

The Redrock Readiness Newsletter

Episode 12: Sharing is Caring

“How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

--1 Corinthians 14:26

Hello everyone! We wanted to take the time this week to pass along some real-life experiences shared by other LDS folks who found themselves using their emergency prep items. We thought it was useful to read things that worked, things that didn't work, and things that they were glad they did beforehand.

Beau: Personally I think it's smarter and kinda crucial to learn from other people's mistakes or experience. I know here in Nevada we're not really concerned about natural disasters, however that doesn't mean that one can't or won't happen. What I like about the following anecdote is that it touches on both the natural disaster and some of the civil unrest that happens when everyone panics.

Danielle: The following anecdote, written by a member (a man) who lived through the Oklahoma tornado outbreak in 2013, was forwarded to me from Sister Rath, of the Town Center ward. I cut some things for length.

Lessons learned from the Oklahoma tornadoes (May 2013)

After eating, we noticed that the tornado that hit El Reno was moving straight east, instead of the north east track that it was supposed to. Concerned, we finished up and went home. [...] However a new funnel was spotted over Oklahoma City Community College. The track of this one was heading right for the house. The weather forecasters were calling for people to either evacuate, or to get below ground. Since our house didn't have a storm shelter, we thought about leaving the house.

In a panic, we decided to abandon the house around 7pm. We were following the storm and thought if we could get south down to Norman, we would be completely out of the storm. Earlier in the day, I had my oldest daughter pack what she would need for her and the baby should we have to evacuate. I also ensured all electronics were charged.

We grabbed the kids, a bag with some clothes, and the cats in their carriers and loaded into the three cars. My wife Jennifer had the little ones and our Siamese cat in the minivan. My oldest daughter Joelle was with my mother in law in the PT Cruiser. Once they were loaded, they headed out. I remained to finish locking up the house and to ensure the power was turned off.

Due to some delays getting the power off, and me starting to panic with the approaching storm, it took longer than I had planned to get out of the house. I grabbed our other cat and my backpack with the laptop computer and headed out to the truck.

I tried to get out of the neighborhood and get onto Walker Ave. However this was bumper to bumper cars and not moving. I turned around and made my way through the neighborhood to Western, but that was bumper to bumper going south. Finally I realized that I was not going to get out of the neighborhood, and headed back to the house to ride out the storm. I sent a text to Jennifer and told her I couldn't make it out. She was very slowly making her way south, staying ahead of the storm.

After about 20 minutes or so, the house lost power, and the storm arrived. I could hear a roar somewhere outside. I huddled with the mattress in the main hallway. (The news reported later that an EF1 had touched down in our neighborhood, taking out my fence, the neighbor's fence, and some trees). Because the wireless router was on a battery backup, I had internet until about midnight, when it finally died. I was able to follow the storms, and give Jennifer advice on road and weather conditions. Conditions proved impossible for them to turn around, so I told them to just keep heading south. [...] They were able to make it to a friend's house in Norman who had a storm shelter in the garage. They all rode out the storm there.

[...]

The Good:

Batteries were available for flashlights and lanterns.

Internet was available to track weather and road conditions.

Two 24 pack cases of water provided drinking water.

The eight D cell batteries were still good, able to power the big boombox radio for updates

The Nook, My netbook, laptop, phone, and MP3 player all charged and ready to go.

Oldest daughter had a bug out bag for her and her baby ready to go.

We have some canned goods, and the gas is still working so we can cook things on the

gas range.

Four cases of MRE's are available in case the roads are bad and we can't get out.

Phone chargers were in the minivan, which proved critical to keep Jennifer's phone charged.

Texting was very valuable, and texts made it through when regular voice calls didn't.

Kids were entertained on their tablets. Could have packed more entertainment in case they were gone a long time (books, games)

IMPORTANT – God was watching over us that day. The fan/alternator/A-C belt went out in the minivan Friday afternoon. I was able to get a new one installed before the storms arrived Friday night. If the fan belt had broke while the family was fleeing OKC, it very well could have proved fatal.

The Bad:

Forgot to charge other netbook. When the battery died on the primary netbook, I had no backup.

No fresh batteries available for flashlights. We are out of AA batteries.

Bug out bag was not packed beforehand. Just had in mind what I would grab.

No paper maps of the area available. Google maps was still working, only because we still had internet.

No weather radio. Was able to watch live streaming of the local tv station, only because we had internet.

Family drove straight through Moore, and through all the previous tornado damage.

Forgot to pack lots of extra cash

I always keep my gas tank 1/2 full. I need to buy a Jerry can of gas to grab n go. One of the first commodities that runs out is gas at the gas stations.

The Ugly

Succumbed to panic and sent my family out into the storm trying to get away from it, instead of staying put.

Didn't have a clear plan on what we would do in case of a tornado headed for the house. Just "thoughts".

Jen and I had "normalcy bias". Both of us thought nothing would happen because this neighborhood has never been hit.

Didn't realize that thousands would also be panicking and clogging the roads. Estimates were 89,000 people were jammed onto the roads trying to flee Oklahoma City.

No kitty litter or garbage bags were packed - things could have gotten stinky and unsanitary fast in the cars.

I don't have a Ham radio or GMRS. If we couldn't have texted, there would have been no way to communicate with loved ones at all.

We shouldn't have split up as a family. I would have never forgiven myself if I had sent them off into the tornadoes [sic] path of destruction.

A different member who came through the tornado shared these seven thoughts:

- 1: Storing all of your preparations at home may not be a good idea. Police prevented homeowners from returning to their homes EVEN IF they could prove that they were residents.
- 2: Don't depend on phones or cell phones. We have all become comfortable with cell phones and being able to call whomever we want whenever we want. Cell phone towers went down, and what little coverage was available was reserved for emergency responders.
- 3: Have a family "evacuation and meet" plan. Our family was spread out across 20 miles.
- 4: Use real keys, not garage door openers. My SIL was stranded OUTSIDE of his home because he uses his garage door opener instead of a key. If you can't carry a key, at least hide one somewhere safe in your yard.
- 5: Have some preps in your car, particularly clothing. Daughter and SIL were both away from home and could not even pick up a change of clothing.
- 6: Make sure you have phone numbers memorized, and that there is someone in another area with a LAND LINE that everyone can contact to relay and receive information.
- 7: Be prepared to invite extras into your home. Glad we haven't down-sized yet - plenty of room to accommodate extra bodies for as long as necessary.

Also, the webmaster of *Southern Belle Prepper* reposted some experiences written by a Hurricane Katrina survivor. This survivor, among other things, mentioned that refugees often flocked to the prepared, who, in some cases, had enough for themselves, but not for these other folks who were in need. Just something to think about:

<https://sites.google.com/site/southernbelleprepper/lessons-from-katrina>.

Join us next week when we review what we learned at the Provident Living Fair! Until then, be smart and stay safe!