

My 72-Hour Emergency Prep Practice Camp-in

Well, I finally took my own advice and had a 72-hour practice camp-in. As an old grandma paraplegic going it solo, the idea was somewhat daunting. No bowel and bladder control. Everything has to be managed from a wheelchair. My daily routine generally includes doing a batch or two of laundry, need I say, in a washing machine and dryer--requiring both water and electricity.

I admit that I did not turn off all the fuses, nor the water to the house. I just had to remember not to use them—and we take them so much for granted, I had to keep remind myself. The thermostat is set to 60°F, and it never got that low indoors. There was more light than if all electricity was out, because all our devices have little lights on them. But I didn't feel the need to get over-zealous.

And, I didn't evacuate, nor live in the backyard in a tent. I allowed myself to pretend I was able to stay in my home, just not use the running water nor any electrical devices. I chose my days so that undue complications would not be a part of the plan. That's good enough for a start.

As a paraplegic with no bowel and bladder control, that was highest priority. After much consideration over what I could manage from a wheelchair, I decided to get a portable **commode** (I wished I'd had on my last vacation, which didn't have wheelchair friendly toilet accommodations), and was pleased to find that there are ready-made liners with absorbent pads in them to handle the waste. I felt I could do that.

Next was the daily **bathing**. I got plenty of baby wipes and rinse-less shampoo. That takes care of much of the daily laundry: 3 towels a day (one to sit on in tub, one to protect the tub from my wheelchair and then to dry with, and one to sit on when I get out of the tub). The other big laundry makers are **bed pads**—and I invested in a package of disposable ones. Not as effective as the big washable ones I use, as I toss and turn a lot at night. But I kept a large cloth one under the disposable one, as a precaution, so that I would not take the risk of having to wash all the bedding. Of course, adult **diapers** are a fact of my life, and my intention was to limit beverages, and not to go out and about, as part of the experiment.

Next: food plan & water. Since there's just one of me, I had to figure no leftovers, except I thought 3 bean salad, since it has vinegar and could be put in the cool garage overnight, would be ok. I took eggs and cheese out of the frig and put them in an **insulated bag with a couple ice bottles**. The bottles had thawed on the second day, but the bag was cool inside til the third day.

Day 1: (Decided to try a non-cooking day first.)

Breakfast: 15 oz can of peaches in juice (70x3.5 servings/can=245 cal, 0 protein, 3.5 g fiber), and a Special K Protein Snack Bar (160 cal, 8g protein, 2g fiber). I drank a Vitamin Water to stay hydrated (zero cal, as I'm on a diet), and used about ½ c **water** to rinse my can so I can use it later to heat water or cook a muffin. I poured the refuse water in my plants.

I had had a bad night (which is quite frequently the case—and I usually turn on some music or watch a show or listen to a talk to help lull me to sleep . . . none of that), and only got up at 10am. The **house was 68° at 11am, 54° outdoors (predicted high/low: 59°/53°). A rainy day.** The house would have been colder, but my grandson had visited the day before and turned the

heat up to 75°, much too hot for me. But, I thought, when an emergency happens, it doesn't ask what happened the day before . . . it just happens.

I used my **cell phone** as little as I could, and had got a cell phone charger battery backup, just in case—because I usually recharge my cell every night, even with limited usage. I tried not to let the charge get too low.

First **potty** chair trial: my usual bathroom being incommodious for the commode, I had to transfer everything I would need to the other bathroom. Well, I forgot a couple items, and had to go get them midflight, which created some **laundry & logistical difficulties**—which in a real emergency, if I didn't know when or if I would have running water in future, I would have **bagged** and thrown away soiled towel (at least I had that to hand!). As it was, I bagged it for later laundering. Although I disposed of the commode liner and all at once, I was glad enough that I had **Febreeze** on hand in there, and spray **Lysol**. I also found it wise to have the disposable underpads (I call bed pads), as well as baby wipes, in both the bedroom and bath.

My usual bathroom has plenty of **light** in daytime, but as I was using the main bath, which is not as light, I decided to light a scented **candle** I keep in there just for power outages. I set it in the sink, away from any towels or flammable trouble, and dropped the spent matches in the sink for later disposal as well. It didn't provide much light. I had forgotten I also have an **emergency light/radio** plugged into the wall there, that turns on automatically when the power goes off. It was helpful to inspect the commode afterwards, tho' it is too narrow a beam for ambient light. Just the same, it was there, and both the LED light & radio worked.

Next agenda item was to check my "**Dynamo**" **crank flashlight/radio**. It worked great, but I didn't see how it could access NOAA local weather station. Need to address that. Turned the radio on at 12pm, and ran it all day, no problem.

My cell charge was at 79% (they seem to do all the updating overnight, which uses up the charge), so I plugged it into the charger 12:25pm. At 1:20pm the cell was at 97%, the charger at 100%.

I had decided to work from my bed, so that I could take cover and stay cozy. But at 2pm I dressed cozy to go work in the living room, first one project, then another.

At 3:30pm I checked the mail (half a block down the street), and looked around the yard.

Lunch: 11 oz diet drink (180 cal, 10g protein, 4g fiber), 5 Ritz crackers (80 cal, no protein or fiber), but daren't eat the little Jif to Go peanut butter cup, fearing the consequences. At a family dinner the evening before, we had had wonderful soups and cornbread—my favorite being a corn and jalapeño one—well, it was too much liquids, and too many vegetable items for my system, so I needn't have worried about getting dehydrated, and instead, had to take a pill to make my bowels more solid. **Lots of wet diapers, and, some laundry.**

By **6:30pm it was too dark** in the house to read or write, and as I was unwilling to use up my energy sources, I put what I was doing away. Being in a wheelchair, I'm slow, so it took me a half hour before I was ready to potty.

7pm needed more light in the bathroom. The emergency crank light was too dim (though 3 minutes of cranking greatly improved the light output), and 1 candle was not enough. So I got out the **100 hour emergency liquid candle** I had on hand. Two candles was sufficient.

It was just easier to diaper on the bed rather than try to manage on my chair in the cramped space of the bathroom. So, I would put an underpad on the wheelchair, and one on the bed, diaper and dress myself, and fold the used underpads for use on the chair between bathroom

and bed. Put a clean one under me on the bed. I used **8 disposable underpads over the 3 days**. About **6-8 diapers a day**.

I don't know why it didn't occur to me until it was all over, to **set the commode over the top of the toilet** (open both lids of the toilet, so that the bucket of the commode is accommodated). It would have simplified matters quite a bit . . . I could have put the commode in my usual bathroom, where things are more set up for me, and I am more comfortable, and I would have needed less supplemental light—though **neither candle was used up to any degree**.

8pm **Dinner**: 7.5 oz Beef Ravioli (Single Serve; 200 cal, 6g protein, 3g fiber), 7 slices pepperoni (65 cal) . . . and didn't dare eat the 3 bean salad, for fear of becoming loose as a goose. Later in the night I **needed more calories, and snacked** on a little more pepperoni.

By **1am my feet & legs were finally warm**. I wore warm jammie bottoms. I decided it was better not to let my legs get too cold, because it's so hard to warm them, and is uncomfortable for the rest of my body as I try to manage it.

I was wakeful all night, and chose to use the **crank radio as the best renewable source of energy**—the radio was still playing, as I hoped it would help me sleep. With lots of time to lay there thinking, I was anxious to capture on paper some ideas, before they vanished. The light of the crank radio used more energy than the radio, and had to be cranked quite often. But at least it helped to pass an uncomfortable night. I didn't use the light continuously, but I let the radio play, until about 4am the static seemed to indicate the battery was running low.

Day 2: (cooking day)

8am I got up with my phone alarm. The phone was charged over 90%, and the charger still said 100%. The indoor temp was 66°, 57° out. Forecast 63°high/46° low, partly cloudy (pavement was wet). It was comfortable enough to take out the garbage, check on things in the yard, and fix breakfast on the **camp stove** set on the back porch bistro.

Breakfast: 1 pkt Quaker instant oatmeal (160 cal, 4g protein, 4g fiber), half of 1/3 c instant nonfat dry milk (40 cal, 4g protein, 0 fiber), 2 T chopped walnuts (100 cal, 2.5g protein, 2g fiber), 5 dried apricots (100 cal, 1g protein, 2g fiber), cup of water for cooking was more than needed. Although the nuts were dated to expire June 2019, they already tasted bad, and I ended up throwing the rest away. There's a reason some things are on sale.

After all the peeing the previous day, should I drink a vitamin water? I was still kind of hungry, so I drank half a pint bottle. I had also drunk some water in the wee hours of the morning.

The water boiled in no time on the camp stove, and I was very happy with its efficiency . . . I could use just only the amount of fuel I needed, vs a wood or charcoal fire. I could technically have used my gas stove top, as it is supposed to still work in a power outage. But I decided to gain a little experience with the camp stove.

I used about **half a cup of water to rinse my pot and spoon**, and then poured it into a plant pot.

After potty, took a "spit" bath with baby wipes on my bed, and used the **rinse-less shampoo**—not quite the same as regular shampoo and water, but still felt better than nought.

I did do a little yard work in the morning. And then I needed a break from working on my projects in the cold living room, and decided to read in bed pretty much all day. Moving around, necessary changes of position in bed, required fairly frequent change of diapers.

About 2pm **Lunch:** 18.8 oz can of chicken corn chowder (380 cal, 14g protein, 3g fiber), 27 Goldfish crackers (75 cal, 1.5g protein, 0 fiber). A **hot lunch helped** against the cold. I put **hand warmers in my socks**, and they kept my feet warm the rest of the day and night). Continued reading in bed.

At 6pm I had come to a convenient stopping point—I had been wanting to eat for 2-3 hours, but put it off. **Dinner:** 10 oz Ready to Serve Vegetable Korma (260 cal, 6g protein, 6g fiber), 2.6 oz tuna packet (90 cal, 16g protein, 0 fiber). Again, didn't dare eat the bean salad. The Korma heated quickly, and again, the **hot dinner was helpful**. I drank the other half pint of vitamin water, and used half cup water to rinse pot. I poured the water down the drain, so as not to attract pests. Later, in the night, had to snack on more crackers, and a Special K bar. Between **the cold, and the long wakeful hours, I had to have more calories**.

7pm my phone was at 69% . . . I had used it to take some pictures for my blog, which uses the battery fairly quickly. I plugged it into the charger.

After spending **all day in bed, spent another wakeful night. And when the nights start so early—so many hours of darkness**—it's just a misery with no way to help me get off to sleep. At 7:15pm I used my cell phone to help me re-write my lost list (my brain). The phone charging was at 92%, the charger at 98% or 86% (one is upside down of the other). Used the cranking flashlight to write. About 8-9pm worked a bit by flashlight. 10pm got up to potty, **snack, drank pint of water** (hungry). About midnight, worked some more by flashlight. At last, I thought, "OK, my **laptop has 3 hours of battery . . . I'm going to use one hour of it.**"

Desperate at 1:30am, I got out the **home made emergency candle** I had been given years and years ago, made of wax and sawdust. It was pretty nice to work with, until it started burning a little too vigorously for comfort, and I put it out. I decided it was too dangerous to use in the house. I'll use it to start a fire in the pit some time.

About 3:30 or 4am I got up and took a **pain pill**, ate a **Special K bar** (both for the sake of the pill, and for hunger). Finally slept.

Day 3:

I heard my phone alarm at 8am, but after such a wakeful night, needed "just a little more sleep". Next thing I knew, I awoke at 10:15am, but it was a good sleep.

Breakfast: 4" pancake (85 cal, 1.5g protein, .5g fiber), 1 T marionberry jam (35 cal, 0 protein and fiber), 1 egg (70 cal, 6g protein, 0 fiber), 1 Epic Bison Bar (130 cal, 7 g protein, 1g fiber). ¼ cup water for pancake, ½ c water for dishes (I used a measuring cup to mix the pancake, but could have used a paper cup)—if you use a non-stick frying pan that is kept seasoned, it should be easy to just wipe out with a napkin after frying an egg and a pancake. I have ever found that scrambling an egg is not as clean.

I figured I had not used nearly the gallon/person/day recommended water storage, so I decided to use 2 gallons to try out washing clothes. At 4qts/gal x 2pints/qt = 8 pint bottles is 1 gallon. I had just changed out the water bottles in my car, so thought I'd use some of those. **One gallon to wash, one gallon to rinse a small batch of clothes:** a few underwear, a nightie, a pair of flannel pants, and a pair of cozy pants (sort of like fake fur, but Hello Kitty design).

Washing could be done in a 5 gallon bucket outdoors, but the easiest way for me to manage was **a large metal bowl in the bathroom sink** (since the sink drain tends to let the water out). A person more mobile and able than I **could heat some of the water** (I suggest heating a small part of it very hot, rather than to try to heat it all).

Method: 1. pour 4 pints of water in the bowl. Add the lightest, least soiled items. Rub the bar soap on the most critical areas . . . don't worry about soaping every inch . . . as you swish and swirl it in the water, the soap will circulate sufficiently. Of course you will not be able to be as efficient as a modern washing machine, but good enough. After you have swished around the first items, wring them as dry as you can and set them aside. 2. Add the next item and do the same, adding a little water at a time as absolutely needed. Save the fluffy cozy pants for last . . . they will use a lot of water (better if possible to wash out a smaller spot than to wash the entire garment). Don't try to wash jeans or heavily soiled items this way.

When you have washed and wrung out all your items, put the last item in the sink, pour the soapy water over it and squish and squeeze so that it gets an extra washing.

3. Pour 4 pints clean water in the bowl, add the light weight, lightly soiled items, rinse them in the clean water, and wring them as dry as you can. Set them aside. Similarly rinse the other items, one at a time, adding a little water at a time, as needed. If possible, pour water out in the garden (not manageable for me, in a wheelchair).

4. **Hang the items to dry. They are going to be drippy**—you will appreciate how grateful housewives were for wringer washers!

I was fortunate to have a nice day, even several nice days, to hang the clothes out to dry, and they smelled so wonderful! It took the flannel pants, nightgown, and cozy pants 2 days to dry. You can hang things in the tub if it's raining out (especially if you have a drying rack), or put towels on the floor to catch drips. If it's summer time, they should help cool the house. If it's freezing out, you can "freeze dry" them.

About 1:45-2pm **Lunch:** I went up to check on my granddaughter—although I had avoided visiting anyone who might be using electricity, it was a nice warm sunny day, and I could pretend that they were not using electricity for an hour. I had planned a soup and sandwich lunch, but I was anxious to have the kids try "The Complete Cookie"—4 varieties I had got. Well, I wanted to try them and could not eat all 4 cookies myself, as well as wanting the kids to try them.

After 2 days pretty much alone (my granddaughter did come and check on me each day, but didn't stay), in the cold and dark, getting out in the warm sunshine, being around people, and active—all helped cheer me up. Besides, it was the last day, and I was anxious to be done.

3pm my grandson came down as usual to earn money helping grandma for an hour. I **worked in the yard from 3-6:30 pm. Working helps keep one warm, but it also requires more calories and liquids.**

I indulged in a **pint of water to wash** after working in the yard/dirt. I washed in my big bowl I'd used for washing clothes, and used the bar soap, and a **finger nail brush**.

It was dark by the time I was cooking **Dinner:** a full toasted cheese sandwich, instead of half as planned (2x90 cal/slice of bread, 2x3g protein, 2x2g fiber), 2 T margarine (120 cal, 0 protein & fiber), 2 oz sliced cheese (220 cal, 12g protein, 0 fiber), 2 cups tomato soup (360 cal, 8g protein, 4g fiber), and vitamin water. After working hard in the yard, I had to have more

calories than my original plan. Later in the night I ended up **snacking** on a couple Special K Protein bars (150 cal each, 8g protein each, 2g fiber each).

About 8pm I took care of potty for the night.

As I reached for something, a shot of pain in my shoulder reminded me to take a **pain pill** before bed, instead of having to get up in the middle of the night and cold to do it. Drank another **half pint vitamin water** with it.

I had meant to wear my **long johns** to keep my legs from getting too cold, but when I went to show, they didn't show! So I thought I had forgot. But, as it turned out, I had remembered—they had just ridden up. My legs and feet were warm. I had worn a cozy top, as well.

The house had got down to 63°. At 8pm it was 65° indoors, 60° out. The phone said the high was 67°/low was to be 41°. Forecast for next day was 69°/42°, and then in the 70s for the 10 day forecast. My cell phone got down to 60%, the charge to 71%. But 8:35pm the cell phone was up to 89%. I had again taken pictures, answered important e-mails.

Shortly after 8:30pm I was in bed. Again, I decided I could use my **laptop** an hour to work on a project—but it turned into 4, and I was in the middle of things when it shut down, so I cheated a bit and plugged it in at 11pm). I found that my **cell phone light** seems to use little battery, and is a much brighter light than either the candles or crank flashlight. How I wished I had discovered that before!

To conclude: it was a valuable, if not exactly a fun experience. I learned some things, had a chance to try out some things . . . The hardest thing was the long hours of cold and darkness, compounded by inability to sleep at night. And it's a difficult time to be on a 1200 calorie diet—though I'm sure that POWs have survived on less (and lost weight)—it's good to prepare for more calories than that, especially if there might be physical exertion in clean-up or rescue work. Yet there *are* a few details that can be tweaked to make the experience less difficult.

I hope to try a summer camp, but have some preparation to do before that: the heat is really a misery for my legs (thus my whole self), and will keep me awake, amplifying the problems of my disabilities. I want to get a generator that will run on propane (as gasoline can't really be stored, is not practical for me to be able to attain, nor probably will be attainable in a general emergency), so that I can still run the frig/freezer (thus have ice bottles to help keep me cool), and hopefully run an AC in my room so that I can at least sleep at night.

Well, it's been a learning experience, an "I done it" experience, an "I'm glad I did it, but I'm so glad it's over!" experience.

And what huge blessings are electricity and running water—blessings most of humanity for most of history didn't have. Let us not take them for granted; let us share them with all we can; let us use them for the benefit of all humankind.