

Survival pack – Stay in Your Lane



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



Bring some survival gear along this year, and know how to use it. You don't want to come home from your hunting trip this way. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was to "stay in your lane." For example, I was a marine mechanic at one time, in our boat racing and marina days. If the outboard motor had a problem, I fixed it. I maintained a dump truck load of tools and put my Snap-On guy's kids through college and med school.

I am not a plumber. If I attempt to fix my leaky faucet in the kitchen, bad things will happen. First, I will shear off a bolt that wasn't supposed to be sheared. Then I will strip the water shut-off valve, in the on position of course. Then I will sneak out of the room so my wife will think someone else did it, and she will call a plumber.

The same can be said about a survival pack whenever you head in the woods. I cannot begin to tell you how many people I have helped carry out in a body bag because they succumbed to exposure, had a heart attack, or injured themselves and had no way to summon help. The other ulterior motive might be that I, like many of you, wait all year for hunting season, and want to spend it in the mountains hunting, not on rescue missions.

Having the survival pack with you at all times is the first part, knowing how to use its contents is the 2nd, and just as important as the first. Start out by building

your own personal kit. Some things to consider include:

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, don't leak, and last longer. I also carry a small headlamp for walking and using for tasks

Fire starter-waterproof matches, metal match and flares; carry at least two types and some tinder for wet conditions. I use the product called Wet Fire.

Drinking water-a hydration bladder or camel back works well

Life Straw-this is a small, personal water filtration device. You can safely drink from a puddle with one of these.

Food-high energy foods, power bars, nuts, trail mix, jerky

Cell phone and extra power source. These extra battery chargers can be had for around ten bucks, are very small and weigh mere ounces.

Rain Gear or poncho because Colorado weather changes by the minute

Space blanket bivy-much better than a blanket as you can crawl into a bivy to stay warm, like a sleeping bag

Duct tape-good for just

about anything from first aid to repairs

Toilet paper-you just never know about how old those snacks were

First Aid kit -My personal first aid kit contains the basic life-saving items, including a tourniquet, Israeli Compression Bandage, Combat Gauze, a couple band-aids, and some Tylenol. The kit carries just the basics to save a life. Things like tweezers to remove a splinter can be kept in camp. Remember, you are not running an ambulance, just want to take care of any emergency. If your kit becomes too expansive and heavy, you will not bring it with you.

Now learn how to use the equipment you bring along. Take a basic first aid course. There are many available online and in person at the hospital. You don't need a tourniquet if you have no idea how to use it.

Everyone should know the basics about a cell phone, but the rules change when you head into the backcountry where service is scarce and there are no outlets to charge your phone. Keep your cell phone off during the day. The phone will use up its battery while constantly searching for service. Turn it on when needed and carry an extra fully charged power supply. I prefer at least 20,000mAh and a backup power cord.

If you do need help, make certain you contact 911 with your phone. Many people make the mistake of calling someone back home and having them make the call. When you make the call, 911 personnel will get a GPS ping on your location that will save many hours for search and rescue folks in finding you.

If you have no service, try moving around to higher locations. If all else fails, send 911 a text. Sometimes a text will go through when a call will not. Remember the motto: call when you can and text when you can't. The good folks at the 911 centers can receive texts and reply to the text conversation.

Plan your trip properly before you leave home. Start with having a responsible contact person back home. This person should have names, descriptions, vehicle, and personal information of everyone on the hunt.

Make certain this contact person knows your itinerary and where your camp is. Notify them of any changes and have set check in times. Instruct them to call the Sheriff's Office if you are overdue. Information they provide to search and rescue folks will save countless hours looking for you.

Again, make sure this is a responsible person. Choose someone who will be available 24/7 for the entire duration of your

hunt to receive updates from you. Schedule a call-in time with this person for routine check-ins. For the several hunts I take each year, my wife is my call-in partner. She knows my trip itinerary for every step of the trip and is notified about any changes.

Before you head out, study maps of the area and familiarize yourself with landmarks, roads, trails, and terrain. Never head up blindly. There are all kinds of mapping programs you can load onto your phone, such as OnX Maps.

Everyone should have a GPS, be it the one on your phone or a stand-alone unit, but make sure you know how to use it properly and bring extra batteries. Turn it on and use it whenever you are away from your vehicle or camp. Before you start out, take a GPS coordinate of your starting point.

We once had a man who brought a GPS but did not turn it on until he was lost. He was able to give us his exact location but had no idea where his truck was parked. Needless to say, we found him quickly and it was a happy ending.

At your starting point of your hunt each day, leave a note. This note, which is sometimes referred to as a "backpacker note" can be left on the windshield of your vehicle, tied to the tent or taped to your ATV. Just state which direction you went off on foot and the area you plan on hunting in. This gives search and rescue a great start on finding you, again, saving time that could be lifesaving.

Learn about the weather. Don't rely on the local forecasters because most times they haven't a clue. Learn how to watch the sky and type of clouds. And most importantly, bring lots of extra warm and dry clothes. I never

spoke with any rescued person who complained they brought too many warm clothes.

One thing for certain here in Colorado; the weather is going to change. I have seen temperatures drop 40 degrees in 30 minutes and sunny skies turn to raging blizzards.

Carry some extra clothes along. It might be a balmy 50 degrees in the morning. A front can push through, bringing rain changing to snow, all by afternoon. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Fire building is one of the most important skills. Having the lighters and fire starters with you is one thing but know how to use them. Learn where to find dry wood, even in a storm. Practice building a fire, using the survival equipment and not with a quart of lighter fluid.

Make survival and first aid one of your special skills. When the day comes that you need them, you really don't want to have on-the-job training, those skills should already be ingrained. It's ok to have to call a plumber at home but help on the mountain may be a ways off. Stay in your lane up there.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for The Nautical Mile, and several other saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. Personal email is elkhunter77@icloud.com For information about the Posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

New park manager for Crawford and Paonia state parks shares vision, addresses drought and fire concerns

By FRANK M. WITOWSKI JR.
DELTA COUNTY INDEPENDENT

There's a new Colorado Parks and Wildlife Park Manager for Crawford and Paonia State Parks, and he wants to make a difference and get to know the people he serves.

Mark Lehman was at the Aug. 11 Crawford Board of Trustees meeting to reassure the board that he will help spread the word about the upcoming water shortage while Crawford rehabilitates its water storage tank. He will also provide an incentive for campers to bring their own water reservoirs with them. Before taking over as park manager



Colorado Parks and Wildlife Park Manager for Crawford and Paonia Mark Lehman is concerned about lower river levels and hopes Crawford State Park can continue boating opportunities through Labor Day. (Courtesy photo/ Frank Witowski/DCI)

for Crawford and Paonia State Parks, Scott Rist managed those two parks as well as Sweitzer Lake State Park. Lehman was hired

to lessen Rist's workload as they prepare to expand the Sweitzer Lake State Park area through a recent land acquisition and expand their

offerings.

Lehman grew up and graduated from Mount Pleasant High School in Michigan in 1999. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in recreation, parks and leisure services management from Central Michigan University in 2005. Lehman came to Colorado to perform his internship at Steamboat State Park and immediately fell in love with the state's colorful mountains. "I knew I was never leaving Colorado at that point," Lehman said.

Lehman continued working at Steamboat following his internship, serving as the Title 33 Limited Enforcement Communication

Ranger, where he enforced park and wildlife statutes and regulations, such as leash laws and fishing and hunting licensing.

He found working with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department very rewarding and "decided to take the next step." He went through an intense 16-week academy in law enforcement training at Arapahoe Community College in Littleton. Shortly after, he was hired as a seasonal armed ranger at the Yampa River State Park in Hayden.

He landed a full-time armed ranger position at Stagecoach State Park in 2008. He met his wife during this time, as she

worked at a bank in the area, and he did business transactions there. They got to know each other, and he married his sweetheart, Kimi, on Oct. 2, 2010. The couple has four daughters who are now enrolled in the Delta County School District since he accepted this role in Delta County. The family has also bought a home in the area.

Lehman stayed in his role at Stage Coach State Park from 2008 to 2015 and took a position at Stauton State Park on the Front Range.

As life sometimes goes full circle, Lehman returned to Yampa River State Park

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