

Carry a light. There is no excuse to wander around in the dark anymore



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

One of the things the cell phone has on it is a flashlight. My old phone had one too. I never used the flashlight on the old phone and doubt I ever will on the new one. It is not very bright and only helps to further deplete a rapidly depleting phone battery. It is one of those things I always considered bordering on the cusp of useless.

The cell phone light brings to mind a mission for a lost hiker a few years back. We were busy doing a night search for a man who hiked away from his car and became hopelessly lost. Night fell, making it much worse. He found enough cell service to get a text to Westco Dispatch, who was able to ping his location, and give us an approximate area to begin our search.

While looking across a large draw, we saw a light flash on the other side. We responded by flashing our very bright lights back. The light flashed back at us again and we began our crossing of the draw, but never received a flash from him again.

Turns out, the only light the man had was the flashlight on his cell phone. He quit flashing back to us because his cell battery died. He had no extra clothes or survival equipment, so he was in a bad way. The little light probably saved his life, but he should have been better prepared. I guess the little light has a purpose, but I would save it as a last resort.

A flashlight is one of the most important things you can carry with you, and not just in your outdoor gear. I carry a good flashlight with me everywhere. It is part of my every-day carry stuff, or EDC as it is called on the streets.

My pockets are full of EDC stuff, so much so that the pants weigh me down. Often times, when I am in a hurry to get somewhere, my pants lag woefully behind, arriving on scene 15 minutes after I do. Such is the life of a first responder.

I carry 2 knives, a Leatherman multi-tool, wallet, keys, a SWAT-T tourniquet, a handgun, extra magazine, a money clip, and a flashlight. I should carry a life jacket in case I ever fall in the drink with all this stuff. While I may overdo it a bit, and perhaps exaggerate a bit, the flashlight is no joke.

Back in my grandfather's day, the flashlight, or electric torch as he called it, weighed slightly less than a Buick. His operated on 2 D-cell batteries and gave off just enough



With flashlights this small, lightweight, and bright, there is really no reason to ever leave home without one. (Courtesy photo)

light to show you what you tripped over in the dark. It had a screw in bulb, and he carried replacement bulbs with the light. I don't ever remember him having to change the bulb because usually the batteries leaked, ruining the light long before the bulb ever burned out.

Today we have the LED lights and if you have not looked into them in the last 5 years, you are missing some great advancements, both in battery, size, and brightness. There is no excuse to wander around in the dark anymore.

If size or weight is a problem, consider

the Streamlight Pocket Mate. This mini light is 325 lumens, USB rechargeable, throws a beam 76 meters, has a high and low setting, runs an hour on low, and is about the size and weight of a half dollar. It can clip on a zipper or key ring. It sells for around 25 bucks.

There are dozens of small pocket flashlights, about half the size of a ball point pen, available on the market today. Most of these give off brighter light than the old hand torch my grandfather carried around, and they will easily fit in a pocket.

I am a believer of carrying several lights

in the field. I like a powerful handheld light and also a headlamp. The headlamp is perfect when you are walking or doing other tasks as it keeps your hands free. The drawback on them was always the weight and lack of brightness.

Take a look at the new Fenix headlamps. For Christmas, I was given one of the HM65R-T model headlamps and it is very impressive. It comes with 2 beams, a flood and a spot. The spot is 1300 lumens and throws a beam up to 557 feet, and on a low setting it can run 24 hours. The floodlight puts out 177 feet at 400 lumens for 12 hours on high, and 300 on low.

I match that up with a handheld light by Fenix called the TK20R which is a brighter beam than the LED lights on my truck. It has similar output times and settings as the headlamp. Both of these lights easily fit in a small pocket on my pack, and can even fit in a coat pocket, along with a couple extra batteries.

These lights all use a rechargeable battery. I know, I have always been against rechargeable in the field. Seems old Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame just loves to prematurely drain rechargeable batteries in the field, on rainy nights, when you are injured and need the light the most. There is no place to plug in a charger in the field.

Well, Surefire, Streamlight, and Fenix have solved that problem for

us as both of these Fenix lights have what is called "dual fuel." Dual fuel lights are powered by either two of the CR123a lithium batteries (disposable) or one of the 18650 lithium-ion rechargeable batteries.

One of my golden rules is to use lights and equipment that share the same batteries, so one does not need to lug around a battery store display in the woods with them. I carry the fully charged lights and the regular batteries as back-ups. I must admit that I have only run the rechargeable battery down on a couple occasions, both being on an all-night search mission. These rechargeable lights have come a long way in the last few years. I guess you still have the old cell phone light as a backup but there really is no reason with the smaller and brighter lights available.

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

Grand Mesa Summit Challenge dog sled races are this weekend

STAFF REPORT

The Grand Mesa Summit Challenge dog sled event is set to kick off this weekend, starting Saturday and continuing on Sunday. The community is invited to watch at no cost, but instructed to leave their own dogs at home.

At 10,500 feet, the Grand Mesa Summit Challenge is the highest race of its kind on the continent and has multiple divisions available for dog sleds and dog-pow-

ered skijoring. The event will include two-dog, four-dog, six-dog, and eight-dog teams, as well as skijoring, where dogs pull their human on skis. Registered northern breeds, fun run and novice and junior classes are included.

Races are set to kick off at about 9 a.m., Jan. 25, at the Mesa Top Trailhead along Highway 65 on Grand Mesa, according to organizing entity Rocky Mountain Sled Dog Club.



Chris Young takes off from the starting line, ultimately winning the six-dog race. (2021) (Lucas Vader/DCI)

GREAT OUTDOORS Company

Select Snowshoes on Clearance!

10 SOUTH SELIG AVE MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401 970-249-4226