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# One Second After (A John Matherson Novel)



## Synopsis

New York Times best selling author William R. Forstchen now brings us a story which can be all too terrifyingly real...a story in which one man struggles to save his family and his small North Carolina town after America loses a war, in one second, a war that will send America back to the Dark Ages...A war based upon a weapon, an Electro Magnetic Pulse (EMP). A weapon that may already be in the hands of our enemies. Months before publication, *One Second After* has already been cited on the floor of Congress as a book all Americans should read, a book already being discussed in the corridors of the Pentagon as a truly realistic look at a weapon and its awesome power to destroy the entire United States, literally within one second. It is a weapon that the Wall Street Journal warns could shatter America. In the tradition of *On the Beach*, *Fail Safe* and *Testament*, this book, set in a typical American town, is a dire warning of what might be our future...and our end.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I live in Black Mountain, NC, and am a personal friend of Dr. Forstchen, so I read this latest book of his with considerable interest. I would highly recommend it. The EMP event he describes might presently be improbable, but is certainly possible. Nicholas Taleb would undoubtedly recognize it as a "Black Swan" event: something that lies outside the range of normal experience, but that has a catastrophic impact. Taleb pointed out that humans have a tendency to excessively discount and underestimate Black Swans, so I would encourage readers to be careful not to dismiss Forstchen's book just because the scenario he paints is improbable. Furthermore, an EMP attack is hardly the

only thing that might result in the substantial or total collapse of the economy and civilization; there are a range of possible scenarios, and the practical effect of living through them and their aftermath might not differ all that much from what Forstchen describes. Some might be tempted to feel depressed after reading "One Second After", or to consider Forstchen's outlook to be excessively pessimistic. On the contrary, I consider his to actually be a rather optimistic view. Importantly, his story line assumes that the townspeople DO come together and cooperate with each other; the town government does hold together, and the town leaders do lead. The town does not devolve into "every person for themselves" anarchy, as so many other post-apocalyptic visions presume. It is also optimistic in that the townspeople do actually win in a horrific battle against a nightmarish roving gang. It is optimistic in that the protagonist and the other characters do succeed in the struggle to maintain their humanity and deepest held values. So, read the book. But then what?

I purchased this book because I have been flogging the Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attack scenario to friends and relatives since early 2008, when it became apparent to me that the U.S. had lost the will to halt nuclear proliferation among terror-sponsoring states. I reasoned that a stateless actor or an apocalyptic regime might calculate that an EMP attack would actually create more casualties and more economic damage than a direct strike on any one city. An EMP attack also has the advantage of being the equivalent of hitting the broad side of a barn. Just get the nuke up a couple hundred clicks and go "boom," rather than trust your missile's guidance to hit an urban center from offshore or (alternatively) risk detection of a smuggled warhead. Lastly, the straightforward atomic bomb designs a nascent nuclear state is likely to deploy don't make as big a crater as a sophisticated "hydrogen" (fusion) bomb does, but they're already very effective at creating EMP. Given the above, one would imagine I'd be among the vanguard in extolling this novel. For reasons great and small though, I was ultimately disappointed. In my opinion the story's biggest flaw is its implicit assumption that EMP would render irrevocably inoperable any integrated-circuit based device -- i.e., anything more advanced than wires, coils, and vacuum tubes -- and by extension anything that depended upon such devices (your modern automobile, for example). My readings so far of the findings of the ongoing EMP Commission (in particular April 2008, see [empcommission.org](http://empcommission.org)) suggest that this is a gross exaggeration.

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