

# SURVIVE AND THRIVE WELCOME: YOUR SURVIVAL GUY UNDER FIRE!

FEBRUARY 2, 2018 | BY E.J. SMITH - YOUR SURVIVAL GUY

Dear Reader,

If you are determined to prepare yourself and your family for the future, perhaps there was a moment in your life when you decided to take action. This was mine.

“There’s a fire in your yard!” my neighbor said. “There’s a fire in your yard, call 911!”

And that’s how Tropical Storm Hermine spun our quiet Labor Day Weekend in Newport, Rhode Island into a full on panic. It happened fast. I wasn’t prepared. And that should not happen, especially as “Your Survival Guy”.

## The Calm Before the Storm

It was a funny weekend weather-wise. Much of it was spent anticipating the storm that never really came. On Saturday, rather than take our boat out, my daughter and I walked to our slip, made sure the lines were secure, put out an extra bumper and walked home.

On Sunday, the surf was up so my son and I went surfing (I mostly paddled) in a steady offshore wind spraying the tops off the waves at First Beach. For dinner we went down the hill to my in-laws’ —Debbie and Dick Young—house for steamers on their patio overlooking the same wave break at First Beach. As the wind picked up and the sun went down we moved inside for lobsters. Not much of a storm so far.

Monday, Labor Day, was cloudy and windy but certainly not a major storm. Becky and I went out for a walk with our dog, Louis, and as we crossed back over the causeway, connecting Goat Island with Newport, we commented on the gusts pushing us off balance.

Around 2:00pm the gusts picked up and looking out our kitchen window, overlooking our backyard, there were wet leaves and branches strewn about from our black walnut trees. Some powerful 40mph gusts were followed by occasional cracks from breaking branches followed by a bang when hitting the metal gutters, the gas grill, or landing quietly in the yard. Our heavy hockey net in the driveway blew over and smacked against the ground startling Louis.



## **The Moment it all Changed**

And then there was a huge CRACK!

A huge Maple in my neighbor's yard, behind our house, came crashing down yanking down the power lines connecting our lots.

About those power lines in historic Newport.

Historic being the key word. Imagine an estate being cut up into residential lots, combined with the desire to hide unsightly power lines in backyards—to maintain the aesthetic of tree lined streets—and you get an idea of the power line situation in my neighborhood. It's a jungle of power lines coursing through and between canopies of old, and sometimes dead, trees.

The felled Maple took out the power lines, destroyed my neighbor's fence, crushed his shed, his car, and his scooter.

But everyone still had power.

Then, just like that, it all changed with a blink of an eye.

## **Confusion and Fear**

There was a knock on our front door from another neighbor, visibly shaken, who called through the screen door, "Hey! there's a fire in your yard! There's a fire in your yard, call 911!"

Louis went nuts because someone was at the door. My daughter freaked out thinking the house was going to catch on fire, I couldn't see the fire in the backyard and Becky and I were telling each other to call 911.

So much for staying calm. I could barely think. I ran outside and saw the fire.

With my adrenaline pumping, I ran inside to call 911 using our land line and as soon as I dialed the house went dark. No phone. Becky called using her cell, then I called from outside using mine (note to self: Next time designate one person to call 911). It was chaotic. Becky was in another part of the house trying to calm our daughter and the dog down. I was outside calling 911.

## **Where Am I?**

My 911 attempt went to a central call center where they asked me what town I was calling from. Not an easy question to answer calmly and clearly when under pressure, especially with bad cell service (note to self: Next time make sure the Satellite phone is nearby and not in your fishing tackle box in the garage).

Seconds later I heard the sirens. My neighbor (the one who warned us) and I stood in the driveway, as the sirens grew louder, ready to flag the police cruisers down. He yelled to me, "You don't want to mess around throwing water on an electrical fire." Then he asked "Did you know those transformers are loaded with oil?" Really?

As the firetrucks rolled in we explained that the downed tree landed on the wires at the back of the lot, that it had pulled the wires at the top of the utility pole, breaking the pole, smashing it and a now an ignited transformer to the ground where flames roared from the oil and wind. Once the power lines were dead, the firemen hit the flames with water as the transformer reacted like one of those magic relighting birthday candles, except this wasn't very funny.

Finally, after the fire was put out a crew from environmental safety cleaned up the oil spill and the electric utility company worked into early Tuesday (around 1am) to restore power.

The fire was out around dinner time so we headed down to my in-laws.

## **Debriefed by Dick Young**

Uh, oh. Time for the debriefing.

As most of you know, Dick Young is more fanatical about survival prep than most. If I'm the survival guy then he's "The Survival Man". Lucky me.

His first question was, "How's the survival guy?"

We sat and talked about what could be done to prep for a similar event in the future. This was serious. What if something like this happened to him?

As Dick rattled off a million questions to me, his power went out. As if on cue. I was saved. Misery loves company.

But, as if on cue, within a few seconds (which felt like minutes) his several thousand watt generator kicked on, powering-up what turned out to be just a brief interruption in my debriefing.

With that in-mind, here's some areas we covered and some thoughts that came to mind for you.

## **What Was Learned**

Electrical fires from transformers are a huge risk to neighborhoods. Take it from me. If there are some near your house have plenty of fire extinguishers at the ready. Walk your neighborhood to locate transformers. Are there any clear risks to you and your family such as low hanging or dead trees? If there are keep an eye on them or call the electric company to look at them.

Keep your cars full of gas. A few Labor Day's ago a hurricane hit Newport. It wasn't bad. But our guests had to stay another night. Keep those gas tanks full.

I've [told you about my Yeti cooler](#). Becky and I moved all of our frozen, grass-fed, meats to the Yeti and they were still frozen when I unpacked them this morning.

There is no downside to having plenty of cash on hand. Cash works even without power, unlike ATMs.

## Who's in Charge Here?

One thing Becky and I talked about as a dozen or so firemen, police officers, and utility workers descended upon our property was: "This is no longer our property." It happens that fast. They were in charge and to put it nicely "we were in the way". Imagine if this was a city-wide event? First, there's no way a crew of that size would help us as quickly as they did and second, you better be prepared to lock-up your property. An emergency can quickly turn your property into a public place. There is a fine line between who should be there, on your property, and who should not. When the smoke cleared and the firemen were gone I went to the back fence, climbed up to check the damage and there was a guy standing there. I asked him if he was a friend of my neighbor's and he said "No" he wasn't. He said he wanted to check out what happened. He had no right being there. He was trespassing. But the cops were gone. He knew that.

Make sure your weapons are easily accessible. I am partial to my Sig Sauer P226 to help me, as they say, fight my way to my shotguns. Here's our review of [our favorite shotguns](#).

Make sure you have light. I love my [Streamlight 88030 ProTac 1L](#). It uses a CR123A lithium battery. It's small and it's powerful. Put it in your pocket and you're good to go in the dark. And it won't break the bank.

I also love my [SureFire Minimus variable-output LED](#) headlamp because two hands are better than one. I pack this on our boating trips and ski trips. It's great for when a transformer catches fire in your backyard, cuts the power to your house, and you want to read in bed to calm your nerves so you can sleep.

Have a go kit. Check out our [Navy Seal Kit here](#).

Buy a handful of [Henry Survival Rifles](#) for your family and keep one in your car. For the car, store the loaded clip in a separate place from the rifle.

Have plenty of water in your car. Dick Young has all of the above for his frequent north/south trips between Key West and Newport.

## Night Comes Fast

Don't forget, night comes fast when there's no power. And, as is often the case, this stuff happens at night. Be ready.

There's a reason to practice, because as the saying goes, you don't rise to the occasion, you fall to the level of your training.

Get your gun and Your Training Now. (Read [Part I](#), [II](#), [III](#), [IV](#), and [V](#))

Get a dog. Yes, Louis was loud but that's what you want from your dog when something goes bump in the night.

Last but not least have coffee, Burgundy and toilette paper on hand for obvious reasons.

You never know when a funny weekend weather-wise can turn into a serious situation. And the Burgundy always helps with the debriefing.

Survive and Thrive this Month.

Warm regards,

E.J.

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"Your Survival Guy"