

Wilderness survival involves common sense, preparation

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Improvise, be creative and definitely be prepared. That was the overriding message delivered Wednesday night by Tamara Burns.

Burns is registered nurse with Barton Health who has had to use some of the advice she dispensed June 12 during a lecture at Kahle Community Center.



Tamara Burns explains ways to survive an expected emergency while playing outdoors. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The 10 essentials she says people should carry with them when playing outdoors include:

- Map
- Compass
- Sun protection
- Clothing/hat
- Headlamp/flashlight

- First aid supplies
- Fire starter/matches
- Emergency shelter
- Knife/tools/repair kit
- Food/water.

Burns said people tend to be prepared for bigger excursions compared to a routine bike ride or short hike. But accidents and emergencies can happen at any time.

She is a firm believer duct tape can save the day in almost any situation. Shoes or equipment can be repaired with it. Blisters can be covered with it.

Super Glue is another one of her essentials. Burns says to use it on blisters and cuts. It can be used to seal together a wound.

“The solution to pollution is dilution,” Burns said when it comes to cleaning a wound. Most people aren’t going to carry saline solution with them. So, creating a device that can “shoot” water into the dirty wound to flush it out is the best. This could include a plastic bag filled with water, then puncturing a small hole to squirt water through.

That small hole could be pricked with a safety pin – another tool Burns suggests taking. And take several.

They might be needed to piece together equipment that is falling apart. Or if a splint needs to be devised by wrapping the arm into the bottom of a shirt, pins could be use to immobilize the limb to secure the wrap job.

Hiking and ski poles can be transformed into splints. Stringing a jacket through them creates a litter to haul someone out. Sticks can also do the trick.

A fender on a bike tire can also work as a splint.

For chest wounds, Burns says use gauze on three sides to cover the area. Most likely it's better to leave the foreign object for a professional to remove.

Don't move a person with a cervical spine injury. If touching the back of the injured person's neck hurts them, it's a serious injury. Roll up a jacket and put it behind them for stability.

"Make sure they are breathing and calm," Burns said.

Extra clothing can be used to soak up blood.

"You can bleed to death from two things – a fractured femur or fractured pelvis," she said.

Zip ties and parachute string are other things she likes to have in her pack. Dental floss is another item. It has more uses than just teeth cleaning.

Putting dryer lint in a small waterproof container is all one needs to say they have a fire starter.

Burns recommends testing what you would do in an emergency with family and friends before the real thing happens. Make sure someone knows where you are going and don't play alone.