

## Attitude can be everything

Your mind is the most important tool you carry with you in the backcountry. It is your most valuable asset in an emergency situation.

Survival often depends on an individual's reaction to stress rather than the danger, terrain, injury or the nature of the emergency. When you open up that first aid kit, the most important tool is your mind and being able to use it to solve the trouble at hand.

In 480 BC, at the Battle of Thermopylae, 7,000 Greeks held off 150,000 Persians for seven days, which included at least three days of battle. The Greeks knew death was imminent but maintained a positive mental attitude and strong mental determination. Many writers have used this battle as a symbol of courage, training and mental attitude against overwhelming odds.

Physical skills are very important, however, you can't use them if you do not use your mental skills. When you face an emergency situation, you will be faced with many fears that you must overcome. Recognize the immediate threats to your life, prioritize them and take the necessary actions to overcome them and to survive.

Keep in mind Mr. Murphy, of Murphy's Law, where everything goes wrong, all at once. Most people have faced hunger, cold, heat, fatigue, injury, pain, thirst and fear before, but what about when you have to combat them all at once during a survival situation? Any one of them, or combination of, can destroy your self-confidence and reduce your desire to fight for life. Learn to identify these fears and control them, rather than them controlling you.

Fatigue is a major enemy of a positive mental outlook. It lowers your defenses, makes you less aware to danger, and causes a loss in judgment and reasoning. Always take the time to rest your brain and body.

Cold and heat are your enemies. In an emergency, shelter up as soon as possible. If you are cold, make a fire. When you are overheated, find some shade and rest up. Address the elements before they become a problem.

Hunger and thirst is an enemy that can really depress your attitude. Find water as soon as you can, and remember that food can wait. You can go weeks without food. Consider that you may be better off resting than wandering around looking for food. Finding the food may have used more energy than the food found can supply you with. Again, control your thoughts.

Everyone has fears. Fear is a normal reaction for someone faced with an emergency situation in the wilderness. Fear usually depends on the individual rather than the situation faced. Fear can lead a person to panic or stimulate a greater effort to survive.



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



Heading off into the wilderness is fun and exciting, but those feelings can change to fear and panic in an instant. Controlling your emotions in an emergency is key to survival. Pictured above is a New Foundland landscape. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

The worst feelings to avoid are hopelessness and helplessness. Never let the idea of a complete failure cross your mind.

You are not going to avoid the feeling of fear by denying the existence of the danger you are in. Accept the fact fear is a natural reaction and concentrate on making the best of your situation. Don't let your imagination run away with you by making "mountains out of prairie dog mounds." Keeping your mind and body busy with small tasks can lessen fear as you do not have time to dwell on it.

The most dangerous enemy you face in an emergency is panic. Panic is the uncontrolled urge to run away from the situation and is triggered by the mind and imagination under stress. Fear can build into panic and make a bad situation worse, leading to tragedy.

Combat fear and panic by keeping your cool, relaxing and looking at the brighter side of things. Stay in control by keeping up your positive self talk and remembering your goal of survival.

Spend some time learning first aid skills, survival

skills and outdoor crafts while at home. Practice these skills often. In an emergency, self-confidence will go a long way to defeat fear and panic.

When you first realize you are in an emergency or survival situation, stop and regain your composure. Recognize the dangers you face and observe the resources around you. Stop and think; don't make any rash or hasty decisions. Giving into fear and panic can leave you deadlier than easy credit.

Analyze your predicament and plan a course of action, after considering all the dangers and aspects of the situation. While keeping cool, make the right decisions and set the goal of survival firmly in your mind. Never give up and hope for the best while preparing for the worst. Until next time, see you on the trail.

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## EPA crews working on Gold King cleanup find elevated lead threatening birds, animals and, potentially, people

By BRUCE FINLEY

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SILVERTON — A little toxic-lead pollution in Colorado's mountains lasts long after jobs go away.

Environmental Protection Agency crews conducting Superfund cleanup-prep investigations along Animas River headwaters revealed this week that they've found contamination at century-old mine sites at levels 100 times higher than danger thresholds for wildlife.

This lead and dozens of other contaminants are spreading beyond waste-rock piles into surrounding "halos" where they are absorbed by plants and then can be ingested by bugs and transferred from the insects to birds to, ultimately, mammals. EPA officials said tissue samples from deer will be tested to assess ecological harm.

"You start to understand the scope of the environmental problem and how long this is going to take," EPA Superfund project chief Rebecca Thomas said after a town hall meeting this week in Silverton. "It is pretty overwhelming."

"We don't really have an

active mining industry in this state anymore. Yet we still see so many impacts. And we're just looking at the Bonita Peak Mining District in the San Juan Mountains. Think how much more widespread it is across the Rocky Mountain West. It's a big problem. It's going to take many years to solve it — and a lot of money."

The lead, measured at concentrations up to 5,000 parts per million, surfaced in the latest round of sampling and study that were spurred by a federal declaration last year of a Superfund environmental disaster linked to the 2015 Gold King Mine spill that turned the Animas River mustard-yellow through three states.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has said Superfund cleanups will be the EPA's priority, even as he and other Republicans push to trim the agency's \$8 billion budget, because Americans deserve to have environmental harm fixed as required by law.

Mining that began in the late 19th century, churning out minerals that propelled the rise of the U.S., left tens of thousands of abandoned tunnels leaking

acidic metals-laced water into Western watersheds — continuing now when clean water increasingly is coveted.

The equivalent of the Gold King spill still happens again and again, every couple of weeks, as thousands of gallons of the acid-metals mine water flows into creeks where few fish or even aquatic bugs can survive.

But Silverton residents and their elected leaders worry not just about environmental degradation but also about EPA targeting of "potentially responsible parties" liable for footing some of the Superfund cleanup bill.

Those costs will depend on whether the EPA decides on risky concrete "bulkhead" plugs to stop leaks from an underground mine tunnels and geological fractures, or water-treatment plants that would have to run forever. Under Superfund law, Colorado taxpayers could be left paying \$2 million a year to run a water-treatment plant just below the Gold King Mine, just as Colorado has been left paying perpetually at other now-toxic mines.

"The lead thing surprises

me," San Juan County Commissioner Scott Fetchenhier said, saying he doubts deer tissue tests will show wide impact because wildlife exposures may be brief.

The EPA teams probably are measuring lead levels in part to produce legally defensible data for legal battles over who will pay, Fetchenhier said. "There are some mine owners who are definitely worried about being a potentially responsible party."

The EPA must take account of naturally occurring minerals in streams above Silverton, he said. "How far do you go with your cleanup if 50 percent to 70 percent of your metals loading is natural?"

The EPA experts say their data on contamination will help focus cleanup at the worst of 46 targeted sites, among 180 or so old mines above Silverton. Much of the data builds on information gathered over 30 years by a local Animas River Stakeholders Group.

"I would like to see the EPA focus on actually removing metals out of streams, ... removing the sources from the

streams and improving water quality," said ARSG co-coordinator Peter Butler, who also has served on Colorado's Water Quality Control Commission and leads an advisory cleanup working group.

Thomas acknowledged concerns about drawn-out EPA processes.

"It is a valid criticism of the EPA — taking far too long in the studies before we start to take response actions," she said, adding that heavy work will begin after snow melts in 2018, when a draft "record of decision" should be complete.

Read more on [denverpost.com](http://denverpost.com)

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