

Cellphone survival

Seems that everyone has a cellphone these days. Verizon estimates there are more than 300 million of them in the United States alone. While these phones have been an advancement in our communications, they have certainly destroyed our situational awareness skills.

Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



Everyone has seen what can happen when you drive and text. Distracted driving causes far too many accidents. I have seen people walk into poles and signs while looking down at their phones. While they can be a big distraction, cellphones have a very useful place in the outdoor world.

Always start your trip with a fully charged phone, even if you have to charge it in the vehicle on the way up. Keep the phone off once it is fully charged, as the battery will run down needlessly while the phone is searching for service.

Keep the location setting on your phone turned on when you head into the outdoors. That setting gives the good folks at 911 the ability to obtain GPS coordinates for your location in the event of an emergency. Having a latitude and longitude location for you will save many hours of precious time for rescue personnel trying to find you.

If you are out for more than a day, turn the phone on once a day for a few minutes. This allows the phone to check in with the nearest tower, even if you do not have enough service to make a call. Having your phone on once a day leaves an electronic trail that can be utilized by rescuers in the event of a problem.

One of the things in my pocket is a back-up power source for the cellphone. These little portable battery packs will hold a charge for months and power up your phone when you need it. The pack is very small and compact, so taking it with you is no problem. I buy the 4000mAh size and it will charge your phone twice. You can buy one for around 10 bucks and it is money well spent.

Cellphones can sometimes send a text when you don't have enough service for a call. If you send a text to 911, the phone will send it whenever it finds enough service to send it out. While a phone call to 911 is your first choice, the old saying is call when you can, text when you can't.

We are fortunate that our E-911 service here has the capability to



A cell phone is an excellent survival tool. Books on survival, first aid and edible plants can be stored on a phone and used when outdoors. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

receive text messages. I would also mention that you be sure to call 911 yourself in an emergency. Some folks call a contact person in town, asking them to make the call. All this does is delay the rescue and put personnel in the wrong area while sorting out the cellphone GPS ping. Remember, we want the ping from the victim to aid in finding his or her location.

There are some other things that you can do with your phone that will help in the outdoors. The app stores have hundreds of useful applications available to assist you while outside, and many are free. Most of these applications will work fine when you do not have service.

There are many maps available that will work on your phone. These programs can be downloaded, while others use an SD card on the phone. Maps are available for most of the state of Colorado.

When Mr. Murphy pays you a visit in the backcountry, he cares little

about your bank balance or church attendance. A good app to keep him in check is one from the American Red Cross. This app is called the Red Cross First Aid App and it is free. It contains lots of first aid information, helping you sort out a medical emergency.

If you find yourself 150 miles east of nowhere and in for the duration, one of the Army survival apps may be just the ticket. The U.S. Army knows how to teach its people how to survive. Its field manual is the most authoritative guide available for survival.

The manual will have chapters on first aid, edible plants, signaling, shelter, dangerous animals, and just about anything else you may encounter. Having it on your phone is a great reference to carry along when you head outdoors.

There are scores of apps available, some free and some with a nominal cost. The survival apps can be used for wildlife identification or edible

plants as a training exercise when you go out, making good practice.

I grew up with a dial phone attached to the wall in the kitchen. It was on a party line so we had to know our ring. When I went off outside, I had no means of communication, short of yelling for help from a hilltop.

I really enjoyed the solitude and not being bothered by the phones. Sometimes I wish I could go back to those days. But I must admit, the cellphones save lives and are a very important survival tool when utilized properly, even if they do have people walking into poles on the street. Until next time, watch where you are walking and see you on the trail.

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Ticket to Write: Service helps landowners, campers find each other

BY STEVE STEPHENS
MORE CONTENT NOW

Person-to-person vacation-rental websites like Airbnb and VRBO have grown quite popular. I've booked getaway rentals on such sites and have been very happy with the results. A new startup company is now offering the same kind of service for campers.

Hipcamp connects lovers of the great outdoors with property owners who want to make a few bucks from their camping-appropriate spreads.

Campsites range from primitive, no-services sites to "glamping" setups with all the trimmings. Some owners even offer amenities such as heated cabins, running water and flush toilets (although at that point, you might as well book The Ritz).

Prices vary from \$10 to hundreds per night. Property owners keep 90 percent of the proceeds while Hipcamp, which also can provide insurance and other services to campsite owners, gets the other 10 percent.

I really like the idea of helping owners of beautiful, natural property profit,

at least a bit, from preserving their land and sharing it with fellow nature lovers. I also like that campers can enjoy pretty spots that are otherwise inaccessible to the public.

Sites are already available all across the country, with more quickly being added. Users can search for a site by area or with a map tool. Hipcamp also offers creative suggestions, such as the best campsites near national parks, and useful tools like a fall foliage map, should you want to find a campsite with the prettiest trees this weekend.

You can even find a site that might come with a ghost. Although it's a bit late for Halloween, Hipcamp is offering suggestions for campsites near 13 of the spookiest ghost towns in America.

For example, Paradise Shores Camp is located in the desert near the old gold-mining town of Bodie, California. Legend has it that Bodie is protected by a curse that causes bad luck to anyone foolish enough to take an artifact from the site. (That same curse protects the stapler on my desk from co-workers, by the way.) On the other side of the

country is Field, Forest and Farm, offering campsites in New York's Catskill Mountains near Grossinger's Catskill Resort Hotel. The old resort, now abandoned and spooky, was reportedly the inspiration for the hotel in the movie "Dirty Dancing" — which is pretty scary when you think about it.

Campers, and property owners who would like to find out more about renting campsites, can find more information at www.hipcamp.com.



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In this upcoming season ofThanks and Giving,

Give Thanks that you have enough to eat, and then give to a Food Bank.

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