

Shelter is Number One!

In a survival situation, nearly all survival training books claim that before a survivor does anything, he must provide shelter. A cold wind can initiate hypothermia before a survivor has a chance to worry about food or water. That is why shelter is the number one priority. Shelter is necessary to give shade, to repel wind and rain and to keep in warmth. Sleep and rest are essential, and the time and effort spent making a shelter comfortable will help aid in restful sleep. If a home is not safe or has been destroyed, there may be other undamaged buildings or homes that can be used for shelter. However, in situations like the California earthquake and Hurricane Katrina, public shelters were full and sanitation conditions were down right hazardous, as was security. In the Rocky Mountains in the middle of winter when the ground is covered in snow and the temperatures are in the single digits, sleeping outdoors requires previous, thoughtful planning. A commercial survival kit is probably inadequate.

TYPES OF SHELTERS

TUBE TENT: Small, lightweight three season protection.

Most commercial 72 hour kits have an almost bread-sack thin plastic tube tent neatly folded in a little bag. It would be wise to try and use such an arrangement, before a disaster, on a rainy windy night. Chances are it will not keep a loaf of bread warm, much less an individual. There are some tube tents that are thicker and actually have three grommets for a triangular door on each end. These tube tents will hold up much better. However, with just a little more thought and money, most planners will leave the tube tents in the store.

TARPS: A 9 x 12 tarp made by OUTDOOR takes up about as much space as a paperback book, and it weighs only 16 ounces. Packed with 50' of Para-cord it can be pitched in dozens of different ways. It can even serve as a dining fly for picnicking or regular family outings. It is not the regular plastic tarp, which is noisy, sags under rain, and becomes heavy, big and bulky under a snow load. It is a nylon polyethylene impregnated tarp with double reinforced side seams and 10 grommets. It takes a little practice to properly set up a Tarp. Some good old scout knots, such as a double half hitch, taunt line hitch, and a clove hitch will make it secure. Tent stakes are necessary, but they can be made with a knife that has a saw blade. However, tarps require two trees or poles to be pitched because the ridge line needs to be tight. Cost is about \$50.00.

Black Diamond Mega Mid: This is a pyramid shaped floorless tarp which folds down to the size of a grapefruit and weighs just over a pound. Four people can sleep under this shelter. It can hang from the center of a tree or trekking poles can be used to set it up. Cost is about \$250.

Minimalist/Ultra light shelters: Other very good, lightweight shelters are Integral Designs' Siltarp, Mombase's Outback, Equinox's UL Tarp, REI's Pro Shelter, GoLite's Shangri-la tent, and Kelty's Noah's Tarp. Some of these, including the Mega Mid, have optional bug screens which may or may not be needed. These products can be located on line by using Google. These shelters are very light weight and, if set up correctly, will a complete family. However, they are floorless and are not made to hold up in extreme weather.

Bivy Sacks: This is waterproof barrier that slips around a sleeping bag. Some are basic sacks; others offer pole-supported head space. Bivys save space and weight but may feel confining. They vary in price from \$80 to \$200.

Free-Standing BACKPACKING 3 Season and 4 Season Tents:

Eureka Zeus Classic Single Wall Tent is ideal if an individual is going to spend more than one or two nights outdoors. It has no rain fly which cuts down on weight and bulk. It is very durable and lightweight with aluminum frame shock-corded poles. Clips attach the tent body to the frame, and it sets up in 30 seconds. This tent can sleep two people through a raging rainstorm yet it only weighs 3.6 pounds. It breaks down small enough to fit in a day pack. It is free standing so it can be set up anywhere. Cost is about: \$150.

MSR Hubba Hubba: This is a 3 season tent! The entire packed weight for this two-man tent is only 4.4 pounds. It is light because they replaced the solid fabric with mesh for nice summer nights. The floor material is lighter and keeps one drier. It is very well vented and made of high tech nylon, but the light materials are more expensive. The Hubba Hubba has a full coverage rain fly. It is a Cadillac backpacking tent; there are many others that cost much less but weigh more. This is a serious tent and costs about \$380.

Jack Wolfskin: This is a 4 season tent. All-weather tents are very durable and are designed to hold up in a snow storm. This tent weighs 7.6 pounds but will hold up in just about any weather. It is scientifically designed to vent condensation in cold or high humidity weather. This is a mountaineering tent that has a bath tub floor. REI, Mountain Hardware, The North Face, and Sierra Designs are good brands. This tent ranges from \$300 to over \$600.

BACKPACKING TENT SPECS

A backpacking tent **MUST** have factory sealed seams and a full-coverage rain fly that covers the entire tent. "A bathtub" floor and vented roof with rigid, hardened aluminum shock-corded poles are essential. Most good tents have a rain fly that is also a vestibule—a place to stow wet clothes, boots, and gear.

DON'T PURCHASE cheap tents from the popular box stores. They are fine **UNLESS** the weather becomes windy, wet, or cold. They will fail under those conditions. They are not waterproof tents. As soon as a sleeping bag, coat, or person rubs up against this type of tent's wall, the item becomes wet. Quarter-inch fiberglass poles are not rigid and break. A 30 mph wind will flatten and pull the tips out of the grommets on a fiberglass pole tent. They are not made for survival. (Good tents use rigid Anodized aluminum poles.)

Kirkham's Springbar Tents

Most family camping tents are huge, heavy, and bulky. They are made to be moved in cars, trucks, or 4-wheelers. Some Springbar family tents weigh 30 pounds! If a refugee could drive a vehicle to an emergency shelter area, a good-quality family tent would be the way to go. On week-long camps, this tent holds four comfortable cots with thick foam pads and a camp table with chairs. This is a bombproof tent that holds up in any weather and is very durable. A Springbar Family Camper that sleeps 7 or 8 runs about \$650. A Springbar Outfitter 3 will comfortably hold three cots plus gear and costs about \$340.

Big Dome Tents: This is a good option but one that usually costs more. It is a geodesic type base-camp dome tent. It has at least four if not six poles running through it. Cabella's makes a reasonably priced one in different sizes. Kelty, REI, Marmot, and Mountain Hardware, also make higher end big dome tents but: Get it Cheap. Don't purchase a high-end shelter at full price. Options: There are many tent sales; also, consider internet companies. Stores go out of business and sell their inventory; check out Overstock.com; look at trailspace.com's classifieds. Buy "Last Year's" model, even used. (However, make sure it is in good condition and has no mildew.)

Bottom line: Spend a little more on your shelter and survive comfortably in any weather.