

## Communications Equipment in the Wilderness

*by David Leonhardt*

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"Make sure that somebody knows when you leave, when you expect to return (or get to your destination)," advises Chad Brown, owner of Farm And Field Outdoors Equipment Auctions ( <http://www.farmandfieldauctions.com> ).

"Provide as much information about your route as possible.

Things can happen. Rocks can fall on your head while hiking. Boats can tip over. Firearms can malfunction. Somebody needs to know that you are late in arriving...and where to send search parties to find you. In fact, this is the same advice I used to give drivers in winter weather when I was spokesperson for CAA Ontario.

The second tip is to never head into the wilderness alone. Just as one should never go swimming without a swimming buddy, nor should one go long-distance cycling or hiking, nor hunting, camping or fishing in a remote area without a buddy.

My wife's uncle took the business end of large falling branch on his skull while out in the forest, knocking him unconscious and cracking his skull down the middle. Eventually his skull will heal, but only because he had companions to get him into town. Otherwise, he might still not be found.

Here is another report, this one from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation about a fall from a tree stand: "The subject had no communications equipment with him. No phone or radio. If the subject had left word of where he would be and approximate hour of return, a response may have been quicker. Cause of Death: The subject suffered a broken shoulder, multiple broken ribs on one side, a punctured lung, and a punctured spleen."

This is hunting equipment?

Assuming you are still conscious, it helps to have some communications equipment while out hunting, fishing or camping. Of course, there is the ever popular cell phone, which brings instant communications to almost everywhere in the world. Except maybe your wilderness trek.

But there are many places where cell phone range covers your fishing lake or hunting woods. The best part about a cell phone is that, even in the wilderness, you can have utterly normal conversations with pretty well anybody.

"OK, darling. On my way back into town I'll pick up some milk and peanut butter and...wait! Was that a whitetail? Gotta go." Click.

Not only that, with a cell phone you can even catch up on your email while crouching in your tent or scaling a cliff, with an email to phone service, such as <http://www.email2phone.net> .

A two-way radio is a much surer piece of equipment, because it does not depend on the cellular network to connect. The downside is that you get to speak to a much narrower range of people: other two-way radio owners.

"Hi there, Big Bear, do you read me? Can you get a-hold of my wife to see if I have to pick up milk and peanut butter on my way back into town? Do you copy?"

Before you leave on any outdoors trip, it is wise to check the weather forecast. But the weather forecast can change quickly, so a cell phone or radio serves another purpose.

"Whaddaya mean thunderstorms and hail?!? I just got here, darling, I don't want to come home just yet. Oh...alright..."

Of course, you could just have someone email the weather forecast to you on your cell phone.

Chad Brown also advises keeping a very loud whistle hanging from your neck. If you are trapped under a tree, pinned down by a boulder, or wrestling a grizzly bear, you might not have reach or the attention span to dial a number. If anybody is within earshot, they will come running...if not to help you, at least to capture it for "America's Funniest Home Videos".

Our final tip might seem obvious, but make sure you know where to call. Have the emergency number taped to the back of the cell phone (ignore your wife's idea of tattooing it to your forehead; where would you find a mirror in the middle of a ravine?) and make sure you know what frequency to call for help on the two-way radio.

There you have it. You are prepared to go out into the wild and communicate. And if the animals don't understand what you are trying to communicate to them, you might not be any worse off than in the city.

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