

Survival Priorities

1. **Positive Mental Attitude.** As attested by those who have survived wilderness emergencies, a positive mental attitude may be the most essential element in survival.
2. **First Aid.** If an injury is life threatening, such as rapid loss of blood, first aid becomes the most important thing to do.
3. **Shelter.** Extreme weather conditions, too hot or too cold, make finding or building a shelter of top importance. At such times even painful but minor injuries must wait until shelter is available. This is even more urgent if night is approaching.
4. **Fire.** Often, along with shelter, you will need a fire for warmth and signaling. Fuel should be secured and the fire started before dark.
5. **Signaling.** When you have taken the first steps in dealing with the emergency, you will need to prepare rescue signals.
6. **Water.** Under all circumstances, water is essential. You can live only a few days without it. Finding water is even more urgent when the weather is hot and dry.
7. **Food.** A person can live several weeks without food; it does not rate high as a survival priority

Reference: Wilderness Survival Merit Badge Handbook, Copyright 1984 Boy Scouts of America, 1998 Printing of the 1984 Edition, pg 9.

Five different ways of attracting attention when lost

1. A fire is certainly one of the best signaling methods. Adding green material such as leaves will make smoke which can be seen for miles on a clear day. In the summer, when fire lookouts are on duty, the slightest bit of smoke will be seen and investigated.

The flame itself will attract attention, especially on overcast days and at night. Unless the fire is on high ground, however, it will be visible only to airplanes that fly directly overhead.

2. If you have sunshine, a signal mirror can attract attention for miles, but it must be used properly. You have to aim it, and this takes practice. See the merit badge hand book for an illustration. With a buddy go out and practice until you know what you can and cannot do with a mirror.

3. Contrasting colors and motion tends to attract attention. A bright piece of cloth tied on a stick and waved can be noticed for quite a distance. If the background is dark, such as a green forest, something white can easily be seen, especially from the air. Any geometric shape in a field will attract attention.

4. Ground to Air emergency Signals. Make an X as large as possible in an area and manner that can be seen by an airplane. Green branches on white snow, tramp out the X in the snow and the shadows can be seen, stones, or strips of cloth and/or wreckage are all materials that may be used.

Ground to Air Visual Signal Codes

V – Require assistance

X – Require Medical Assistance

N – No or negative

Y – Yes or affirmative

5. Sounds can help searches on foot. Three of anything – three whistle blasts, three gunshots, three bangs of a rock against a tin pan, are all distress signals. Repeat them at intervals. While three sounds might be the distress signal, any noise in any pattern might be useful.

Whistle blasts carry a long way and every outdoor person should have a powerful whistle. It is much better than your voice alone. Yelling can only be heard a short distance. It takes considerable energy to keep yelling, and yelling can sometimes increase feelings of panic. Keep shouting to a minimum. Cry out only if you have reason to believe searchers are nearby and can hear you.

Reference: Wilderness Survival Merit Badge Handbook, Copyright 1984 Boy Scouts of America, 1998 Printing of the 1984 Edition, pgs 35-36..

How to Use a Signal Mirror

<http://www.oreida-bsa.org/Events/ontarget/UseSignal.htm>

You must be able to manage a number of things at once. Though it may seem complex at first, with practice & use, it becomes "second nature" and a valuable resource in your ability....to survive. 1) Look through the hole at your target. 2) Find the "dot" in the back mirror (usually on your hand, face, or shirt). 3) While looking at your target, arrange the mirror such that the "dot" crosses back & forth over the hole.

In other words, while looking at your target, align the reflected hole with the real hole, and you're...[ON TARGET!](#)

WARNING!

Do not flash a signal mirror towards cars, planes, etc. If you flash an airplane while you are on the mountain, you may have a HUDGE search and rescue bill. If you flash a car, you may cause a wreck or worse! **BE SURE EVERYONE IS AWARE OF THIS BEFORE SIGNALING!**

Perhaps of Interest:

To check yourself, sight in on a reflector such as a license plate, taillight, or freeway sign. they'll really "light up".

In a 15 to 20 mile range, a 3" or 4" mirror is sufficiently imposing that you not only can see it, you do see it. For greater range & brilliance, use your small mirror as a "sight" by tapping it (in the same plane) to a corner or edge of a larger mirror.

It can be used with morse code by clamping to a tripod and interrupting the continuous signal with a cardboard deflector at appropriate intervals.

This sighting method works because it lines up the mirror exactly perpendicular to a point halfway between the sun and the target (which is also halfway between the eye and the reflected hole).

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