

The Seven Priorities for South Florida Wilderness Survival

Packing a survival kit before going hiking and having one in your vehicle may not be enough to protect you in the event of an emergency. Remember the rules of 3: injury and/or death can occur in 3 seconds from panic or lack of thinking; 3 minutes from lack of oxygen; 3 hours from lack of shelter; 3 days from lack of water or 3 weeks from lack of food.

- 1. S.T.O.P.** Stop, Think, Observe, & Plan Stop and relax. Observe your surroundings, equipment, the weather and natural resources. Determine what you need to do to survive and help others find you.
- 2. First Aid.** See if you, or anyone with you, are in need of first aid. If there is a need, provide first aid immediately. This is the second priority for survival. For Florida survival know the signs and treatments for Heat Stroke and De-Hydration.
- 3. Shelter.** The third priority for survival is to find or construct shelter. Natural cover under the lower branches of strong oak trees are quick solutions. Before building a shelter check for signs of snakes or other animals. If you have 15 feet of rope and ponchos, garbage bags or emergency blankets you can make a shelter. You can also use small branches and cabbage palm fronds to build a shelter that will keep you dry.
- 4. Build a Fire.** A fire can be used for comfort, sterilization, purifying water, protection, cooking and signaling. Having Waterproof matches and dry tinder in your survival kit is a given. Without matches, the next best way to build a fire is with a magnifying glass. The reality of finding the right materials to make a fire by friction is a long shot. Unless you are wet, building a fire for warmth is rarely a problem in Florida. But building a fire for signaling and purifying water is important. A small fire is more controllable. Large, smoky fires are more visible. Add green or wet leaves to increase the smoke.
- 5. Signal.** Use smoke or signal mirrors to signal for help. Whistle instead of yelling. It carries further and requires less energy. Three is the universal distress signal. If you're near a clearing, arrange three fires or piles of rocks in a field. You can also scratch a message into the dirt or sand.
- 6. Water.** Due to cold, hot, exertion, stress and waste removal, your body loses vital fluids. Collect rainwater in a plastic sheet or poncho before it hits the ground. Having a **metal container** (Canteen) that can be used to collect water from a lake, river or creek, then placed in a fire to boil for 1 minute or more to kill bacteria. Use your scout neckerchief to filter out large containments. Standing water is your last choice. Have a bottle of **Tincture of Iodine** in your survival kit. If you cannot boil water, add 5 drops per quart when the water is clear. Add 10 drops per quart when the water is cloudy. Cactus pulp can be sucked in small amounts. Do not drink sea water or urine, or suck plants that are not edible.
- 7. Food.** The capture and preparation of an animal requires too much energy. You can safely eat insects. In the 10,000 islands, Sea Purslane, found everywhere on our camping islands, can be nibbled on, but it is safer and tastier if it is boiled in two changes of water. Twice boiling will reduce the saltiness and the concentration of Oxalic acid. Pine needles can be chopped and boiled as a tea.