

## Survive a Winters Night

During the winter, we travel to work and to play just like we did in the summer. In the winter, there are different outdoor activities and of course different challenges. If we are at home, we have resources at hand; after all, we are preppers. Cars break down, horses buck us off, ATV's topple over and snow shoe bindings break. There is always something right around the corner that can go south very quickly and without warning.

A somber fact is that about 70% of winter weather fatalities occur in an automobile. You can bet many of those vehicle related deaths began with someone simply leaving the house to run an errand, make a short trip to visit family or friends or take care of routine business. The weather turns unexpectedly bad, road conditions rapidly deteriorate and, suddenly, what was an ordinary drive becomes an overnight ordeal.

Most folks think that just because they don't live in New England, Upper Midwest or the Rocky Mountains, this could not happen to them. Weather that causes limited visibility, traction and low temperatures can happen anywhere. If you have ever traveled out east in Nevada on the loneliest road in America, yep highway 50, you can understand that you can go undetected overnight if you get into trouble.

A winter event will require short term protection from the natural elements. If we look at the rule of 3's, air, shelter, water and food, Shelter in severe conditions can be the most important item on the list and the rule says 3 hours without shelter, but that also can vary. If it's cold and windy, you may have only minutes, not hours to get shelter from the elements.

**Before you head out**, doing a few things will make you safer:

- Filled the gas tank. Never let it get under 1/2 tank
- Left info about your trip with those you are meeting or a friend/family member
- Checked road and weather conditions along your route
- Your vehicle should have been assessed and serviced for the winter season
- Do you have your Car Kit

**Your Car Kit:** Should have as a minimum:

- Small Shovel
- Jumper Cables
- Sand or Kitty litter for traction
- Tire chains
- Road flares or other signaling devices
- Windshield scraper and broom
- Tow chain or rope
- Cell phone adaptor
- Fluorescent distress flag and whistle

**When you get into trouble**, you need to do several things using the acronym STOP.

- **STOP.** Whatever you are doing, stop. Sit down, take a drink of water, take a deep breath and try to calm down.
- **THINK.** Admit that you are in trouble and as objectively as you can, think about your situation. Are you safe? Are others safe? Do you need to move to a safer area? Is anyone injured? What do I need first, fire or shelter?
- **OBSERVE.** Observe the area you are in. What are the hazards? What are the natural resources that you can benefit from? Are there sources of help available? What can you take advantage of to help you survive?
- **PLAN.** Plan your next move carefully. Put together a plan in your head based on the facts at hand and your training and preparation.
- There is another acronym when working through an event called: SIZEUP. This is used on CERT teams when working through an event to always make the best decision at the time. This has 9 steps: Gather Facts – Assess and Communicate Damage – Consider Probabilities – Assess your situation – Establish Priorities – Make Decisions – Develop a plan of action – Take action – Evaluate progress. This process is continually being updated, the size up never stops.

So let's say that your vehicle has a car kit and is ready for winter, what about yourself and your family?

What winter emergency gear do you have with you? What you have could mean the difference between life and death. So if you're vehicle has a kit to help it when problems arise, what kit do you and your family have?

Get Home or Possibles Bags. Whatever you want to call them, this bag has one goal, short term survival. Everyone in the vehicle should have their own bag with similar items. Short term for me is 24 hours without other support. The items in that bag should always contain:

- Fire Kit
- Water
- Flashlight and batteries
- Battery powered am-fm Radio
- Snack food including energy bars
- Matches and small candles
- First Aid kit
- Personal medications
- Sleeping Bag or Bivy Bag
- Nylon Poncho
- Knife
- Signal Mirror
- Gloves (working)
- 550 cord or bank line

You may want to add a few things to your vehicle:

- Carbon Monoxide Test Strip. They cost about 4 bucks. Stick em up and they will warn you of unhealthy air
- Buddy Heater. Safe indoors using 1lb propane cylinders. Tip over and Oxygen depletion safety and heats up to 200 sq ft.
- Alternate Shelter. If you can't stay in the vehicle, stay next to it.
- Add anything that you feel will aid in your survival

While on the thought of adding, you should add another bag to list. It should contain clothes. In winter, they should be the warmest layers you have, in summer the clothes should be light and cover from the sun. Hats and gloves for the season should be included. It's a great idea to take your "Possibles" bag and clothes bag when traveling, so it moves to the vehicle we are taking

If you find yourself in this situation, here are some general Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Stop and Think. You need to do a calm assessment of your situation taking in all facts and options. Don't rule anything out at this point.
- What do you have at hand? Cell phone, Sat phone or Radios? Personal Locating Device like SPOT?
- Run the engine in 15-20 min intervals to heat up then keep warm with clothes and blankets. First check that exhaust is clear to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Eat snacks. Eating keeps the furnace going and that creates body heat, kinda like jogging in place without all the sweating.
- Tie a fluorescent flag to your antenna
- Partition off part of the car if possible to reduce the area to provide heating to
- Do not leave the vehicle and start walking. More people are rescued by staying with it.

Don't:

- Drink Alcohol. This gives a false sense of warmth and dulls the senses, you need to think clearly.
- Sweat. Getting wet can mean hypothermia can set in minutes
- Leave the vehicle and begin walking. Unless you can see help, don't leave. You are more likely to be found if you stay with the vehicle.

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