TC ARES Training 7-MAR-21

In light of the recent winter storm here in Texas it is a good time to review our ability provide communication “When All Else Fails”

While some do not have the ability to be as resilient as others here is my personal list of equipment to be able to not only survive but to be of service to ARES.

1. Power
   1. Generation - A dual fuel generator, in my case propane and gasoline
   2. Storage – Batteries are important for our equipment but also for lights, phones, computers etc. Charging and testing your batteries on a regular basis is important to be sure they are ready when you need them. I charge and test batteries for my radios on a regular basis. Since most of our equipment runs on 12 volts DC, an automotive battery (if charged) can provide emergency power and is able to be recharged if installed in a working vehicle.
2. Fuel
   1. Propane - An adequate fuel supply is important to ensure your generator will supply the power required when needed. I keep three tanks of propane large enough to supply my generator but small enough for me to take and have filled. I have two 40 pound tanks and one 50 pound tank in addition to a couple of smaller tanks used for a propane barbeque grill.
   2. Gasoline – Since my generator runs on gasoline as well as propane, I keep a reserve of treated gasoline on hand to run my generator as an alternative fuel source.
   3. Wood – Having a wood burning fireplace may seem unnecessary in Texas, but comes in handy when you need heat but have no means to provide it via gas or electricity. I happen to have a wood burning fireplace and keep an adequate supply of wood for heat.
3. Water
   1. Keeping drinking water in any capacity be it small water bottles or larger containers is critical when water becomes unavailable. Having the ability to boil water is of no use if you have no water to boil. It is important to keep an adequate supply of water on hand to survive and be able to provide the critical services we so when called upon.
   2. Other sources of water for non-potable purposes are important if available. As we found last month, when water is unavailable, any source be it a creek, hot tub, or swimming pool can provide water to boil for consumption, bathe, or simply flush toilets.
   3. I happen to be able to store enough water for a month and live along a creek but not everyone is as fortunate. Keep enough water for several days if you can for at least drinking purposes, our bodies are mostly water and we need it to be able to provide services when requested.
4. Food - As we saw last month, stores that sell food can close without warning. Keeping food on hand is critical in this instance.
   1. Prepared food – Food that can be consumed without preparation is important especially if we don’t have the means to cook, heat or otherwise prepare it. Whether cans, packets or other containers, our ability to open them is just as critical as having them on hand. If your food supply contains cans, ensure you have a can opener that doesn’t require power to operate.
   2. Food that needs to be cooked is a good backup providing you have the means to prepare it. Having a gas grill or a camping stove can allow you to leverage your food supply if it needs to be cooked. I have a primary and secondary gas grill for food preparation as well as fuel for both.
5. Clothing
   1. When the temperature drops to the single digits as we saw last month, it is important to have adequate clothing to survive. Layers can help if you don’t have the proper cold weather clothing.
   2. If you have to go outside, waterproof and warm boots, shoes, gloves, hats and jackets are important if you are to last for any period of time.
   3. If you are inside and lose power or heat, having thermal, long clothing and/or layers may be important until heat can be restored to your QTH.
6. Medication
   1. Over the counter medications may be in short supply when stores are closed. If you rely on these, make sure you have a couple of weeks on hand.
   2. Prescription medications are more critical and may also be unavailable when pharmacies are not open. Take stock of your prescriptions, review expiration dates, and ensure you have enough to last you for a couple of weeks when pharmacies are closed or you are not able to access them.
7. Transportation
   1. If your role calls for you to be mobilized, ensure you have enough fuel for your vehicle and that it is in working order. If you are not required to travel, stay of the roads so you don’t consume additional resources to come and rescue you.
   2. If you have the ability, add resilience to your transportation plan. For instance, I have two 4 wheel drive trucks. One uses diesel for fuel and the other uses gasoline. By diversifying your fuel source, you are never completely reliant on a single source (of failure) for your vehicle.
   3. In the case of snow, which happens so rarely here, having a set of tire chains can come in handy as Joe Fisher, K5EJL found last month. While I am not advocating chains as a critical part of your transportation package, it became useful since Joe already has them on hand.

All of the items listed here are in addition to our equipment used to provide communication. While it is critical to have our radio gear and backup gear in working order, it is of no value if we are not physically able to use it to provide communication “When All Else Fails”

Take some time this week to inventory your supplies and be prepared to take care of your physical needs so we can provide services using our gear and knowledge next time we are called upon.

This concludes tonight’s training and with that I turn it back to net control.

This is Alpha Alpha Five Echo X-Ray"

***By AA5EX Phil Bautista for Travis County ARES Net, aired on February 28, 2021. Reproduced with permission by the author.***

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