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GUEST COMMENTARY

Cell phone survival: Making it through a wintry inconvenience

The bridge in Salem was out of commission, and I was cut off from my home in McMinnville.

At 10 am on Wednesday, December 14, a wintry mix of rain, sleet and snow started to fall near my job site in Salem. The snow continued to fall throughout the day.

By the time my workday ended, five inches of snow, combined with below freezing temperatures, made for treacherous driving conditions. The streets of Salem were gridlocked. After sitting in traffic for an hour, I started the police scanner application on my smartphone. I learned the storm had stalled multiple vehicles on the icy approach to the Marion Street Bridge. This kept me from the most direct route to the warmth and safety of my McMinnville home.

To compound matters I had forgotten my wallet (for the first time in years), and had no access to folding money, credit cards, or other identification.

My first impulse had been to stop for an

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extended dinner to allow some time for the local authorities to resolve the traffic situation. I took stock of my resources and thought about the possibility that this situation might last longer than a single day. Searching my car, I found a handful of change, a smartphone, and tire chains, as well as some emergency food and water.

To conserve my precious pocket change, I reconsidered my dinning strategy. Rather than a leisurely meal at a nice restaurant, I opted to purchase a sandwich using the Subway app on my cellphone. With the order complete, I parked my car and walked 15 minutes to the local sandwich store.

After dinner, I hiked back to the car and patiently waited for traffic to move. After waiting an hour in one location, I called

my wife to let her know my situation. She suggested that I stay the night in Salem. Since I was without funds, my wife called a local hotel and reserved a room using her credit card. I quickly arrived at the hotel, but because I did not have identification, there was some back and forth while my wife and the motel staff exchanged rental agreements, credit card information and signatures.

And so, at the end of day one, I was well fed and had a warm place to sleep.

After heavy use, my cellphone battery was rapidly losing its charge. To keep it going for another day, I cobbled together the charger from my car and the battery from my laptop, which allowed me to fully charge the phone.

On the morning of the second day I was ready for breakfast. I used some change to purchase a muffin from a local convenience store and found a bottle of water in my car.

Now, with ample time, and the benefit of daylight, I installed my tire chains. As I

checked the vitals of my car, I found I was nearly out of gas. My time living in Colorado had taught me that I not only needed enough gas to get home, but I also needed a large reserve to heat the car if I were to become stranded. So, I motored over to the local gas station and used \$20 in dimes and quarters to purchase fuel.

The roads were still icy as I departed Salem, but with my chains installed and a strong reliance on first gear I did not have much trouble with the bridge. I took the long way home to avoid perilous backroads. During my journey, I saw wrecks along the road; most had been marked by police, and more recent wrecks all had police officers managing the scene.

So, nearly 20 hours after I left work, I arrived safe at home. I was welcomed by my loving wife and ushered into our warm home. From this safe sunny setting, I could finally enjoy the beauty of Cozine Creek as it babbled though the snow-covered glen.