



The Calaveras Chronical is pleased to introduce a new column (*series of articles*) by Calaveras County Search and Rescue (CCSAR) focusing on outdoor recreational safety.

Ten Essentials, by Calaveras County Search and Rescue (Steve Shields), October 2015

It's that time of year again when folks of all walks of life turn off Animal Planet, dust off their favorite rifle and join the annual pilgrimage into the wilderness in search of fresh meat. While the experience provides many of us a chance to escape the daily grind and reconnect with our natural world it can also suddenly throw us into unexpected situations.

Whether it is an early winter storm, a hasty fall or losing our way – if we are not prepared this can quickly deteriorate into a life or death struggle! Most feel they are prepared to face such situations but find themselves without the proper equipment or training when something actually happens on their own.

The most important attribute in any survival situation is a positive mental attitude and the ability to make sound decisions in the face of many unknown factors. Preparation however can considerably increase our chances of survival by having the right equipment on hand. Sage advice by Benjamin Franklin tells us, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail"!

I'd like to introduce the "Ten Essentials" which every outdoorsman should pack anytime we leave the trailhead – whether hunting, hiking or participating in any outdoor activity. These ten essentials should help us survive most any unexpected situation we may encounter. Many sources such as scouting and mountaineering manuals will provide a list of ten specific items you should carry, but I like to suggest these are *functional* items. There are multiple pieces of equipment that could satisfy each function, depending on the season or your personal preferences. And surprisingly these ten functional essentials should not take up much room in our pack. Some functions may be improvised or covered by multi-functional equipment. So let's take a look at these ten essentials and examples of equipment that you might choose to carry.

- 1) **Food** – always carry enough food or snacks to survive overnight. Nuts, bars and other trail food are a good choice.
- 2) **Water** – instead of carrying a bunch of water in your pack, consider carrying a small filter or purifier that can provide an endless source of water during your adventure.
- 3) **Shelter** – this is anything that will provide a barrier from the elements. At minimum you should carry rain gear at *all* times – lightweight gortex provides excellent protection from rain, wind and cold and compresses into a very small volume in your pack. Also a lightweight 8x10 foot tarp and accessory cord will provide for an endless arrangement of shelter options and other uses.

- 4) **Firestarter** – Having multiple sources of fire starter is a good idea such as storm matches, lighters, and flint sticks. Also prepared tinder is a great idea to help start a fire. A small candle is also very helpful.
- 5) **First Aid** – don't get crazy, but do carry the basics for cuts, abrasions, sprains and simple fractures. A roll of athletic tape, a cravat or two, a Sam's splint, a few 4x4 dressings and roller gauze are great 'stop gaps'. You can improvise all sorts of bandages with your pack and natural material.
- 6) **Sun Protection** – even with overcast conditions and especially at higher altitude, sun protection is important. Carry sunglasses, and sunscreen and use them.
- 7) **Insulation** – carry an extra layer of clothing to stay warm when conditions change. A light 'sock' hat and a pair of liner gloves should always be part of your pack. Remember "Cotton Kills" – when wet cotton will absolutely zap all of your warmth! Go with synthetics or wool.
- 8) **Navigation** – always carry a map and compass and know how to use them. GPS units are helpful, but often run out of batteries and fail when you need them most. Get familiar with your surroundings and remain aware of your location at all times. A whistle, while not navigation, is an excellent tool to signal for help and should be carried by everyone!
- 9) **Illumination** – Always carry a headlamp or flashlight with extra batteries. LED type lights now offer very bright illumination and long burn times in very small packages. When you don't carry a light, you are guaranteed to get stuck out in the dark!
- 10) **Repair** - Always carry a knife or multi-tool. Serrated edges are very practical. Be prepared to field repair any critical gear you carry. Duct tape rolled around water bottles or other equipment can be very helpful for all types of repair. Small, lightweight finger saws can be helpful in preparing shelters or improvising splints out of saplings.

Always be prepared on every outdoor adventure you engage, even if only a short hike! These "Ten Essentials" will allow you to survive overnight, uncomfortably, if you become lost, injured or stranded in an unexpected storm. On a final note regarding survival, it is almost always best to find a safe, comfortable location and remain there so that rescuers are able to locate you. Often positioning yourself near a clearing will help you remain more visible by search parties.

Author Bio

Steve Shields is the training officer for CCSAR. He is an outdoor adventure enthusiast residing in Murphys, CA who enjoys rock climbing, backcountry skiing, sailing, mountaineering and exploring the wilderness. He has a passion for search and rescue and is a long time member of the Bear Valley Ski Patrol. Steve is a certified instructor for avalanche safety, mountain travel & rescue and outdoor emergency care.

Calaveras County Search and Rescue

Calaveras County Search and Rescue (CCSAR) is an all-volunteer team working under the direction of the Calaveras County Sheriff Office. We take volunteers of all abilities ranging from support staff with no

physical requirements to field team members who will be trained in swiftwater, rope rescue, tracking, medical, search tactics and much more. Please check out our website for interest in joining. CCSAR is funded by donations – simply click on “donate” on our website. 100% of your support will directly aid Calaveras County volunteer efforts!

Website: <http://calaverassar.org/>