

# GUIDE TO THE OUTDOORS FROM THE SHERIFF'S POSSE: GET READY FOR THE HUNTING SEASON

By Mark Rackay

According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) an estimated quarter million hunters will take to the woods during the several big game seasons this year in Colorado. The season starts out with archery Aug. 26 and ends with a late season elk Jan. 15, 2018 in a few areas., making this a busy time for hunters.

This is also the busy season for search and rescue teams all across the state, including the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. The Posse expects to be called out numerous times for lost, overdue and injured hunters during the season, averaging a half dozen missions each year.

Unfortunately, many of these rescue missions turn into recoveries because the people did not prepare properly for their excursion. The hunter carrying with them a few life-saving articles, and the knowledge to use them, in a pack, could have avoided many of these deaths.

The scenario usually starts out with a couple hunters leaving camp early in the morning. The weather is warm, in the 50's, and the skies are clear. Since the two are only going out for a few hours, planning to meet back in camp for a late lunch, they do not carry any extra clothes or a survival pack or a GPS. The two hunters split up, one staying low and the other dropping over a ridge, but keeping the ridge in sight as a landmark. Over the next couple hours, a strong cold front pushes in, bringing high winds, dropping temperatures and snow. The snow blocks the second hunter from seeing his ridge landmark, and he walks hopelessly in circles, with only a light jacket and no way of protecting himself from the elements.

If the hunter is lucky, his buddy will make it to camp and summon help before it is too late. Most likely, the lost hunter will fall and perish to hypothermia in a matter of a few hours.

Unfortunately, we see this scenario play out several times each year. Sev-



*There are many styles of packs to choose from. If you are like me, you will want to own several. Photo by author.*

eral certainties for Colorado hunters would include that the weather will change, abruptly and harshly, at any given time. Another certainty would be that you would have an unexpected travel companion, that being Mr. Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame. He goes along on every trip, just to make sure you stay on top of your game.

You simply carrying along a pack equipped with some basic survival equipment and possessing the knowledge how to use it could avoid most of this. Here is a list of a few things I would suggest everybody bring with them:

- Compass, maps and GPS with extra batteries
- Signal mirror and whistle, sound making device to help searchers locate you
- Knife and Multi-tool
- Flashlight with extra batteries-I prefer lithium as they hold power better in the cold than alkaline
- Several types of fire starter-waterproof matches, metal match and flares
- Drinking water-a hydration bladder or camel back works well
- Life Straw-this is a small, personal water filtration device
- Food-high energy foods, power bars, nuts, trail mix
- Cell phone and extra power source
- Rain Gear or poncho
- Space blanket bivy-much better than a blanket as you can crawl into a bivy to stay warm



*Here are just a few of the items that you can include in your pack. Tailor the pack to fit the specific needs of you and your trip. Photo by author.*

Duct tape-good for just about anything from first aid to repairs

Toilet paper-you just never know  
First aid kit-with life saving items such as tourniquet, Israeli bandage, prescription drugs, few band-aids  
Extra jacket and warm clothes for when the weather changes

I suggest that everyone take a basic first aid/CPR and a basic survival course. These skills could save a life.

Finally, leave a note on your vehicle windshield or on your tent, giving a brief description of the area and direction you are hunting in that day. It really helps search and rescue people to know a direction of travel and general area you may be in.

I know that I have written and spoke about the survival pack for so many years that people may tire of hearing of it. However, it still astonishes me how many people need rescued or perish because they have no lifesaving tools with them. This year, plan to foil Mr. Murphy and be prepared. Carry that pack with you everywhere you go and stay safe. Enjoy the hunting season and see you next time.

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