



Readers’ questions answered

I receive a fair number of comments, ideas and questions from you readers each month. I generally try and answer each question personally, which is why I include my personal email on each column.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

There are times when a particular question comes up that I would like to share. We have decided to periodically have a column to address those questions and others that may be of interest to outdoor folks. Feel free to write to me your questions and comments on my email whenever you like and I will do my best to deliver answers.

Dear Adventurer Mark,

How many days should I prepare for when I get my survival pack together? And how many days of emergency food should I have at home? Seems like a lot of food storage.

Signed,
Overstocked Mary in Montrose

Overstocked Mary,

Let’s start out with home first. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, through FEMA, recommends a family have a 14-day food supply stored at home for each member of the household. That should also include 1 gallon of water per person, per day. Personally, I think that a 30-day supply makes more sense.

On Aug. 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew plowed into the area of South Florida we lived in. This storm knocked out our power and water. We did not get the services back to our home until the Saturday after Thanksgiving. It was 5 weeks before our street was cleared enough from debris so we could get out of the subdivision. I was really tired of eating dry Hamburger Helper without the hamburger. Hopefully, you never see a catastrophe of that strength and duration.

I know that 30-days seems like a lot of food, but it really isn’t. Start buying a few extra items each week when you shop. Canned goods, pasta, water, and dried foods all have a long shelf life. Eventually, you will have a stockpile that you can just rotate things out of and maintain your supply. During the aftermath of Andrew, drinking water was a rare commodity.

Pay special attention to prescription drugs and needed medicines for family members. An extra 30-day supply could be the difference between life and death. Could we see an emergency of that duration in Montrose? You bet. All it takes is a pandemic, like the close call we had some years back with the bird flu.

As for your survival pack when you head outdoors, that is another story. Most lost people are found within 24 hours. This assumes you do your

homework and have someone in town that will summon help if you do not return on time. This person should know your starting point, and general area of your adventure, thereby ensuring help will find you quickly.

I generally carry a 24-hour supply of food and snacks. Remember, you can survive a long time without food but not so long without water. Use the extra space to carry water and a Lifestraw or similar water filtration device. Keep your pack light, so you bring it with you everywhere. Whenever I find myself stranded in the woods, of course I wish I had more along, like a large pizza and a full box of cookies. I carry the minimum and have always made it through safely.

The federal government recommends (and I do also) everyone have a bug out bag, full of at least a 72-hour supply of food, water, and medicines for each person in the family. This kit is really necessary for us in situations like a wildfire that could threaten our homes. We may be asked to leave with little or no advance warning. Gas leaks or chemical hazards are another possibility. When preparing, be sure to include food, water and meds for your furry kids as well.

When you have to store or carry everything, it seems like way too much. However, when the feces impacts the oscillator, there will never be everything you need.

Dear Adventurer Mark,

I hear people refer to a backpackers note from time to time. What is it and what is it for? I am not very social and don’t even like to write thank you notes.

Signed,
Unsocial Tom from Olathe

Dear Unsocial Tom,

A backpacker’s note is simply a note left on the windshield of a car by the backpacker, describing a general direction of travel, number of people in party, names, and approximate return time.

This note saves countless hours of time for rescuers when they come to find you. With this note, we have a starting point and a general area to start searching. The note can be used by anyone. Fisherman, hikers, ATV riders, hunters and backpackers can all leave a note. In a camp, hang the note on the tent flap or on the door of your camper.

Remember Tom; this note is not just an attempt to be social with passersby, it must be in conjunction with the responsible person back in town with your itinerary. If that person never calls for help, obviously nobody is going to be reading your note.

A couple years ago, I came across a jeep that was parked well off the road. Upon inspection, I saw a backpacker’s note that was on the windshield so long that it was not legible. Obviously, this person did not take care of step one and nobody knew he was missing. This story did not have



Letters wanting answers. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

a happy ending, as the hiker tested his mortality, and lost.

Dear Adventurer Mark,

I have read your articles, and many others for that matter, about the ills of going it alone in the wilderness. I have spent most of my career and personal time in the outdoors. Most of my trips have been alone.

If a person is trained in survival, outdoors and self-defense, I see no reason not to go alone. As far as running into “bad guys” in the woods, this is a rare event. Why do you, and so many others, push this safety in numbers thing? If I had to depend on a group, I would hardly make it outdoors at all.

Signed,
Adrenaline Junkie Robert from Montrose

Dear Adrenaline Junkie Robert,

During hunting seasons, over 50 percent of our rescues are for someone out alone. A higher percentage of our recoveries are for someone who went out alone. The fact is, a person out alone who becomes injured, ill or lost, has a much greater chance of cashing in because there is no buddy along to help. Most die from exposure or succumb to their illness, such as a heart attack.

There are some people who are competent in the outdoors, those who have studied survival and emergency medicine. Unfortunately, most people are not well trained, which makes going

alone even more dangerous.

When it comes to facing bad guys in the woods, common sense dictates safety in numbers. Most criminals are looking for an easy score. One guy alone, or three people out in a group; who do you think is better off?

Robert, I am an adrenaline Junkie myself; it is why I raced offshore powerboats and hunt dangerous game around the world. When it comes to Mother Nature and fate, I just don’t like to gamble because she will always win. Just when you think you are King of the Jungle, the old lady will come at you like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. If you really want to gamble, find a blackjack table, but when you head into the wilderness, use common sense.

Like you, I enjoy my solitude in the woods and relish those days alone. I have hunted and fished by myself many, many times. I have been lucky so far. In good conscience, I could never advise anyone to go alone in the backcountry.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff’s Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@bresnan.net



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