

Home & Heart



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The Y2K phenomenon is being thrust at us from everywhere. Our Post Office in Ashland, Oregon has a big millennial countdown clock on the wall. It ticks off the remaining time to the hundredth of a second.

Blind Dates

It turns out that January 1, 2000 isn't the only date coming up soon that might cause problems with computers or computer chips. On the Julian calendar April 9, 1999 is "9999," which means "end of input" or "discard" in computer programming language. September 9, 1999 is the same as April 9, containing "9999." January 3, 2000 will be the first business day of Y2K. January 10, 2000 is the first date with seven digits. February 29, 2000 is the first Leap Year day. October 10, 2000 is the first date with eight digits. Everyone will have to wait it out to see if these dates will cause system crashes or equipment failures.

August 22, 1999 is the rollover date for the Global Positioning Satellites. Even though this date isn't associated with the millennium, the GPS satellites are programmed to work a week at a time and designed to run 1,024 weeks and then roll over.

Yankee Ingenuity

In terms of getting by when faced with shortages and stoppages, I would like to think most of us will be okay. Eighty percent of pre-World War II Americans lived and worked on farms. Most farms could produce what they needed and could repair what they could not. Folks got by using Yankee ingenuity (that's Southern ingenuity for y'all down that way) or what I think of as Physical Ad-Libbing. This is something my Dad taught me. If you need a "do-hickey" and you don't have one, then what do you have that is similar? What will it take to modify it? How can you make it either as efficient or more efficient?

We have to remember that when Daniel Defoe wrote 'Robinson Crusoe' in the early 1700s, people were amazed that a man could survive on a lush, tropical island—and with only one servant at that! I think that because of the books we have read and the movies we have seen, we could survive on that island, without servants. But even with preparation, emergencies will arise. Don't lose your head, use your head.

The Five Stages of Y2K

1. Denial and Isolation

Some problems are going to occur with the coming of the millennium. I don't think society is going to crumble, but there will most likely be shortages and stoppages to varying degrees.

Ignoring the information coming in about Y2K is not the answer. However, we need to filter the hype and use the core of knowledge to prepare for our needs. And if we don't need our preparations, we are still ahead.

2. Anger

It is easy to be angry about the whole situation. After all, didn't the programmers expect to live to see the year 2000? Wasn't it like *really* obvious that this particular date would approach at a steady determined rate? I can't figure out why it took so long for the dated chips to be changed to include the needed four digits. Back in the early 80s, a few programmers brought the Millennium Bug to the attention of the computer world. They were totally ignored. Since there is documentation of the warnings, the lawyers are going to have a field day with the post-Y2K lawsuits.

3. Bargaining

Well, if I knew what was going to happen I could be more prepared. If I am informed better I can avoid any problems.

4. Depression

Oh, no! The whole system is going to go kaput, and society will be crippled for years to come. I will have to give up the entertainments and luxuries I enjoy. No matter what I do, things will go wrong.

5. Acceptance

Oh, well. Something is going to happen. I will prepare for this event as best I can. It won't be any worse than the time the pipes froze for two months and it got down to -17° F. We kept a hole broken through the ice in the creek and hauled water. Bob-O said we had running water—we ran to the creek and ran back with the bucket of water. I found then that we could always get by.

More Preparations

Our county's Y2K task force says to be prepared for two months of dicey services. After reading Bob Ellison's

account of the ice storm in New York last year (*HP68*, page 42), I realized that some of my advice in the last column wouldn't have helped. The solar shower would have frozen solid.

Here are a few more things to consider tucking away. A small wood stove with pipe. A stash of wood to burn. If you keep it dry it will last a very long time. I have seen a gizmo that rolls newspapers so tightly that they can be burned as fuel. Household bleach to purify water. A good water filter. An extra pair of glasses. You should already have fire extinguishers by every door in your house. Plastic garbage bags, tarps, and rope—for those of us living rurally these are a necessity of our lifestyle. Assorted soaps and detergents. Last but not least, duct tape, or as we call it "hippie chrome."

Here's a good idea I read about: Have a working bicycle handy. Ride it once in a while now and you'll do yourself a favor in any case. Extra tubes and a patch kit would be smart too. Make sure you have a non-electric can opener. Spring is coming—get those open pollinated seeds now.

Enjoy the Trip

I saw a clock for sale—its only function was to count down to the millennium. I figure they used the old chips in these because, hey, they don't have to work past New Year's Day 2000 anyway.

I still don't think this bug will be devastating. I like to plan and pack though. Whenever we go on a trip of any kind, long or short, I am the one to pack and plan. I find the preparation as fun as the trip. I have found though, that as careful and thorough as I try to be, I always forget something. You know what? The trip always turns out okay anyway. Don't stress. Enjoy the trip.

Access

Kathleen Jarschke-Schultze and her Airedale, Emma Rushingheart, are taking puppy socialization classes at her home in Northernmost California, c/o Home Power Magazine, POB 520, Ashland, OR 97520 530-475-0830 kathleen.jarschke-schultze@homepower.com or kjs@snowcrest.net

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