

CONTACT US
Erick Bengel | Features Editor
 ebengel@dailyastorian.com

WEEKEND BREAK

FOLLOW US
 facebook.com/
DailyAstorian



WHEN HOURS BECOME DAYS

During National Preparedness Month,
 a search-and-rescue member talks planning, preparation

By **AARON BRENNAN**
 For EO Media Group

As a search-and-rescue volunteer, I see people making decisions over and over that lead to dire situations. Headlines from September alone speak for themselves:

“Fire turns hikes into overnight camping trip, followed by tearful reunions,” OregonLive.com, Sept. 5, 2017

“Coast guard ‘copter crew plucks man from coastal cliff,” OregonLive.com, Sept. 6, 2017

“Jackson County Search and Rescue continue looking for missing man,” KTVL.com (Medford), Sept. 13, 2017.

Many people don’t necessarily want to talk about safety preparation, as, I find, most of them tend to have a “that could never happen to me” attitude. I can relate; I’ve had it, too.

September is Ready.gov’s National Preparedness Month. And since outdoor recreation safety’s my thing, a few tips and conversation starters seemed appropriate. They can make all the difference when things go sideways.

A little planning and preparation goes a long way for everyday adventures, car trips, disasters and other weather-related events.

Planning and preparation

1. Bring a pack and have extra gear.

Even if you’re just heading out for a short day hike, or a drive exploring the coast or mountains, you’ll be glad you have it should you need it.

Always try to carry a few extra items, including water and food, a jacket or layers, navigation tools, power bank or solar charger, fire starter, tarp or shelter, and a headlamp to name a few essential items. Start with a base of essentials and, over time, build out your kit from there.

2. Make a plan, and let someone know where you’re going.

Yes, it’s often unnecessary and seems like an additional hassle. But many times I’ve seen the survivability window shrink because, even though friends and family know a loved one is missing, they don’t know specifically where the person went. It happens all the time to trail runners, hikers, hunters, mushroom and berry pickers, and others.

Have a plan, check the weather, make plans, share your plan and stick to it.

3. Build a car safety kit.

Pretty frequently, I see news stories about someone following a road too far, relying on GPS or a phone app and getting stuck somewhere.

While most of the time safety isn’t far away, and we merely deal with an inconvenience, if the time comes when you need to



Photos by Aaron Brennan

Brennan’s 10-essentials kit unpacked. Along with the standard items, he added some personalized ones, such as flagging, paracord and something to read.



Two Garmin GPS units that Brennan carries — a touchscreen for fair-weather use, along with a unit with manual buttons for poor weather and search-and-rescue applications.

bed down in your car and wait it out for rescue, you’ll sure be happy for a few simple things like blankets, water and food.

4. When you’re on or near water, wear a personal floatation device.

I know, most of the time you’re not going to need it. But when you do, you’ll be glad you have it. This applies to all water activities in big waters like the ocean and Columbia River, or alpine lakes and small streams.

I love small stream and remote lake fly fishing for its quiet and solitude, but that’s a double-edged sword if you run into trouble alone. As the adage goes, though, the best PFD is the one you’re wearing.

RESOURCES

- National Preparedness Month info from Ready.gov
- Ten Essentials from The Mountaineers
- Caltopo.com (print and share free topo maps online, send a link with your trip plan)
- “Find My Friends” app
- “Columbia Take 10” app

prepared one can lead to complacency in others. Offer to send the trip plan to your emergency contact, and ask someone else to bring the pack (either a car kit or a day-pack with the needed items).

This can also be a great opportunity to involve kids. I have friends whose little ones love carrying a pack with a blanket or their stuffed animal, but it’s also a great opportunity for them to carry (at least some) of their own gear, such as a water bottle, jacket or snacks.

Carry your knowledge

Ready.gov is a great place to start putting together kits, emergency planning, disaster preparedness, family safety plans and much more.

They say the lightest gear you can carry is knowledge, and the best safety measures are the ones you take before you need them.

Aaron Brennan, a Portland resident, is an outdoor recreation enthusiast, search-and-rescue team member, emergency medical responder, communication consultant, college instructor and freelance writer working on his first book. Contact him or find him on the socials via aaronbrennan.com.

Conversation starters

1. Show me yours, and I’ll show you mine.

Offer to show family and friends the kits you’ve put together for your home, car and any sort of adventure. I find this is often an easy place to start the conversation and leads to genuine interest in kit building.

2. Share news articles.

It’s a slightly less passive approach, but I’ll send friends and relatives news articles of stories where things went wrong. I do it with love, and it seems to have a little more impact than nagging.

3. Engage others in planning.

I’ve found that being considered the