

Siuslaw News

P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

DISASTER PREP

By Dave Robinson
Special to the Siuslaw News

Solar generator

Several months back Ted Koppel released the book, “Lights Out.” His book explores what it would be like to have a nationwide electrical blackout for a lengthy period and the result of an in-depth look into the vulnerabilities of the nation’s power grid. More than one reviewer called the book “scary.”

I have written a few times on the loss of electricity and how to survive a grid-down experience. I own a backup generator, but they require fuel. It is neither practical nor safe to store the amount of fuel needed to see one through a lengthy power failure. I have calculated that I have enough fuel on hand to keep my refrigerator and freezer running until the food contained therein is depleted.

I have always thought solar energy was cool, but here on the Oregon coast, sometimes our days are “sunlight hindered,” if you get the hint. I have had some free time on my hands recently and stumbled across a set of online plans for a solar generator I thought was not only practical, but affordable. This unit is portable, self-contained and capable of light duty usage.

I based my unit on a Plano toolbox, available at most hardware stores. The toolbox is built from heavy-duty plastic and seemed big enough to duplicate the plans I had seen

online. I ordered all the components from Amazon.com and in a few days the parts began to arrive. In true “Tim Taylor” fashion, I didn’t precisely follow the online example in that, instead of a 10-watt solar panel, I ordered a 20-watt unit.

After all, it wasn’t that much more expensive and we all can use more horsepower. Right? Instead of one 12-volt, 18-amp sealed lead acid battery, I ordered two. Increased storage capacity, you understand. Then, I added a 500-watt inverter and a solar charge controller. I also added a 12-volt plug-in that looks like a cigarette lighter receptacle and a USB receptacle. Those I mounted in the lid of the toolbox for ease of access.

After spending a few hours in my shop and three days sitting cross-legged on my living room floor, I have all the pieces assembled and wonder of wonders: It works! Lights light up and, when I plug my cell phone into a USB port, the phone goes “ding” and it charges.

Please know, this won’t power up your microwave, blow dryer or any major appliance. It will keep your phones charged, your laptop, tablet, toothbrush, bluetooth speaker, goTenna, battery-operated power tools and nearly any other rechargeable device in your inventory.

As an interesting side note, I plugged a 60-watt floor lamp into the inverter. The inverter has a readout that lets you know how many watts you are pulling. The read-out boldly proclaimed, “60 watts.” I unscrewed the incandescent bulb and screwed in an LED bulb, the display: 3 watts. Besides, the light is brighter than the regular bulb. So if you’re agonizing over spending the extra for LEDs, go for it. They will easily pay for themselves in time and (I haven’t tested this yet) but they seem to last longer than either the compact (spiral) fluorescents or the old school incandescent bulbs.

My total cost was in the neighborhood of \$200. I picked up all my wire and connectors at the local hardware store. For now, this is a work in progress, so I will undoubtedly keep fine-tuning for a bit longer. Also understand, I am not an electrician, but if you have questions about how I did it and where I got the plans, send me an email.

Dave Robinson is the postmaster in Bandon, Ore., and author of “Disaster Prep for the Rest of Us.” He may be contacted at disasterprep.dave@gmail.com. Visit his website for more disaster preparedness tips, www.disasterprepdave.blogspot.com.

LETTERS

Kudos to city employees

Masonic Lodge #107 owns a commercial property in Old Town, near Bay Street. This summer it was refurbished after a tenant moved out. I contacted the city planning office to insure our compliance with the city.

City Planner Wendy FarleyCampbell responded by telephone, e-mail and her staff. She assisted in our compliance with exterior paint colors and adequate landscaping, including plants, automatic sprinklers and minimum square footage. Her staff was most helpful and courteous in expediting our renovation.

Residents of Florence are lucky to have “can do” people in the Planning Department in lieu of obstructional folks other cities might have.

Kudos to Florence city employees.

Rodney Stowe, Master
Florence Masonic Lodge #107

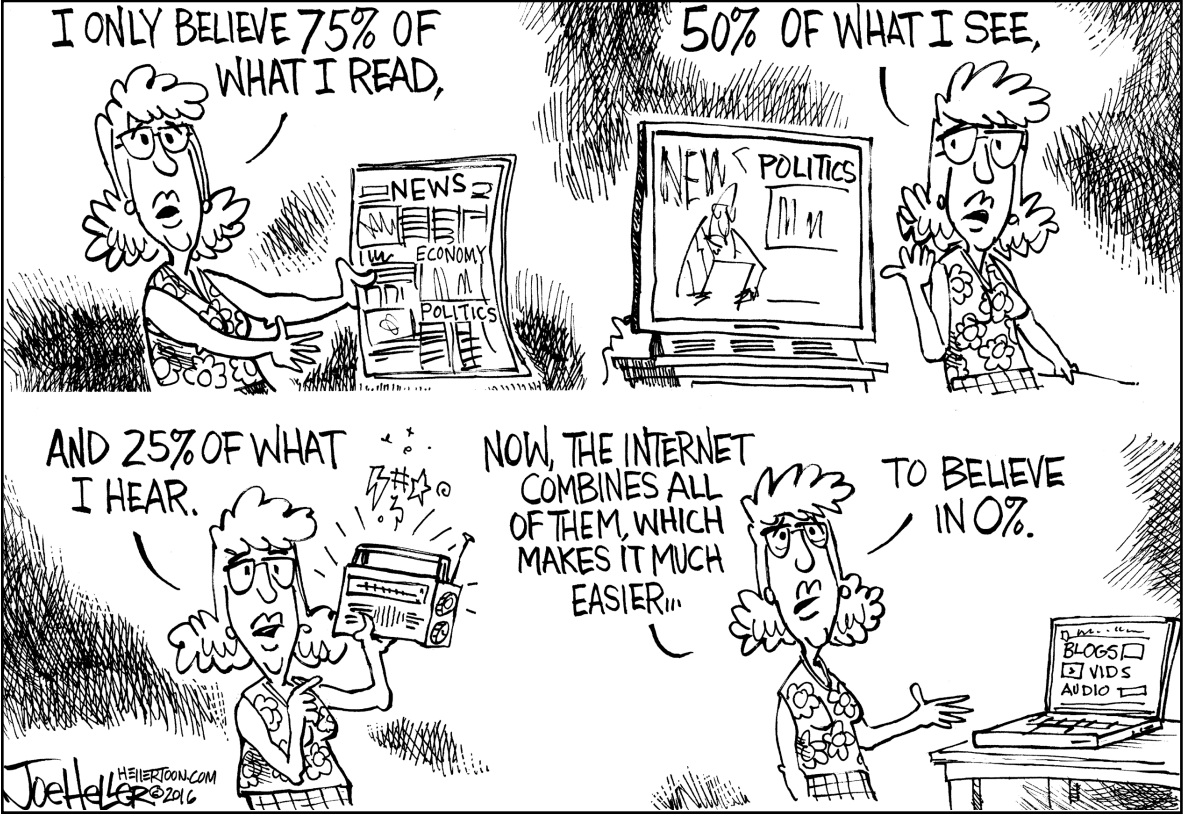
Festival fun, funky

My wife and I went to the events center Sunday afternoon for the 2nd Star Festival.

Not sure what we expected, but it was a fun visual experience seeing individuals dressed in a mix from a Renaissance fair, a Star Wars convention and the movie “Mad Max Thunder Dome.” There was no way to determine who were the venders/participants and who were the visitors, because everyone was in costume. It was a sort of funky something — and I’m still not sure what “Steampunk’d” is.

We thought the work by artists Charles Mason and Joshua W. Kinsey was great.

We entered the front door and paid our entrance fee and were given a green strip of paper to be



attached to our person. Later I noticed those that entered through the south entry did not pay for admittance. If the entry fees were going to the FEC, how much money did they loose?

Win Jolley
Florence

Hands off the people’s business

Our right to decide what initiatives we can vote on is under attack by four out of five county commissioners.

Pete Sorenson, the only attorney on the commission, understands that the county cannot legally weigh in on initiatives until after the new laws are passed. That this is a constitutionally protected provision of the initiative process is the argument Sorenson made to his fellow commissioners.

If Sid Leiken, Jay Bozeivich, Faye Stewart and Pat Farr really want to save the taxpayers money, they won’t pass a law that, most certainly, will kick off a lawsuit and land the county in court.

Let’s keep the pressure on our elected officials by contacting them. Tell them, “Hands off the people’s business, executed through the initiative process!”

Michelle Holman
Deadwood

Gun paranoia — or what?

How is it that gun violence, during the last century, was virtually unheard of? There was very little gun ownership, and along with that, the gun murders that took place were in poor, large city neighborhoods by gangs.

Now, however, with the onslaught of gun purchases we

have more and more killings as more and more guns become available. We now have innocent people everywhere — in malls, schools, churches, theaters, etc., — being murdered.

Either this is paranoia or insanity. They say “guns don’t kill people; people kill people.” Then that shows that perhaps people should not own guns.

Jean Perry
Florence

Political thoughts

I have three political thoughts: President Obama’s brother is voting for Trump. How about you?

Why didn’t the Democratic National Convention have the Benghazi mothers and fathers of our fallen heroes speak?

Something is not free if your neighbor has to pay for it.

Martin Cable
Dunes City

YESTERDAY’S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME
The History Channel

• On Aug. 24, 79 A.D., Mount Vesuvius erupts in southern Italy, devastating the prosperous Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum and entombing thousands under a thick layer of volcanic material and mud. In the 18th century, the cities were rediscovered and excavated.

• On Aug. 22, 1864, the International Red Cross is founded in Geneva after being advocated by Swiss humanitarian Jean-Henri Dunant. The international emblem, a red cross on a white background, is the Swiss flag in reverse.

• On Aug. 25, 1875, Matthew Webb, a 27-year-old merchant navy captain, becomes the first known person to successfully swim the English Channel. Webb accomplished the 21-mile crossing, which really entailed 39 miles of swimming because of tidal currents, in just under 22 hours.

• On Aug. 27, 1883, the most powerful volcanic eruption in recorded history occurs on Krakatau, a small volcanic island in Indonesia. Heard 3,000 miles away, the explosions threw 5 cubic miles of earth 50 miles into the air, created 120-foot tsunamis and killed 36,000 people.

• On Aug. 23, 1926, the death of silent-screen idol Rudolph Valentino at age 31 sends his fans into a hysterical state of mass mourning. Some 100,000 mourners lined the streets outside the New York City church where funeral services were held.

• On Aug. 26, 1957, the Soviet Union announces that it has successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of being fired “into any part of the world.” Following his election in 1960, President John F. Kennedy made missile development and the space program priorities.

• On Aug. 28, 1968, at the Democratic National Convention, tens of thousands of protesters against the Vietnam War battle thousands of police in the streets of Chicago. Fights also broke out on the convention floor, and delegates and reporters were beaten and knocked to the ground.

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LETTERS TO THE
EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer’s full name, address and phone number for verification.

Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published.

All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

Write to:
Editor@TheSiuslawNews.com

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John Bartlett
Jenna Bartlett
Ryan Cronk
Susan Gutierrez
Cathy Dietz
Ron Annis
Jeremy Gentry

Publisher, ext. 327
General Manager, ext. 318
Editor, ext. 313
Advertising Director, ext. 326
Office Supervisor, ext. 312
Production Supervisor
Press Manager

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WHERE TO WRITE

Pres. Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
FAX: 202-456-2461
TTY/TDD Comments: 202-456-6213
www.whitehouse.gov

Gov. Kate Brown
160 State Capitol
900 Court St.
Salem, OR 97301-4047
Governor’s Citizens’ Rep.
Message Line 503-378-4582
www.oregon.gov/gov

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

202-224-5244
541-431-0229
www.wyden.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753/FAX: 202-228-3997
541-465-6750

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (4th Dist.)
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6416/ 800-944-9603
541-269-2609/ 541-465-6732
www.defazio.house.gov

State Sen. Arnie Roblan (Dist. 5)
900 Court St. NE - S-417
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1705

FAX: 503-986-1080
Email:
Sen.ArnieRoblan@state.or.us

State Rep. Caddy McKeown
(Dist. 9)
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1409
Email:
rep.caddymckeown@state.or.us

West Lane County Commissioner
Jay Bozeivich
125 E. Eighth St.
Eugene, OR 97401
541-682-4203
FAX: 541-682-4616
Email:
Jay.Bozeivich@co.lane.or.us