

# When planning an outdoor trip, keep emergencies on your mind

Spending time in the outdoors – whether hunting, fishing, hiking, or participating in any other activity that potentially involves remote locations, dangerous tools, extreme temperatures or rugged terrain – provides enjoyment for nature-loving thrill seekers when things go right.

When things go wrong, however, outdoors adventurers must be prepared to deal with potentially life-threatening situations.



## HUNTER'S JOURNAL

STEVEN KENDUS

Emergencies take many forms and can be as simple as spraining an ankle while climbing a hill or stepping on a piece of glass while wading in a lake. Or, emergencies can be much more severe, such as breaking a bone after falling from a tree stand or suffering a bite from a poisonous snake. In most emergency situations, a clear head, a basic first-aid kit, a reliable communication device, and a shared emergency plan can make an uncomfortable situation bearable until you find help or until help finds you.

Dealing with an emergency while afield begins with preparation. Before heading out to enjoy the wilderness, research the area to which you are heading. Check maps to become familiar with the terrain and closest roads, and be aware of potentially dangerous animals and plants that you could encounter. Think about any emergency situations that may arise, and think about how you would deal with them.

Like proper planning, a basic first-aid kit is a necessity for any outdoors enthusiast. You can purchase a pre-packaged first-aid kit from an outdoors-related retailer for around \$50, or you can build your own. The kit should be comprehensive enough to handle various common ailments, but it should also be light enough to eas-



You can purchase a pre-packaged first-aid kit from an outdoors-related retailer for around \$50, or you can build your own. AP FILE

ily transport along with your other gear. A basic first-aid kit should include a first-aid field reference, various sizes of bandages and gauze dressings for wounds, first-aid tape, elastic bandages for sprains, disinfectant wipes, antibiotic ointment and a cold pack. The kit should also include pain relievers/fever reducers, antihistamines and a several-day supply of any prescription medications you take regularly. Other useful items include a multi-tool, insect spray, a fire starting device, duct tape, emergency blanket, small flashlight (with fresh batteries) and a signaling whistle. Although I can count on one hand the number of times I have needed my first-aid kit while hunting, I always feel safer knowing it's in my pack.

In today's era of mobile phones, you should always carry your mobile phone with you on outdoor adventures. A mobile phone can be used to call help in an emergency, and many smart phones provide access to other useful features, such as a compass, weather reports, maps, GPS locators, and first-aid instructions. Keep in mind that a mobile phone is only good as a communication device if it has battery life,

can connect with a cell tower and is dry. To ensure battery life, only turn your phone on periodically, or carry a hand-crank cell charger in your pack. To keep your phone dry, enclose it in a watertight plastic bag. If you know you will be in a remote location where it is difficult to get a cell connection, consider also using a satellite phone or a multi-channel 2-way radio.

A shared emergency plan is another important component of emergency preparedness. Share your outdoors plans, locations and schedules with a trusted family member or friend. Ask her or him to contact you at regularly scheduled times, and provide instructions for what to do in case you miss a check-in or do not return as scheduled.

While taking adequate precautions may seem like overkill, it's better to be prepared for an emergency and never have one occur than to be unprepared and suffer the consequences.

Steven Kendus' Hunter's Journal appears monthly in The News Journal. Kendus is the author of "Hunting The First State: A Guide to Delaware Hunting." Follow his blog and podcast at [www.HuntingTheFirstState.com](http://www.HuntingTheFirstState.com). Contact him at [skendus@HuntingTheFirstState.com](mailto:skendus@HuntingTheFirstState.com).