grill.



Ammo Can Barbecue: Made like the camp stove, but elevated on a tent stake pole.



Surgical Kits: Use to hold field surgical supplies, such as instruments and sutures.



Ammo cans keep your instruments and sutures clean, dry, and protected.



Consoles: Use ammo cans as center consoles, in vehicles.



Center consoles can be made using one large ammo cans, or several smaller ones.





Field Kitchen: Use Ammo Cans to store your camp kitchen equipment.





Reloading: Use ammo cans to store and organize used brass, and reloading supplies.



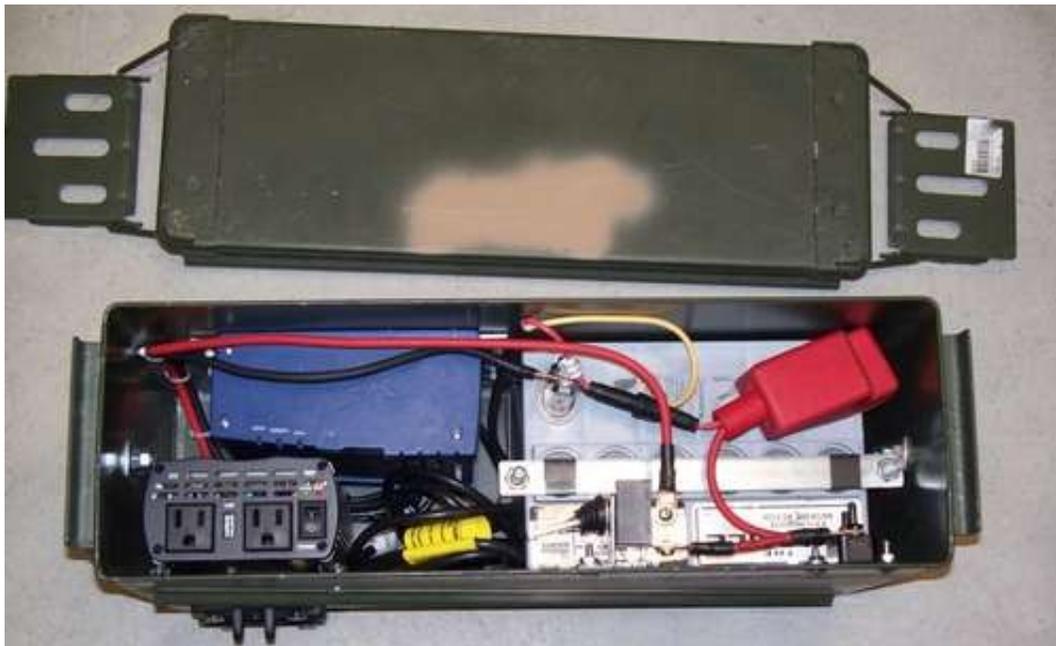


Field Toilet: There is a Coleman plastic toilet for sale, which fits in a 20 mm ammo can.





Fender Storage: Mount ammo cans on trailer sides, or fenders, for extra storage.



Power Pack: Use as a portable power pack, using a battery, charger, and inverter.



Toilet Paper Holder: Keeps toilet paper dry, and safe from rodents, in camp.



Fire Extinguishers: Use ammo cans filled with sand or water as fire buckets. (Modern fire extinguishers may not always be available, in survival situations.)

Ashtray: Ammo cans filled with sand also make good ashtrays.



Truck Bed Storage: Mount cans in your truck bed, for use as storage boxes.





Gun Cart: Use as a range cart by adding a dolly-type handle, wheels, and a rifle rack. This makes a nice cart for moving gear around the shooting range, or hunting camp.



Inner Storage Containers: Ammo cans fit nicely into some sizes of Rubbermaid storage containers, so they can be used to further protect and organize the contents of your tubs.





Padded Storage Case: Use to protect fragile optics and electronics during transport.



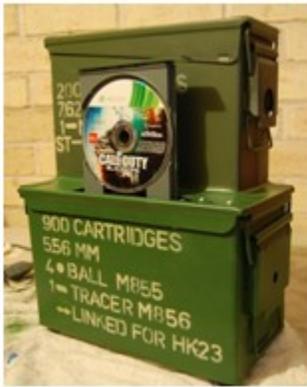
Closed-cell foam can be added to any ammo can, to make a padded storage box.



Bugout Boxes: Use ammo cans to hold your bugout equipment and supplies.



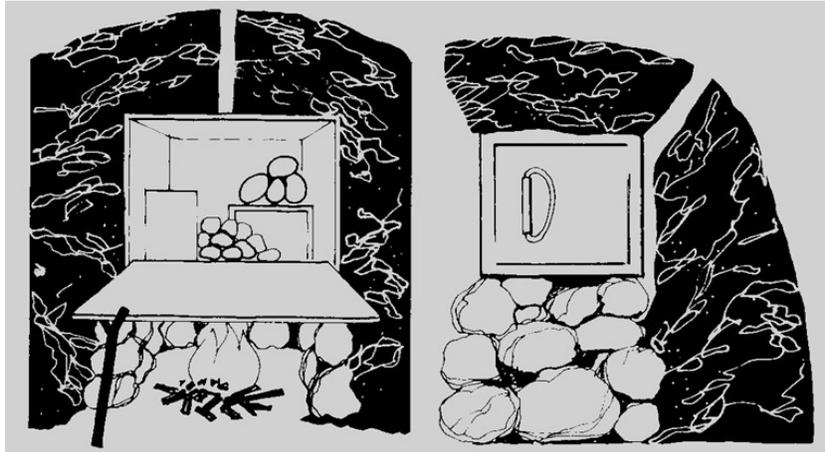
Electronics: Use an ammo can as an EMP protected box to store electronics.



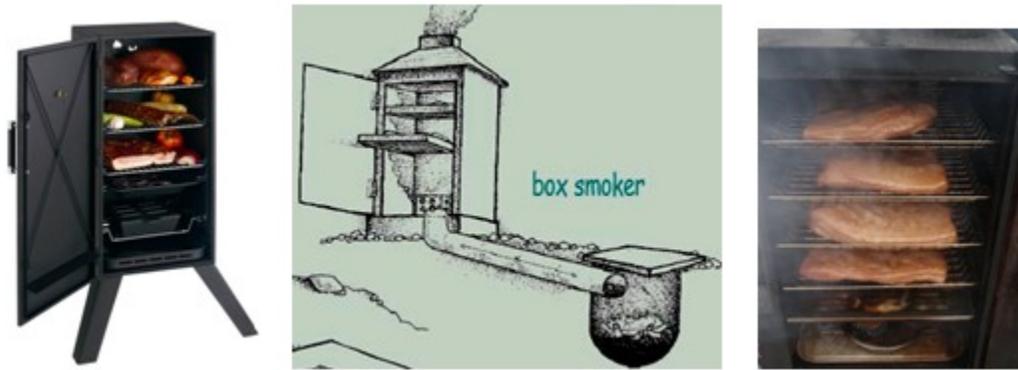
Use an ammo can as the shell, and re-build a video game, or a computer CPU, into it.



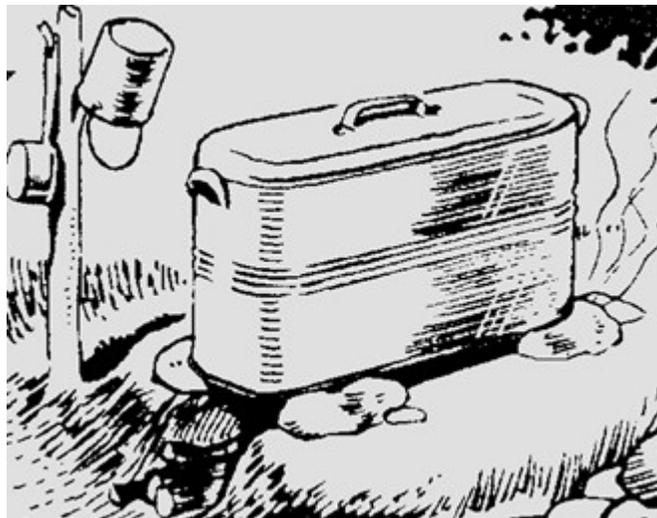
Use an ammo can as the shell, and re-build a ham radio into the ammo can.



Camp Oven: Use an ammo can to make an improvised camp oven.



Food Smoker: A large ammo can may be converted into an improvised smoker.



Water Heater: Make a camp water heater, by setting an ammo can over a fire trench.



ATV Storage: They also work as storage boxes for your ATV.



Tailgate Storage: Add an ammo can to the tailgate of your vehicle, for extra storage.





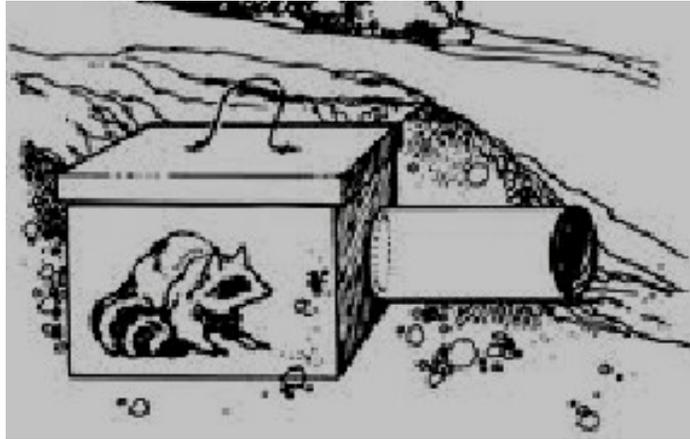
Blacksmithing: Use ammo cans for a Blacksmith's Forge Box, and a Quenching Tank.
(Use clay to shape the forge chamber, and fill the quenching tank with oil or water.)



Storage Shelves (turned on sides, with lids removed)



Fort: Use ammo cans (or crates) filled with dirt like sandbags, to fortify a position.



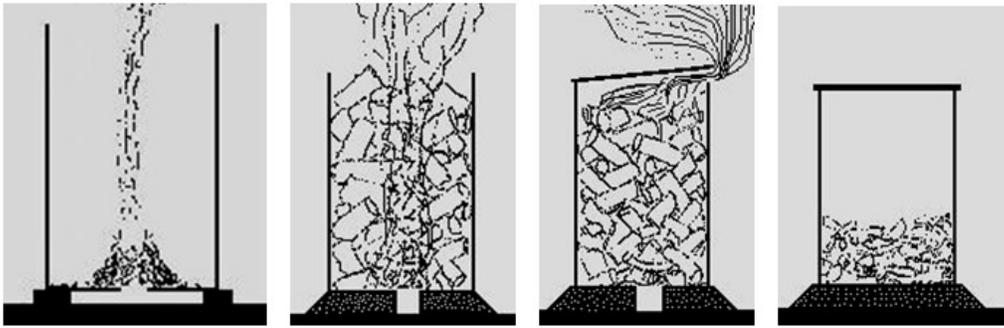
Live Catch Box Trap, or Den Trap.



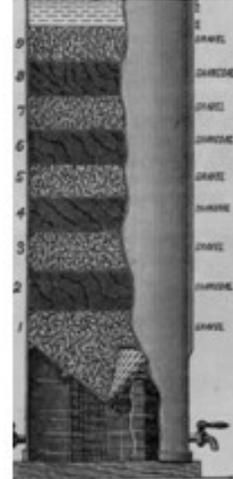
Chocolate Storage: Keep your chocolate ammo safe and secure.



Beekeeping: Use to store your beekeeping tools, like this smoker.



Char Box: Use an ammo can to make char-cloth and charcoal.

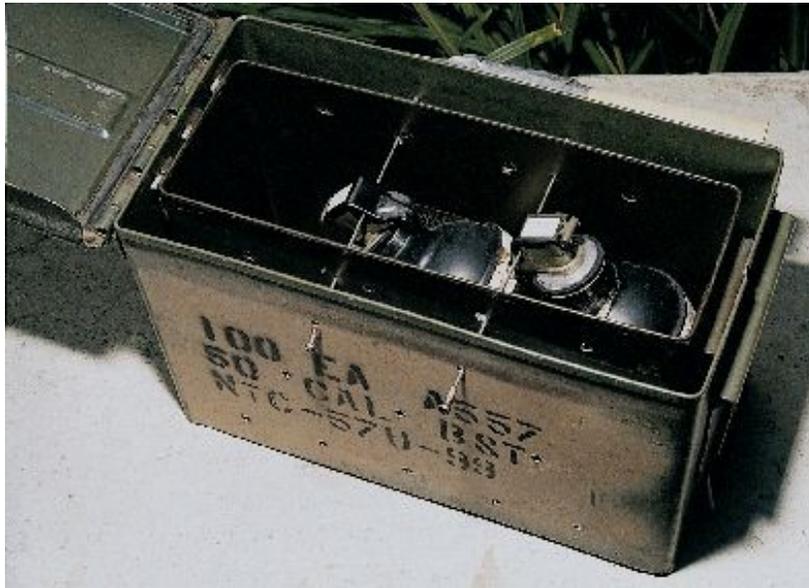


Water Filter: Fill an ammo can with alternating layers of sand and crushed charcoal, to make an improvised camp water filter. Add a spigot, or just make a hole at the bottom.



Knives: Cut up an ammo can, and use the metal to make improvised knives.





Grenade Safety Box: Use to hold lit smoke and gas grenades, to keep them from starting fires, or use as a safety container for warning devices, such as trip flares, flash bangs, etc.



Tinder Box: Use an ammo can as a tinder box, to keep your firestarting materials dry.





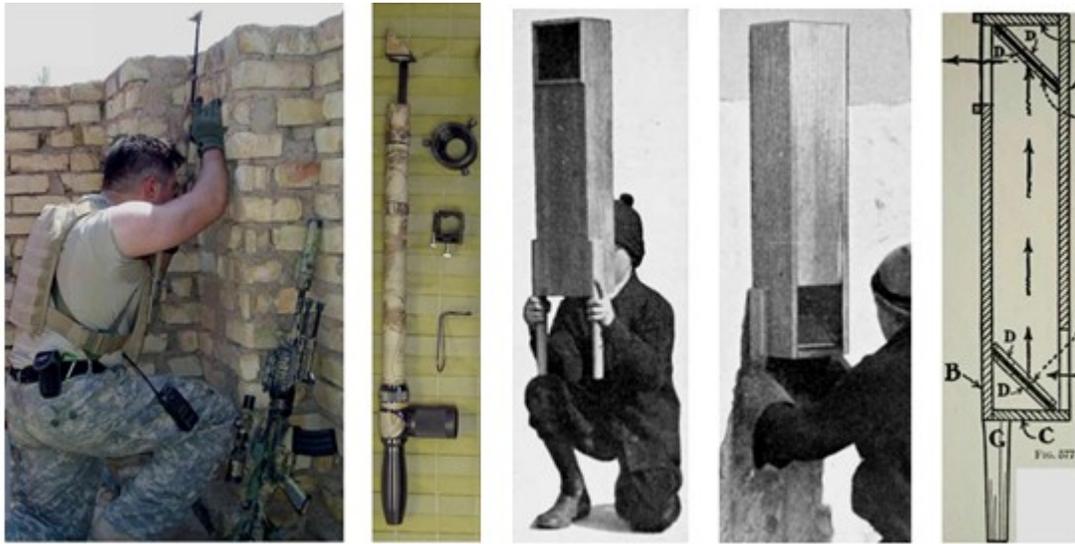
Battery Box: Use an ammo can as a battery box, to protect your deep-cycle batteries.



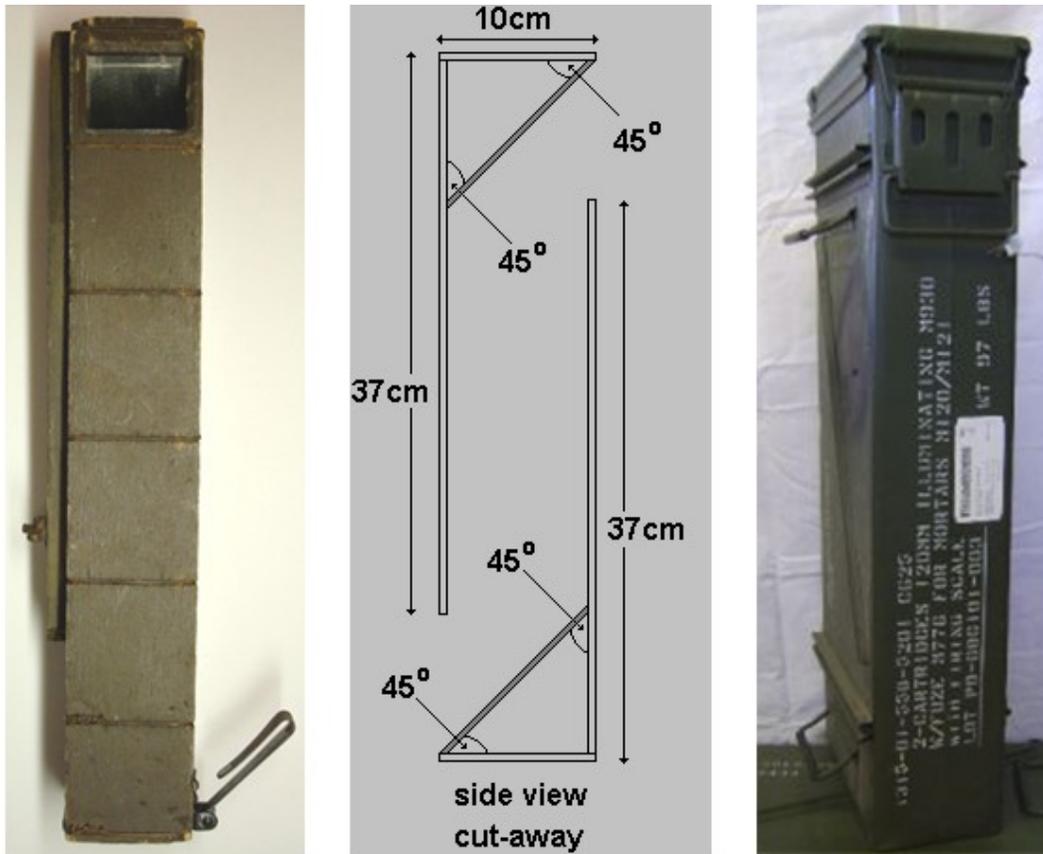
Recovery Gear Storage: Use an ammo can to store chains, winch cables, and tow straps.



Compressor Box: Use an ammo can to mount a small air compressor under your vehicle, for a handy way to air up your tires, or inflate camping air mattresses, or inflatable boats.



Periscope: Modern snipers use tactical periscopes to look over walls and out of trenches, but improvised versions (made from two mirrors in a rectangular box) work just as well. One way to make your own periscope, is to use a long ammo can as the rectangular box.



Wooden trench periscope, periscope diagram, and long ammo can.



Camp Furniture: Large ammo cans make good camp furniture. They can be used as camp stools, camp tables, lamp stands, foot rests, night stands, work surfaces, wash stands, and camp storage boxes. Two boxes and some planks make a camp shelf, or a camp bench.



Ammo cans used for camp benches can be painted, like the can on the right, if desired.



Under-Dash Storage: Mount under your vehicle dash, to create extra storage.



Car Stereo Mounting Box: Install a car stereo inside an under-dash ammo can.



Wine Storage Crate: The cube style ammo can holds one box of six bottles.
(Wooden ammo boxes also make good wine storage crates.)



Planters: Drill holes for drainage, and fill with potting soil and plants.



Underwater Viewer: You can make a water viewing box, by cutting a hole in the bottom of a bucket (or any other waterproof container, such as an ammo can), then using silicone caulk to glue a section of Plexiglas over the opening. These are good for locating fish, and for searching shallow stream beds for gold nuggets, fossils, or arrowheads.



Tool Box: Use ammo cans as tool boxes, for home or vehicle.



Game Trail Camera: Re-build your game trail camera into an ammo can.



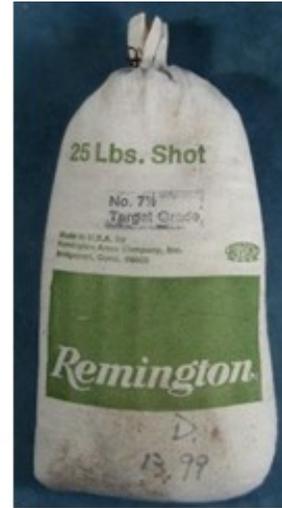
Tent Heater: Use an ammo can as an improvised tent heater, or tent stove.



Niche Storage: Use ammo cans to fill up that little empty space in your gun safe.



The cans keep your ammo organized, inside a larger safe or ammo chest.



Diversion Safe: Use an ammo can to hide your precious metals. Put gold or silver coins in lead shot bags, in the bottom of the ammo can, then cover the bags with a thick layer of loose lead shot. Mark the can "Used Lead". Stash it with your real reloading supplies.



Laundry Uses: Use an ammo can to store your laundry soap, and cleaning supplies. Use a large ammo can as a laundry tub, with an old-fashioned scrub board, or spin an ammo can half full of clothes and soapy water on an improvised frame, like the barrel shown here.



Fallout Shelter Storage: Use ammo cans to keep things organized in your fallout shelter, and to keep your valuable emergency supplies protected from dampness and rodents.



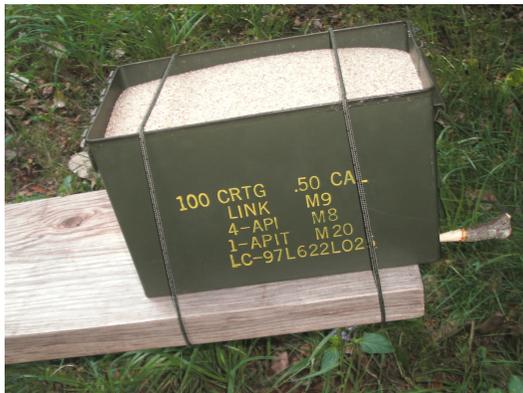
Ammo cans help to keep your shelter's survival supplies neatly organized.



Improvised Time Delay: Use an ammo can to make a mechanical time delay. Drill a quarter-inch hole at one bottom corner of the can, and whittle a wooden plug to fit it.



Fill the plugged can with fine dry sand, and place it on a pivot board, as shown.



Lash the can in place, so that it extends past the board a bit. Use a counterweight stone that is heavier than the full can, and adjust the balance, by moving the stone up the plank.



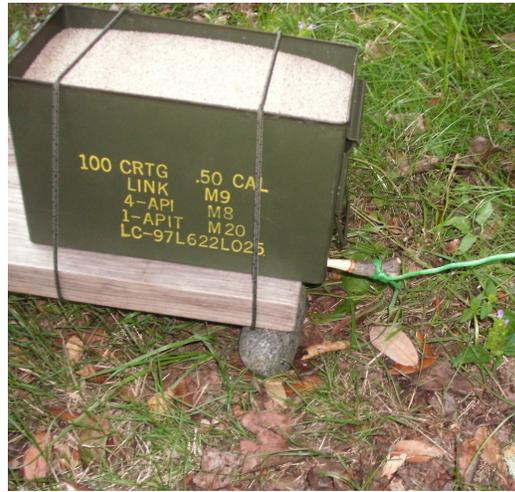
Move the counterweight stone towards the pivot log, until the tipping point is reached.



Once the counterweight is in position, lash it securely to the pivot board.



The time delay should now look like this. (You could call it a teeter-totter timer.)



Elevate the can end of the board on a small stone, to allow room for the sand to escape.

(Or you can dig a small hole in the ground, for the sand to fall into.)

To activate the timer, the plug can be removed by hand, or attached to a trip-wire.



Sand will trickle out of the hole, until the can is lighter than the counterweight, then it will tip up. Use the tipping movement to activate the action you wanted a time delay for. Electrical circuits can be activated using a mercury switch, and mechanical devices can be activated using a tripwire, or with any of the trigger designs used for traps and snares. If you want the timer to tip up with a little more force, place a small stone on the ground, so that it leans against the ammo can. This will keep the tip up from occurring, until the weight imbalance exceeds the force needed to move the stone out of the way. For wet weather, leave the lid on the ammo can to keep the sand dry, or it may not flow properly.



Medicine Cabinet: Mount a flat ammo can on the wall of your cabin, or hang it on the side of a tree at camp, and use it as a storage cabinet, a first-aid cabinet, or a medicine cabinet. Add interior shelves, if needed.



Camp Food Storage: Ammo cans are good for protecting your food from hungry critters, and wet weather, while out camping. They can also be hoisted into trees, to thwart bears.

That's a lot of possible uses, but there are plenty more. An ammo can could be used for just about anything that other containers are used for, so the list is practically endless.

Here are a few more potential uses: Use an ammo can as a ballot box.

Use an ammo can as a Dirt Screener, or Gold Ore Classifier.

Make an Ammo Can Ice Chest (put drinks inside, and fill with ice).

Use a pair of ammo cans to soak your feet (just add Epsom salts).

Make an ammo can Camp Shower (add a nozzle, from a watering can).

Use an ammo can as a jack stand for a small car, or as a wheel chock.

Use ammo cans to make improvised steps (fill with dirt or rocks, for stability).

Use them for Adobe Brick Molds. Try an Ammo Can Anchor (fill with concrete).

Use to store jerky, fruit leather, and dehydrated fruits and vegetables, to keep them dry.

Use one as a small animal cage, or transport, by adding air holes and cage door.

Use an ammo can as a bench rest. Make an ammo can Water Bucket (add a rope handle).

Use an ammo can as a catch box for an oil change, or to catch dripping water from a leak.

Use as a heated camp seat, with holes cut in the box, and with a candle or oil lamp inside.

Use ammo cans to store your spare batteries, for flashlights, radios, and music players.

Make a Sea Water Desalinating Boiler (Burn the paint off, and add condenser tubing).

Use an ammo can for holding bulk nails, screws, and other hardware. They don't leak, so the hardware won't get wet and rust, and sharp nails can't poke through the sides.

Use an ammo can to store grease and oil you wouldn't want leaking everywhere, or for fragile items which could get crushed in a tool box, such as spare vehicle headlights.

Use an ammo can as a flotation device, or outrigger float. Lash large cans together, and cover with a wooden platform, to make a raft. Use two tall cans as improvised bog shoes.

In foxholes and fighting positions, dig them into the wall of the foxhole, and use as shelves to hold your extra ammo, grenades, binoculars, MREs, canteens, etc.

Use an ammo can as a improvised bunker buster. Drill a hole big enough for a fuse, fill can with C4 and shrapnel, throw into bunker, or drop from helicopter. The can is too big to fall into a grenade sump, too heavy to throw back, and more powerful than a grenade.

And Finally, My Favorite: Use ammo cans as survival starter kit gift boxes, filled with useful survival items and survival books, to help get your friends and relatives prepared.