Choosing exercise in smoke

"I can see and smell the smoke in the air again today. Is it healthy for you to exercise in it or not?"

Whether that voice is the one in your head, or the voice of a family member or friend, the question is an important one.

How do we best decide? We could spend a signifi-

cant block of our time researching online advice, wind direction forecasts, current daily air quality test results and how to interpret those test results.

But that act may either burn up our allotted time for such exercise, or possibly miss the window of less smoky or "good" air

When a running buddy texted me last Saturday about a possible fourteener to run Sunday morning, all of those thoughts went through my mind. Do you recall how bad the air was here in Montrose last Wednesday evening? Many friends, acquaintances and patients reported the onset of headaches, eye irritation, throat irritability, and/or low motivation and mild depression from that smoky episode.

Neither myself nor the other runner was interested in running if the fire smoke was going to be as bad as it had been last Thursday. But what if our local air conditions were to improve by Sunday sunrise?

The smoke from hundreds of fires now in northern California continue drifting our way, even if the Grand Junction and Glenwood Springs fire smoke temporarily gets blown elsewhere.

There is a big difference in air quality between "today, I cannot see Mt. Sneffels" from Montrose to "today, I cannot see Flat Top." So how else does a person compare degree of risk? The Air Quality Index (AQI) is how. It is a measure of the number of very small particles in a certain volume of air.

These small particles are worth measuring, because they can get breathed so deeply into our lungs that they can inflame lung tissue. This can damage our heart's ability to pump and our lungs' abilities to deliver us oxygen for our brain and muscle cells.

Our U.S. government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) posts this AQI, updated each hour. Just go to airnow.gov. Then type in our ZIP code. The data from the air monitoring station at Montrose Regional Airport will display in a bar graph.



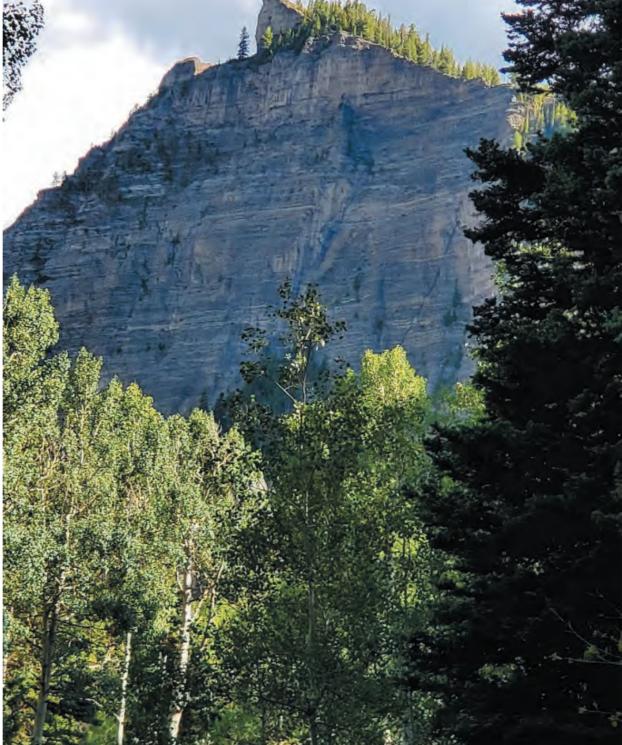


Just before the August drought, runner Jacob Torrey is seen jumping a San Juan stream. (John T. Unger/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)



Outdoors

By John T. Unger



In a remote place like this, the cell phone in your pocket may be your only link to help in the event of an emergency. Make sure you know how to use it correctly in the backcountry. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

The cell phone in your pocket

About three years ago, I wrote an article about using your cell phone as a survival tool. That article has definitely made it around the block. I have seen it published in papers all across Colorado and thought it was probably time to discuss phones and their usefulness in outdoor emergencies once again.

To start with, I hate cell phones on a personal level. Used to be I could escape work, life, school, kids and reality by disappearing into the woods. Then some guy invented a ball and chain that you have to drag around with you every time you want to get away. I cannot even hide from my wife anymore, all thanks to the cell phone.

On a more serious note, cell phones have changed the face of search and rescue missions. Hours and days have been shaved off response times and because of the GPS in phones, locating lost and injured people has become easier. The quality, battery life and features of the new phones are constantly improving.

When you have an emergency, forget all the



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

#77 and 112 nonsense you have read about. Most of that is simply outdated or an internet rumor. When you need help, call 911. You are sending signals through the air to a tower. The tower may or may not be near your location.

The Federal Communications Commission requires that all wireless carriers must be able to pinpoint your location for the 911 dispatchers, but the rule is coming in phases and there are exceptions. Wireless carriers are required to complete 911 calls, even when the phone is not activated. Any phone that turns on is capable of making a 911 call.

We live in a rural area, meaning there are fewer cell towers. The fewer the towers, the more difficult it is to pinpoint a location. This "wider area" means we may only get GPS coordinates for a "general" area.

I don't turn in my old phones anymore when I upgrade. I keep them charged occasionally and throw one in the glove box of the truck. Since it is no longer activated, all it can be used for is to talk with 911 but it is like having an extra around in an emergency.

Your 911 call often lands in a regional center. A dispatcher in a far away city may answer. To get help immediately, let the dispatcher know immediately where (as close as you can describe when in the woods) you are calling from and the nature of your emergency; police, fire, injury, etc.

Many of us leave the cell phone in the vehicle or even at home because they assume there is no service in the mountains. While it is true that coverage is sketchy at best in many areas, the cell companies are improving and expanding coverage every day.

Start the trip with a fully charged phone. You can top off the charge in the vehicle on your way to

the starting point of your adventure. Then, keep the phone off. Having a phone on and searching for service will drain the battery prematurely and there is no sense wasting power searching for service when you don't need it.

Try to store the phone close to your body and under layers of clothes during cold weather. Keeping the battery warm also helps to conserve the power for when you need it. Think how your car battery behaves in the cold. When you park the car in a heated garage, the battery retains power better and does not waste all those cold-cranking amps.

Dispatchers have the ability to ping your cell phone for a location. A ping tracks the location of a cell phone by tracking the last signal. A signal is sent out to the phone and then the carrier is able to track the location of the phone through cellular tower triangulation. Again, this works well in a big city because of the number of towers, but not so much when you are up in the mountains.

See PHONE page A13



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Why not save some seeds to plant next season?

I was just about to pull up some lettuce that was starting to flower and go to seed when I thought, 'why not let it go to seed and save the seeds to plant next spring?'

I'm sure last spring's gardening season is one that no one will probably ever forget. I remember resorting to dawning a mask and going to the garden center to pick up a few vegetable seeds and transplants. I wasn't sure they would even have such items in the garden center. I was happy that they had seeds and starts but glad that I didn't have to buy much because I had saved some seeds the previous season.

I have no idea what next spring is going to bring, but saving a few seeds not only seems wise but it's also a lot of fun to grow something that you started from your saved seeds, and it can even save you money. So here are a few tips to get you started in the right direction.

You may want to save seeds that produced an early crop, or those that didn't bolt until later. You might like the color of a particular flower or vegetable, or the size and shape of a flower or vegetable. If so, save the seeds from that particular plant.

Most flower seeds are easy to collect and save, so I'm going to focus on vegetable seeds. First, you should know that plant tags stating F or F1 may have sterile seeds so don't bother with them.

An "F2" is developed from the second generation and is not considered a hybrid. These plants have a bit more diversity. If you want to develop something that's a little



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

different than the parent plant or a little bit crazy in your garden, you may want to try F2s. Simply save the seeds from the plant with the traits that you like best and see what develops.

Just keep in mind that most, if not all, true hybrid plants will not be the same as the original hybrid plant when reseeded. This is why many of us depend on seed distributors for future crops. The troubling thing about this is, we're losing some of the genetic diversity and your favorite seed could disappear if the manufacturer stops producing the seed.

Many people prefer heirloom seeds. These seeds are non-hybrid seeds, or, the "anti-hybrids."

Before World War II, the majority of produce grown in the United States was from heirloom seeds.

The exact definition of what officially makes an heirloom variety is still being debated. Some say the strain needs to have been grown prior to 1940, which is when hybrid strains were developed. Others insist that the strains need to have originated before 1920. Regardless, many people refer to them as "treasures." Oftentimes, heirloom seeds have been handed down from generation to generation, making them somewhat



This is the time of year to begin saving seeds for planting next spring. (Linda McIntosh/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

historical or special to your family.

The heirlooms are further classified by 'open-pollinated' varieties. In some catalogs, or on some seed packs, it will refer to this as "OP." So now you may be wondering, what does open pollinated mean? This simply means that the seeds saved from these plants are the result of pollination between the same or genetically similar parents and will produce a plant identical to the parent plant.

This brings me to the topic of "cross-pollination." This occurs when pollen is exchanged between different plants. This can result in wanted or unwanted results.

We all know bees and other insects can pollinate plants, but plants can also be pollinated by wind. This is important if you're growing crops where cross-pollination is not going to give you great results.

An example of this would be in the cucurbit family. Cucurbits such as zucchini and squash can easily cross-pollinate, resulting in a product with an unusual shape. Seeds from such pollination may also result in a product that does not taste the way you had hoped it would. To avoid cross-pollination of these plants, you need to plant the plants several feet away from each other, with a crop between them. Some plants may require quite a long distance between them. You may need to research your plant to confirm the recommended distance.

If you want a pure strain from your tomato plant, covering the plant with a floating row cover will help. This can be wrapped around the tomato cage and over the top. Because most tomato plants are self-pollinating, this should not present a problem. However, if you don't want to take any chances with pollination occurring, you can give the plant a little shake during the afternoon, while the flowers are open and pollinating.

Perhaps you want to save some tomato seeds. If so, choose a tomato that's just slightly over-ripened. Cut it in half and scoop the seeds out into a shallow jar of water. Put the jar aside for four of five days, after which a mold will have developed. This helps to remove the gelatinous coating on the tomato seed, which can prevent germination. After four or five days, pour

the seeds into a sieve and wash them thoroughly with water to remove the mold. Arrange the seeds on a double layered paper towel to allow them to dry. Once they have dried out thoroughly, store them in a labeled paper envelope in a dark, cool place until spring.

Most vegetable seeds can be saved by simply drying them on a paper towel and storing them just like previously mentioned.

So what do you think? Are you ready to give it a try? What's the worst thing that can happen? You can still eat the produce, even if it's not exactly what you expected.

Linda Corwine McIntosh, is a CSU Advanced Master Gardener, commercial pesticide applicator and ISA certified arborist.

EXERCISE

EALL EDOM DACE ALS

Merely noting the color of the most recent bar on the AQI graph is enough to help you judge for yourself about that biking, brisk walking or heavy yard work option. Green means "good," representing zero to 50 particulates. For instance, Tuesday evening, Aug. 25, the Montrose area was at AQI of 31, finally in the green zone again. That evening felt good, didn't it?

If the AQI shows a reading of 51 to 100, then the air quality is termed "moderate." In this case, "unusually sensitive individuals should consider limiting prolonged or heavy exertion." (Tuesday at mid-morning, the air quality in Montrose was in this yellow zone).

This "unusually sensitive" designation generally includes anyone under 18 or over 65- to 70-years-old, pregnant women, those with chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart or lung conditions or people taking prescription medicines to suppress the immune system. Ask your healthcare provider if in doubt.

All of Saturday morning and early afternoon, Montrose was in the orange category, when "people within sensitive groups should reduce prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion."

One must use one's own judgment here, of course, to determine the difference between the advice of the yellow stage "consider limiting" versus this orange stage direct advice to "reduce," if you or your loved ones fit into that group's definition.

I myself and the other mountain runners are not in that group of sensitive health individuals. However, we both agreed that we would have no interest in running at all if Sunday morning's AQI ended up showing in the orange category or worse. Maintaining long-term heart and lung health is much more important than any one day run in the mountains, no matter how spectacular is the scenery or how uplifting is the reward of summitting a big peak on foot.

Red, or flat out "unhealthy" ranking, is what was measured in Montrose by 9 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 19, when many people here experienced symptoms. Advice during red conditions is that "people within sensitive groups should avoid all physical outdoor activity." Notice that purple zone stands for "very unhealthy," and maroon for "hazardous."

Sunday morning's sunrise AQI of merely yellow zone showing for Montrose, combined with a clean south breeze, led to us agreeing by phone to meet in Silverton, driving separately to maintain social distancing and keep all risks low. Having run up Handies Peak, each of us was heading down from it before noon, as per smart travel strategies above timberline.

Consider the above-mentioned CDC website for planning your next outdoor adventure. It also has a link to building a DIY box fan filtration unit, in case your home uses a swamp cooler instead of air conditioning.

Praise and thanks go to the thousands of men and women working on our fire crews here and across the country.

John T. Unger is a Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, with more than 25 years of practice in Montrose. Ideas for future columns are welcomed at sportsdocunger.com.

PHONE

FROM PACE A

Some folks keep the location setting turned off because they think secret agents of the government are following them. Before your trip, activate your phone's automatic location setting. This allows emergency services (911) to get a ping and calculate your location utilizing latitude and longitude (GPS.) Countless lost people have been quickly located because of this feature.

I might point out that this "pinging location" feature is most accurate in large metropolitan areas, where there are many cell phone towers to triangulate a location. In a more rural area, such as Montrose, this feature is not nearly as accurate and dependable because of the lack of towers. It is still better than not having the feature

having the feature. If your trip into the backcountry will last more than a day, turn your phone on at least once a day for about five minutes. When powered up, phones check in with the nearest tower. Even though there might not be enough signal to make a call, it can be enough to leave an electronic trail that can be used later in an emergency. Again, keep that location feature turned on.

Higher ground will improve your chances of getting a signal because cell phones operate off of a line of sight.

Features such as mountains, heavy tree cover and rock formations can actually block the signal. If you are going to make an emergency call, try and find the highest and most open location to provide the best signal. Hold the phone in the air at arm's length and rotate around until you

find reception.

It is amazing to me that I can't get service from a parking lot in town, but I can be on a mountain 200 miles northwest of nowhere and find a signal. If you do not have enough reception to make a call, or if the reception is spotty, it's possible you can get out a text message.

The emergency 911 people cannot start a text but can receive one. If they receive the text from you, they can usually answer. If you can't text 911, your contact at home might be the next choice. Send them the emergency text about where you are and the problem that you have. The person can then contact 911 and get help coming.

The good folks at the Western Colorado Regional Dispatch Center, or WestCo, serve all of Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel counties. In the event you need to contact them, you may call or text to 911 or to their nonemergency number, 970-249-9110.

You can also send out the text and many phones will send it when service is found. It only takes a second for that message to get sent so even a brief flicker of service can get the message out. The old saying is, "call when you can, text when you can't."

Your cell phone can be a library of extra resource materials such as first aid guides, survival manuals and map or topography programs, such as COTREX. These, and many others are available as apps, most for free.

I remind everyone to carry an extra power source for his or her phone. 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 ten bucks and it is money well spent.

Conserve battery power by turning off Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and other apps running in the background. Lower the bright-

ness setting and turn off roaming. You won't need any of that on your trip or in an emergency.

I try and keep the cell phone turned off when I want to escape the world and head outdoors. It can always be turned on when I need it. The cell phone has become quite a lifesaving device for outdoor people and I don't leave home without it. My wife sees to that.

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@icloud.com.



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