



NOVA SCOTIA GROUND SEARCH & RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Wilderness Survival Guide

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ABOUT US

NSGSAR volunteers donate their time, energy and skill to search for people who have gone missing in wooded areas or along our coastlines. They also often assist DEM with a community resource during storms, floods and other natural disasters. GSAR members receive regular training in wilderness survival, map and compass, GPS, first aid and CPR, wilderness rescue and many other subjects to ensure a successful search outcome.



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Marking a Milestone.

November 2026 marks the 57th Anniversary of Ground Search and Rescue in Nova Scotia. In November 1969, more than 400 volunteers searched for a 35-year-old father of five who had gone missing in a wooded area of the Cape Breton highlands. Thanks to the dedication and relentlessness of these volunteers, the man was found alive. The Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue organization has grown to more than 1,200 volunteers since then.

Over the years, local search and rescue agencies in North America utilizing the **Hug-A-Tree** Program have reported a significant decrease in the number of searches for lost children.

Of those who had become lost (some as young as 4 years old) a good number have been rescued because they heard an older sibling talk about “staying put so as not to get more lost”, or remembered seeing a **Hug-A-Tree** program at school, or used the whistle they carried to signal rescuers.

Our Mission Statement

Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association’s mission is to assist and give guidance to Member ground search and rescue teams, administrative and operational, in their efforts to provide a superior and dedicated level of volunteer service within the Province of Nova Scotia.



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VOLUNTEERING

Search and Rescue teams in Nova Scotia are manned entirely by volunteers. We are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond to lost person incidents in wilderness and remote settings.

We are the only resource to respond when someone is lost or injured in the woods. Additionally, we can be activated during times of natural disaster to assist local authorities.

Regular attendance at training is important, and searchers train in search techniques, map and compass, radio systems, wilderness first aid, GPS, tracking, survival and more. Lost Person Behaviour and Search Management training are also important.

Not only are searchers important, there are a wide variety of positions which need to be staffed to support the search effort. Drivers, radio people, computer operators and food services are all vital roles on a search.

Searchers are required to have their own equipment, and to be self-sufficient for 24 hours. Typically it is recommended to buy only the minimal required equipment and add to it over time.

Searching is physically and mentally demanding work, and we are often called out in the middle of the night, and in any weather. There is also nothing as rewarding as bringing that person home from the cold.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering with Search and Rescue, please contact your local team.

2025 statistics indicate that NSGSARA contributed in many ways to public safety in our Province:

- **1,275 Volunteers**
- **48 Searches**
- **41,287 Search hours**
- **40,650 Training hours**
- **667 Prevention hours**
- **76,133 Administration hours**
- **23,206 Fundraising and Public Relations**



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Hug-A-Tree and Survive



The Hug-A-Tree and Survive Program was first conceived in the mountains near San Diego, California, after a search for a nine-year-old boy that ended in his tragic death. Afterwards, a small group of those who searched for him developed a program that teaches children what to do should they get lost in a wilderness setting. This same group sincerely hopes that no child ever needs the information. But, if the contents of this program and handout are discussed with every child possible, it may help him or her to remember one or more facts that could make the search short and successful. Here is a summary of the program.

Hug a tree

Once you think you are lost, hug a tree! One of the greatest fears a person can have is being alone. Hugging a tree or other stationary object and even talking to it can help calm you down and prevent panic. By staying in one place, you are also easier to find and won't be injured in a fall.

Always carry an emergency foil blanket & whistle

Whenever you go hiking, you should always carry both a folded emergency foil blanket and a whistle on a lanyard around your neck. Your emergency foil blanket will keep you dry and warm. The whistle can be heard from farther away than your voice, even when you are yelling very loudly, and it takes far less energy than yelling.





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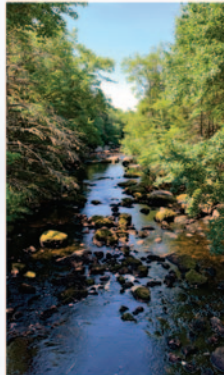
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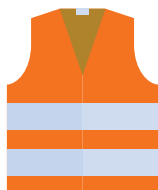
Enjoy The Outdoors and Stay Safe!

Things to Bring

Let's remember to bring our whistles, orange vests and emergency foil blankets!



Whistle



Vest



**Foil
blanket**



Colour me!

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Just For Kids



www.nasar.org



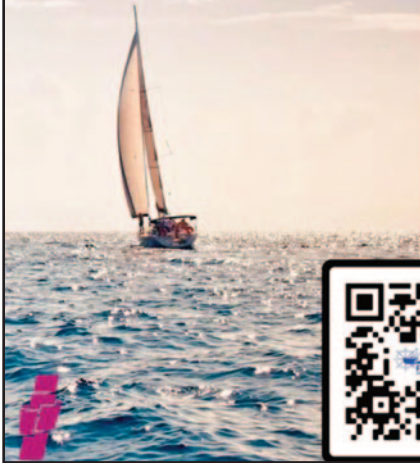
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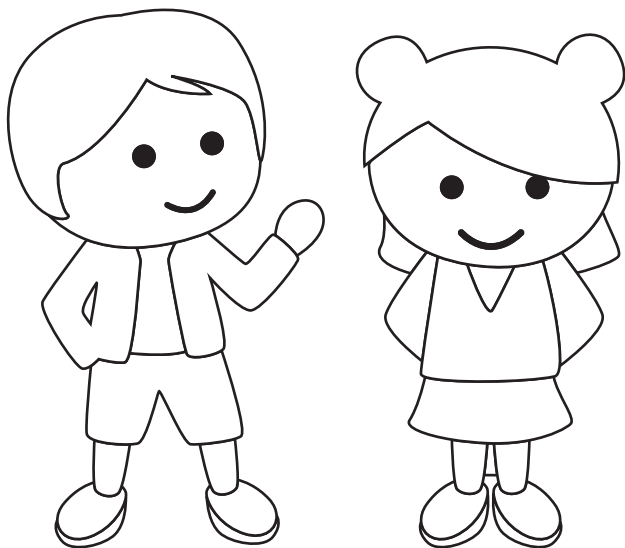


What to Wear

Wear bright clothes
– especially orange,
which is a great colour
for the woods!



Colour our clothing so we are ready for the woods!

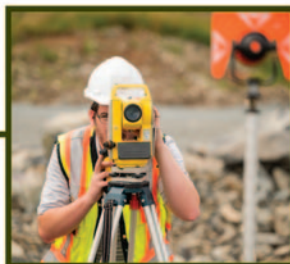


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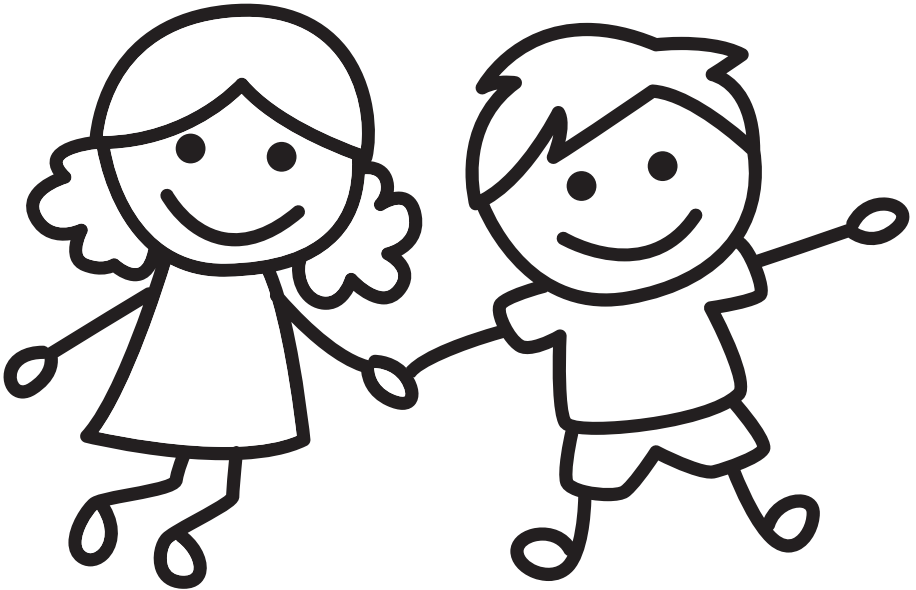
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**Don't sneak
away from
your parents**

~

**Tell them
where you
are going!**



Bring a buddy with you when you go outside.

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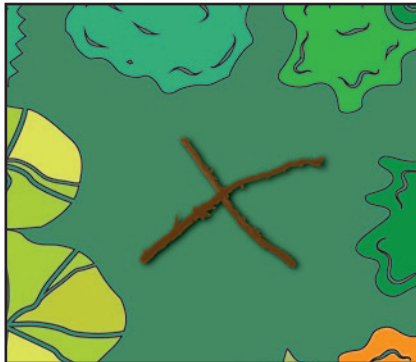
Help Searchers Find You

If you are near a clearing, make a big sign so searchers can see it from the air.



Use rocks to make a big SOS

Or drag branches to make an X



It is always best to **stay near a tree and wait for rescue**. Do not wander to find a clearing.

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**Hug a tree, stay put,
don't wander off!**



Just For Kids





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Help Searchers Find You



**Use your whistle
to call for help.**

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What if...?

What if I have no food?

You can last a very, very long time without eating. If you hug your tree and make yourself big, we will find you well before you need food. A searcher will bring you food and water. You do not need to look for it.

Can I eat some plants or berries if I get hungry?

No! They could make you very sick.

What if I want water?

Should I drink from a stream?

No! Stay away from streams, ponds, and lakes because you might fall in. A searcher will find you and bring you water.

Should I carry matches to start a fire so I can keep warm?

No! It is dangerous to start a fire. It could turn into a forest fire that could hurt you and the searchers coming to find you. A safety blanket or trash bag will keep you warm.

Should I climb a tree so that I can see better?

No! You might fall and get hurt! And it will be much easier for searchers to find you on the ground.

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Stay Safe!



What if...?

What if I hear a scary sound?

A sound that you do not recognize could be either someone searching for you or an animal. Either way, you should blow your whistle or yell at it. If it's a searcher, he or she will hear you and you'll be found. If it is an animal, your whistle or yell will scare it away.

What if a bear comes to eat me?

Animals will not come to you. Even hunters have trouble finding them! If you think you hear an animal, blow your whistle or yell at it. If it is an animal, your whistle or yell will scare it away.

What if I see a snake?

If you see a snake, back away and stay away! If you suddenly see it and it is very close to you, stop, and stay still until it goes away. Never play with a snake or try to poke it with anything.

What about lightning?

The tall trees are "papa" trees, and the short ones are "baby" trees, and the middles ones are "mama" trees. Lightning usually strikes the tallest object. So when choosing your tree, choose a mama or baby tree.

Don't pick the tallest, or "papa" trees to hug. And make sure to pick a tree in a "family" (grove) of many trees.

Does it cost my parents money to have searchers find me?

Searchers are mainly volunteers who work with other professionals and do not charge for their services. They search for you because they care about you very much, and they want to help.

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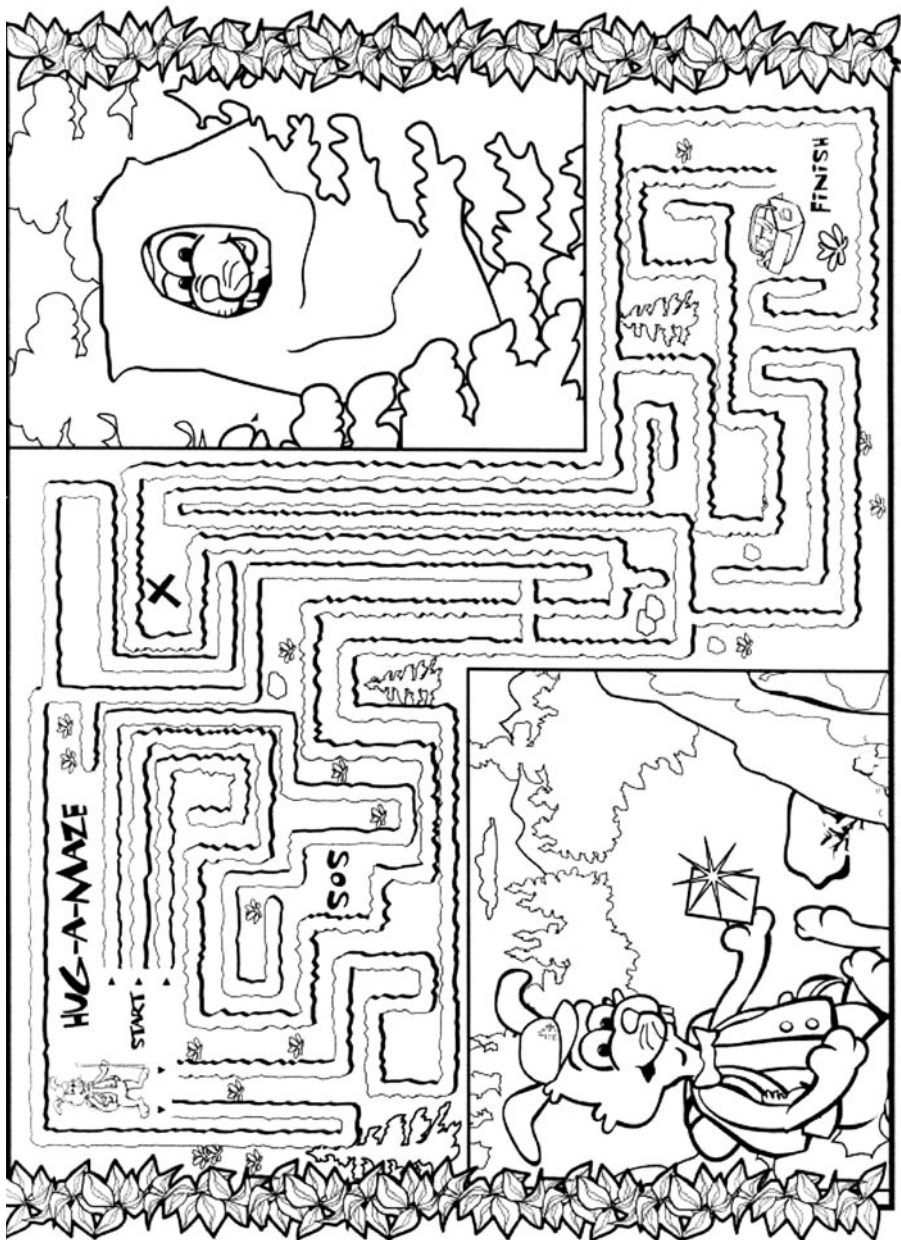
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WHAT JOHN DID WHEN HE GOT LOST

Q1: What did he do when he got lost?

A: He stayed put and **HUGGED-A-TREE!**

Q2: How did he pick a tree?

A: He avoided tall trees all by themselves which can attract lightning during a thunderstorm. Instead, he picked one he could put his arms around near a clearing in the woods and didn't wander around looking for the perfect tree.

Q3: What did he make at the base of his tree?

A: He gathered branches with plenty of leaves and needles on them to make a nest, to insulate him from the cold ground.

Q4: Where did John find his fold-up silver foil blanket?

A: In his pocket, so you should also carry one when you go camping, have a picnic, or go on a hike.

Q5: How did the searchers find out which way John went?

A: They used the tracks that his shoes made on the ground, which are called footprints. Sometimes, this is the only clue as to which way you've gone. You can make an imprint of a child's hiking shoe or boot by pressing down on a piece of aluminum foil placed on a carpet or folded towel and keeping this imprint in a safe place. Well patterned soles make great imprints.

Q6: What else did the footprint give the searchers?

A: John's scent. Wherever he went, he left a trace scent. People cannot smell it but search and rescue dogs can and they were able to find John. All these smart dogs want to do is find you and be your friend. They usually wear a bright orange vest and will protect you until the other searchers arrive.

Q7: What other ways did John attract the searchers attention?

A: He yelled and used his whistle.

Q8: There is a special way to make a signal when you're in trouble. What is it?

A: You can blow your whistle or bang the tree in threes.

Q9: What would you do if you heard a sound in the dark that scared you?

A: I'd yell at it or better yet, blow my whistle to scare it off if it's an animal. This would also be a signal if the sounds are from searchers.

Q10: What is another way of signaling?

A: Another way to signal for help is with visual signals. When you use them, remember that your eyes see movement better than anything else. So, any signal has to move.

Q11: What are some visual signals?

A: Signal mirrors, flashlights, waving some bright cloths and making yourself big.



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WHAT JOHN DID WHEN HE GOT LOST (continued)

Q12: What if you see or hear an airplane or helicopter, what should you do?

A: Get in a clearing and make yourself BIG!

Q13: How do you do that?

A: You lie on the ground, wave a bright cloth or make big arrows, an “X” or “S.O.S.” sign on the ground.

Q14: Should you eat berries and plants?

A: NO! You have to be an expert to tell the good ones from the bad. Especially, never eat wild mushrooms. They may be poison. It is also not a good idea to eat a lot if you do not have any water to drink. It will only make you thirstier.

Q15: Is it okay to eat snow if you’re thirsty?

A: NO! Snow will make you even thirstier. What you can do is melt a small bit in your hand and drink the water.

Q16: What should you wear in the woods?

A: Clothes that have long sleeves and legs, a wind breaker, a hat, sneakers and socks. These will protect you from the sun, insects, and help keep you warm. You could always take something off if you are warm, but you can’t put something on if you don’t have it.

Q17: Should you wear army-style camouflage clothing?

A: NO! It is designed to make a soldier hard to see, not a good thing for you when you are lost. Wear bright colours like red, yellow or hunter orange.

Q18: How can you keep from getting lost like John did?

A:

- Stay within the bounds set by the adult in charge of you.
- Never wander off by yourself!
- Always use the buddy system.
- Always tell an adult where you are going and go there.
- Always watch where you are going and look where you have been.
- Do not follow wild animals, birds, or insects. They are afraid of you and will always run away.
- Do not take dares! People who make dares are usually too chicken to do it themselves.

Q19: What about the searchers?

A: Searchers travel in groups and it is okay to talk to them and to go with them. They will know your name because they are not strangers, they are your friends. These searchers could be looking for you and need your help: the police or fire department; the army and air force search and rescue techs; volunteer ground search and rescue personnel; YOUR PARENTS. And of course, search and rescue dogs.

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CODE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Enjoy the outdoors safely. It's your responsibility.

Each year in Canada, approximately 2,000 outdoor recreation mishaps require ground and inland water search and rescue and many result in injuries and/or death. Many of these incidents are preventable and it is an individual responsibility to be prepared. Complete a trip plan and leave it with someone responsible, ensure that you have the skills required and take the right equipment before heading out.

Canada's search and rescue system uses a combination of public, private and volunteer resources to respond to ground and inland water incidents across the country. As part of this, a network of skilled search and rescue volunteers assist the police and agencies to locate and rescue those in need. These dedicated, unpaid, professionals are trained in Ground Search and Rescue, Swift Water Rescue, Rope Rescue, Tracking, Avalanche Response and Mountain Rescue.

If you require search and rescue assistance on ground or inland waters, please contact your local/regional police services.

For more information on how to enjoy your outdoor activity safely, visit www.adventuresmart.ca



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AVOID DEATH AND INJURY IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Too often, people realize too late that the outdoor activity they are involved with could lead to injury and/or death!

Adjust your plan when circumstances change

- Are you prepared when the weather changes?
- What will you do if you run out of daylight?
- What will you do if your partner or other members of your group become ill or injured?

Prepare for Emergencies

- Will you stay warm and dry no matter what happens?
- Are your 10 essentials and other necessary equipment in good working order?
- Have you practised using all your equipment?

Have you:

- Checked the weather?
- Told someone where you're going?

Do you:

- Know what to do if you get lost?





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OUTDOOR TRAVEL TIPS

Be prepared for your chosen recreation

Being fit enough to go the distance takes physical preparation. Stick to your turnaround time. Take the proper equipment, have a trip plan and use reference and guide books.

Always carry the essentials

If necessary, be ready to stay out overnight.

Complete a trip plan and leave it with a friend

The trip plan explains your destination, the route you are taking, who is in the group and your return time. If you do not return as planned, the friend you left the trip plan with can give the form to the police to initiate a search. Get the **Adventure Smart Trip Plan** app at **Google Play** or the **App Store**.

Never hike alone

Hike with a group and keep together. Travel at the speed of the slowest person. If a person becomes separated by going ahead or falling behind, they are more likely to become lost.

Do not panic

Maintain a positive mental attitude if you become lost. Being lost is not dangerous if you are prepared.

Stay where you are

People who carry on after they become lost usually get further from the trail and further from the people who are looking for them. Also, going downhill often leads to natural drainage gullies which typically have very thick bush, expansive cliffs and waterfalls making travel and searching more difficult.

Use signalling devices

Blowing a whistle, lighting a fire and staying visible will help searchers find you. Help searchers find you even if you are embarrassed or afraid. Remember that animals will not be attracted to your signals. Searchers may also use planes or helicopters – make yourself visible to them.

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Build or seek shelter

Protect yourself from the rain, wind and excessive sun. Be as comfortable as possible, but when it is daylight, make sure you are visible to searchers in helicopters or planes.

The most common mistake

An individual's belief that "it could never happen to me" is summed up as EGO. By being prepared, you can enjoy your trip outdoors regardless of what nature throws at you!

I HAD THE 10 ESSENTIALS AND SURVIVED

Are you prepared and equipped to spend the night outdoors if you get lost?

Many people who have an outdoor misadventure quickly point out that having and using the 10 essentials allowed them to survive!

- 1 Flashlight, spare batteries and bulb
- 2 Fire making kit – waterproof matches/lighter, firestarter/candle
- 3 Signalling device – whistle or mirror to signal searchers if you become lost
- 4 Extra food and water – 1 litre/person
- 5 Extra clothing (rain, wind, water protection and toque)
- 6 Navigational/communication aids (maps, compass, GPS, charts, cellular phone, hand held radio – fully charged) and know how to use these items
- 7 First Aid Kit and know how to use it
- 8 Emergency shelter – orange tarp, large orange garbage bag, or emergency foil blanket which can also be used as signalling devices
- 9 Pocket knife
- 10 Sun protection (glasses, sunscreen, hat)

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MY OUTDOOR ACTIVITY PLANS, EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Complete this form prior to an outdoor adventure and leave it with a responsible person. Your life may depend on it!

Start:

<i>Day of Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Time</i>

Intended Return:

<i>Day of Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Time</i>

Purpose of Trip:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day Hike | <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 Day Hike |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overnight Hike | <input type="checkbox"/> Climbing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/Kayaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Mushroom Picking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Route Plan A

Specific Area: _____
 Intended Route in (be specific): _____

 Intended Route out (be specific): _____

 Destination: _____

Route Plan B – Alternate

Specific Area: _____
 Intended Route in (be specific): _____

 Intended Route out (be specific): _____

 Destination: _____

Transportation to and from the starting point:

Vehicle Licence No: _____
 Make/Model: _____ Colour: _____
 Owner: _____

or dropped off at starting point by:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

To be picked up at end point by:

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Time: _____ Date: _____
 Location: _____

<p>Equipment/Supplies taken:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit <input type="checkbox"/> Whistle <input type="checkbox"/> Skis <input type="checkbox"/> Water <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight <input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoes <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Clothing <input type="checkbox"/> Firestarter <input type="checkbox"/> Avalanche Beacon <input type="checkbox"/> Stove <input type="checkbox"/> Sun Protection <input type="checkbox"/> Tent (colour): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Food (days per person): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Radio (frequency channel): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Signaling Device: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Locator Beacon (PLB#) <input type="checkbox"/> Cellular Phone No.: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Firearms: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> RV, ATV, Boat, Snowmobile (description): _____ _____ _____
--

DESCRIPTION OF THIS TRIP'S MEMBERS

	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4
Last Name				
First Name				
D.O.B.				
Height				
Weight				
Hair and Skin				
Family Doctor				
Hat Colour				
Coat Colour				
Shirt/Sweater Colour				
Pack Colour				
Pant Colour				
Footwear Type & Size				
Allergies				
Medications				
Emergency Contact				
Map				
Transceivers				
Shovel				
Probes				
Communication				
Navigation				
Survival Training				
First Aid/Certification				
Ability B/N/E				

The following will be notified if I/we change destination:

Name: Address:

Home Phone: Work Phone:

Please notify the police if I/we do not return by:

Date: Time:

Signature: Date:

Detach and leave with a friend

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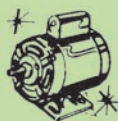


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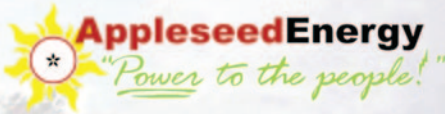
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For Parents

Children are easily distracted and will wander off a trail, so it is important to teach them early to stay ON the trail at all times. Never let a child walk a trail alone. Teach your child to pick out a visible landmark such as a prominent hill, or note the direction of the sun, to stay oriented to direction.

Footprint your child

It only takes a few minutes but it can cut down search time by several hours. Place a piece of aluminum foil on a soft folded towel, have the child step on it with both feet, and mark the foil with the child's name. With these prints, trackers can differentiate one child's track from others and quickly determine the direction of travel.

Call for help right away

If your child is lost, it is important to act quickly. Because the child is likely moving, the search area becomes larger and larger the longer you wait to bring in expert assistance. A delay in calling for help is also very dangerous when the weather is bad. It can wipe out the child's tracks and increase the danger of exposure. Don't worry about calling too early and having to cancel the request for assistance. Searchers won't mind the practice and it helps them stay alert.

Be available for interviewing

Clues that lead to finding a lost child early usually come from family and friends who remain on the scene and talk openly and accurately with those managing the search. Keep in mind that any and all information provided can mean the difference between success and tragedy, and it will be kept confidential.

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Nutrition

In order to safely participate in any outdoor activity, kids need to properly fuel and hydrate their bodies. Before they head outside, feed your kids a nutritious snack such as a piece of fruit, yogurt, a handful of nuts and some water or juice to hydrate them and pump up their energy stores. Pack an additional nutritious snack and water for them to take along.

Keep Your Kids Safe in the Sun

- Stay out of the sun between 11a.m. and 3p.m.
- Liberally apply "waterproof" sunscreen on or near the water - remember to re-apply again after swimming.
- A hat, sunglasses, long-sleeved shirt, and pants protect kids from the sun more thoroughly than sunscreen.

Dehydration

Your child's normal daily fluid intake requirement can be significantly affected by exercise, sweating, heat or altitude. Kids should drink fluids, such as water, before, during and after any physical activity. Set a pace that allows your child's body to adapt to the heat and/or altitude. Be sure to monitor your kids' hydration and don't make them wait for a drink if they tell you that they feel thirsty – that feeling indicates that the dehydration process has already started.

Frostbite

Kids are at high risk for frostbite, which usually affects areas of the body that are exposed to the cold. Though it usually affects fingers, toes, ears, noses and cheeks, frostbite can happen to any exposed skin. Help prevent frostbite by dressing your kids in layers and monitoring them during exposure to cold weather. CAUTION: Do not rub frostbitten skin!

Hypothermia

Hypothermia sets in after long exposure to low temperatures, wind and moisture, and can happen when out hiking, on the ski hill, or in cold water. Dress your kids properly for the conditions – in layers and with a hat – to help prevent hypothermia.

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BEING PREPARED & THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVAL

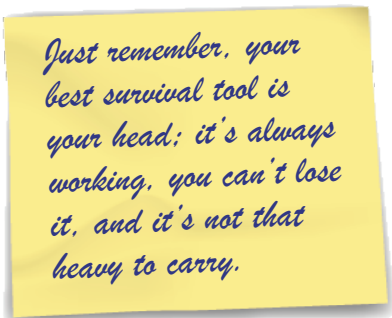
Psychology of Survival

Survival begins with the will to live. Many recorded rescues have shown that strength, knowledge or equipment were not always the deciding factor in a survival situation. Instead, a strong will to live and a good mental attitude made the difference between life and death.

“BE PREPARED”

The motto of Scouts is the basic rule for survival. But it does not just mean carrying a survival kit; it also refers to having a “prepared attitude”.

In a survival situation, the first threat to your life will not be the lack of shelter, water or food, but how you deal with one of man’s basic instincts, the fight or flight reflex. This is an instant decision on your part to either stand and face a threat or to run. Your reflex is triggered by FEAR, and how you react to the trigger will determine whether or not you survive. The best way to handle fear is to learn the knowledge, then practice the skills you will need to survive. By learning how to utilize everything possible from nature; attract attention so rescuers can find you; and above all, how to control your emotions and keep a clear mind, you will be able to react in a quick and positive manner to a stressful situation and be less likely to just sit down in confusion, crying “Why me?” Take the time to appraise your situation, your physical condition and the resources available. Every decision you make will be important, so think before you act. Resist the urge to feel sorry for yourself and instead concentrate on making your stay as tolerable as possible. Obviously, this sounds easier than it is, but consider the alternative. Survival is not by chance; it is by discipline – a discipline of attitude, thought and action.



Just remember, your best survival tool is your head; it's always working, you can't lose it, and it's not that heavy to carry.

All the teaching in the world will be of little use to you if you cannot concentrate on the task at hand. Make no mistake, to accomplish this in a survival situation will not be as easy as it sounds, but if you tell yourself that you will be found, the searchers are assembling, and you realize that it’s your responsibility to aid in your own rescue, then you will have defeated the greatest danger to your survival; fear and panic! Just remember your best survival tool is your head; it’s always working, you can’t lose it, and it’s not that heavy to carry.



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PAIN & INJURY

Pain & Injury

Pain, your body's response to injury, can be very disabling. Despite this, when threatened with danger, your body can at times momentarily mask pain. For example, while gingerly limping along on your sprained ankle, you meet a skunk and it rears its tail at you. No doubt you will find yourself running as though your ankle was never hurt. This is not to say that you should ignore the cause of your pain, but that by keeping yourself busy, you may be able to use this masking ability to help manage it and keep it from weakening your will to go on. Any injuries, even minor cuts, sprains, or bruising can drain you physically as well as emotionally and should be dealt with immediately. With that in mind, it is recommended that you take first-aid training offered by St. John Ambulance or the Red Cross.



Pain, injuries, extreme temperatures, fatigue, anxiety, psychological trauma such as fear, and the loss of body heat and fluids are all aggravating factors that will increase the risk of your body going into shock. Shock is the depression of the nervous system brought about by a reduction in the volume of blood and body fluids available for circulation throughout the body. Immediate attention to injuries and the retention of your body's heat and fluids, while avoiding fatigue, are

vital. Just being in a survival situation can lead you into shock, so do the tasks suggested throughout this manual and reassure yourself that help is on the way. It is your responsibility to be alive when it arrives! (Fortunately, the chances of survival-related shock are diminished as you master the skills needed to survive.)

In addition to physical and psychological discomforts, insects such as black flies or mosquitoes may also have to be dealt with, especially at dawn and dusk. The best ways of dealing with them are to tuck in and zip up all your clothing, spread mud on your hands and face if need be and if possible, make a smudge fire by burning green wood or leaves to produce an insect-repelling smoke.

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COLD INJURIES

Cold Injuries

With an average body temperature of 37°C (98.6°F), cooler temperatures found in the outdoors can expose you to cold injuries, make pain, thirst and hunger seem worse, and sap your ability to think and your will to go on. Factors contributing to such cold injuries as exposure and frostbite are:

- Dampness and temperature of your environment
- Wind velocity
- Age, size and physical condition
- Degree of protection your outer clothing and a shelter can provide

Exposure

Exposure, the common term for hypothermia, is the lowering of your body's temperature due to cold external temperatures or wind-chill, which is the combination of air temperature and wind velocity. The effects of either can be dramatically increased if you become wet. Hypothermia is a year-round threat, as the forest is always cooler than your body and the slightest breeze will cool your skin and remove much needed moisture. That is just how a fan cools you in the summer.

A body temperature of 34 or 35°C (about 93.2 to 95°F), which is the temperature of a very hot day, represents the transition from mild to moderate hypothermia. Your body will attempt to conserve heat by drawing it away from your extremities to protect your vital organs. You will begin to shiver intensely, slur your speech, feel exhausted and sleepy, be clumsy and unable to walk a 9m (30 ft) line properly – the best self field test for early hypothermia. Worse yet, your ability to reason will deteriorate.

Shivering, which is a rapid uncontrollable muscle movement, is your body's automatic method of heat creation that causes the muscles to “burn” (metabolize) blood sugar to produce internal heat, thus warming your body's core. Unfortunately, shivering uses up your body's stores of “fuel”, just as any other work does. It is better to use your limited blood sugar to work towards getting into shelter, rather than counting on shivering to warm you. When you stop shivering from exposure, you are either adequately warm or so hypothermic that your body function has been severely impaired. This occurs at about 32°C (about 90°F) and means you are well on your way to death!

continued...



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The best treatment for hypothermia is prevention. Keep warm and dry. To reduce heat loss, do up all buttons and zippers, tuck your shirt and jacket into the top of your pants, tuck your pants into your socks, pull your shirt and coat collars up, cover your head, then insulate yourself from the ground and keep out of the wind. If your fingers or toes are cold, wiggling them won't make them warm, but exercising the large muscles of your arms and legs will. To warm your hands, swing your arms vigorously or put them in your armpits or groin. Keeping your big muscles moving will help create heat, but at the same time do not overdo it and cause sweating or increased fatigue by overheating or overexerting yourself.

Frostbite

Any conditions that promote hypothermia can lead to frostbite. Frostbite is the formation of ice crystals within skin tissues, causing them to freeze. It is usually limited to the regions furthest from your body's core; hands, feet, face, ears, bottom of your chin or the tip of your nose. Frostbite occurs when blood flow to these regions is reduced as a result of hypothermia or from constricting garments.

Exposure to wind dramatically increases the risk of frostbite. So, in strong winds, cover your nose, cheeks and ears with any piece of warm fabric.

The first sign of surface frostbite (also called superficial frostbite or frostnip) affects only the skin and often starts with a prickly feeling. Next, waxy white to grey patches form and the skin feels cold and numb, although the tissues beneath are still soft. If a white patch appears, warm it by skin-to-skin contact with your hand until it turns red and then keep it well protected. Do not rub the affected areas vigorously with your hands or rub oils, snow or ice on it as this will only result in further damage to the frozen tissues.

If not treated, superficial frostbite will progress to become deep frostbite, with the skin turning hard and pebbly. It will become painful, red, swollen and then blister before deadening. The result can be the loss of part or all of the frostbitten parts of your body in the final stages. Again, do not rub the extremities; instead, use your body's heat. At this stage, it is best not to do any unnecessary exercise since it will cause the cold blood from your frozen extremity to flow to the inner body, further reducing your core temperature and speeding up hypothermia.



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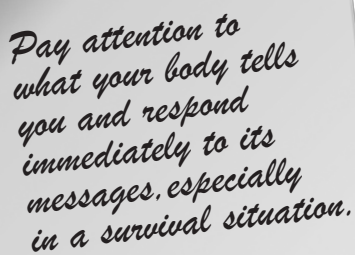
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HEAT STRESSES & WINDBURN

Overheating your body by overexposure to the sun's heat or through overexertion will result in the excessive loss of valuable body fluids and salts through heavy sweating, causing a chemical imbalance called "heat cramps". Your stomach will feel upset and you will begin to experience muscle cramps in your extremities and abdomen. Immediately rest in the shade, loosen your clothes and drink water to replace your body's losses.

If you ignore these warning signs, your condition will advance to a circulatory imbalance called "heat exhaustion". Your skin will appear pale and feel cold and clammy, your pulse will be weak but regular, and your breathing will be rapid and shallow. You will feel weaker; suffer from further nausea, possibly vomiting, headaches, blurred vision and dizziness. Immediately remove excess clothing, lie flat in the shade, elevate your feet and drink plenty of water. If you push your body further, you will advance to a nervous system imbalance called "heat stroke". At this point, you may be beyond self-help, but if you can, you must cool yourself quickly or you will die! Therefore, it is imperative that you pay attention to what your body tells you and respond immediately to its messages, especially in a survival situation.



Pay attention to what your body tells you and respond immediately to its messages, especially in a survival situation.

Exposing skin to winds can result in a windburn, while exposure to reflected or direct sunlight during a bright or even cloudy day in the summer or winter can cause sun burning of any exposed skin. Not only will these add to your discomfort, but they will increase the loss of your body's fluids, so every precaution should be taken to limit your exposure, either by taking advantage of shade or natural wind breaks. By covering any exposed skin from the sun and wind, you not only reduce the risk of skin irritation, but you also reduce the risk of suffering from hypothermia and frostbite in the winter months. As you can see, the threat of fluid and salt loss through perspiration and evaporation are always present and **MUST BE CONSIDERED** before you attempt to do anything in a survival situation!

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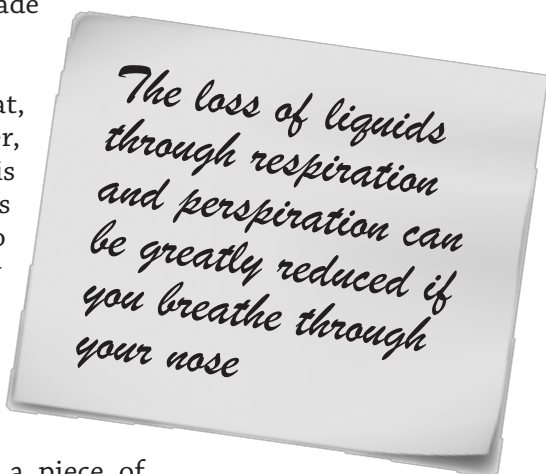


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DEHYDRATION

Every day, your body uses 2-3 litres of water: humidifying your skin and the air you breathe, sweating to cool itself, digesting food and removing body wastes. As a result, you can only survive for about three days without this precious fluid. As your water losses exceed your intake, you will begin to show signs of dehydration; thirst, dry tongue, tiredness, nausea, sleepiness and infrequent, dark yellow urination. In addition, you will increase your susceptibility to fatigue, hypothermia, and in the winter, frostbite. Therefore, rationing water losses rather than rationing water intake is essential in a survival situation. The loss of liquids through respiration and perspiration can be greatly reduced if you breathe through your nose, wear head cover, keep your shirt on, work in the shade at a slow pace, and rest often.

Remember, "Ration your sweat, not your water!" In the winter, the danger of dehydration is even greater. Your body is fighting a constant battle to humidify your skin and the dry cold air entering your lungs. You can help by covering all exposed skin where possible, while at the same time, being careful not to overheat yourself. Breathing through a piece of



The loss of liquids through respiration and perspiration can be greatly reduced if you breathe through your nose

fabric will also help pre-humidify and warm the air entering your lungs. Dehydration thickens your blood, slowing circulation in your fine blood vessels. This will reduce warmth to your extremities and increase the risk of hypothermia and frostbite. While fighting off the cold, your body will also burn up its blood sugar and fat reserves, causing the kidneys to work overtime.

Eating causes your body to pull water into the digestive system, then to the kidneys to remove waste products through the urine. With urine accounting for the largest loss of your body's water supply, it is best to refrain from eating the first day when lost. Limiting your consumption to a bare minimum when water is scarce will reduce the amount of water required by your kidneys.

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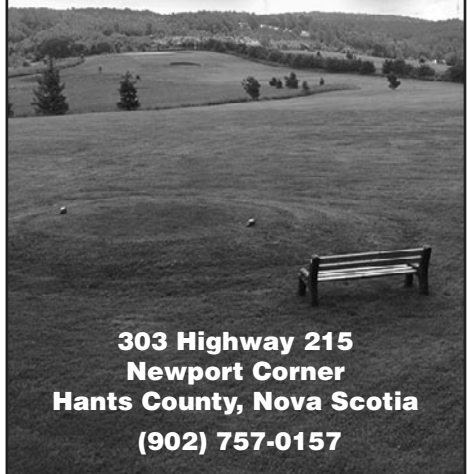


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DEHYDRATION

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In Canada's wilderness, most lakes, rivers and streams provide safe drinking water, with the notable exception of stagnant water or cedar swamps. Despite this, certain precautions should be taken before drinking any water, no matter how clean and clear it appears. Always look for any dead fish or wildlife in or near the water that could transfer micro-organisms or intestinal parasites into it and cause you to suffer from diarrhea, abdominal cramps or vomiting, thus increasing the threat of dehydration and the depleting of your body's salts. Also be careful not to fall in, as any source of water can be dangerous. Remember, it is more important that you prevent dehydration than it is to fear the quality of water in lakes, rivers and streams in Canada.

If there is no body of water nearby, you can collect morning dew or rain from plants, by dragging a piece of cloth through them, then sucking water from the cloth. You can also tie a plastic bag over a live tree branch during the day. Water will condense inside the bag.

Another source of water is snow, but it poses its own dangers. Do not eat snow! Your body uses its heat and fluids to melt it, thus increasing your risk of hypothermia. Use a fire or the heat from your hands to melt snow. The soft, loose upper snow makes very little water for its volume. Use the deeper layers of snow that are more granular. They will yield more water when melted. Wherever you obtain your water, remember to drink it in small sips, large gulps will make a dehydrated person vomit, causing you not only to lose more fluids, but also valuable body salts.

Never drink salt water, even in small quantities, as the salts in it will draw further water from your blood and tissues into your digestive tract to enable it to dissolve the salt crystals in the sea water. You will thereby only increase your body's dehydration. Despite this, salt is essential for human survival. Your body loses salt when you sweat and urinate.

Suffering from salt deficiency can cause muscle cramps, dizziness, nausea and tiredness. In most survival situations, you will not be able to replace the salts lost so the key is to reduce your salt losses. To accomplish this and reduce the threat of dehydration, it is important that unless absolutely necessary, you do not wander in search of water. Instead, stay put, stay calm and stay rested to conserve your sweat and urine.

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HUNGER & HYPOGLYCEMIA

Like thirst, hunger can affect your judgement and undermine your will to survive. During the first 24 to 48 hour period, your stomach will experience strong hunger pangs as the body begins to use its carbohydrate and fat reserves. Despite this, if you are healthy, uninjured, and limit your physical activity, your body can function without food for up to 30 days. Physical exertion and the surrounding temperature affect your feelings of hunger. Extreme heat, which decreases the quantity of fuel needed to keep the body going, discourages hunger. Cold on the other hand, stimulates it, because the body needs more fuel to offset heat loss in a cold environment. Generally, the body registers hunger when there is a physical need for food. Most people are conditioned to eat at certain times of the day, and their bodies produce the appropriate feelings on schedule. The best ways to defeat hunger pangs are to keep your mind busy on the task at hand, sleep or drink water. However, you must be cautious not to drink large quantities of water, as it will dilute the salt reserves in your body, resulting in stomach cramps or inducing vomiting, which will only increase your risk of dehydration.

If you do eat, your stomach and intestines will require water for digestion. If none is available, your body will draw the needed water from your blood, causing it to thicken. This will slow the circulation in your fine blood vessels, reducing warmth to your extremities, thereby increasing the risk of shock as well as the risk of hypothermia and frostbite during cold weather. Consequently, a shortage of water will require you to limit the amount of food you eat. If you do have any food, DO NOT eat it on the first day of survival. Instead, wait for the next day and then only eat small amounts slowly to get the greatest benefit from it.

Another threat is hypoglycemia; that is, the abnormal decrease of sugar in the blood, where it is used as a very important source of energy. Anyone, especially children who have been subjected to extreme physical exertion or complete abstinence from food for twelve to thirty-six hours, can become very unresponsive or mentally dull. Failure to replace the body's depleted stores of sugar (glycogen) may lead to vomiting, twitching, convulsions, or coma.

Food or plain sugar is the best way to treat hypoglycemia. In a survival situation, it is unlikely you will have ready access to either, so prevention is your only option. Think before you act, to conserve your strength, and never overexert yourself! Conservation of your body's heat, water supply and strength are your primary concerns. If food is available, limit your consumption to a minimum to help prevent hypoglycemia.



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FATIGUE, LONELINESS & BOREDOM

When both physically and psychologically exhausted, you will begin to act carelessly and experience feelings of hopelessness, frustration and boredom to the point where your only desire is to lie down and die to escape from a situation you feel is too difficult to face. You are experiencing fatigue and your mental ability to cope with the stresses of survival can be reduced as a result of it.

When you are inactive, fear, loneliness and boredom will start to creep up on you and threaten to be overwhelming. The best way to overcome fear and panic is to keep your mind active. Take stock of your situation and plan out the next day's activities. Mentally look for ways you can improve your shelter, to make your stay more comfortable and help searchers find you. If you start to feel lonely, talk out loud to the tree you have befriended (hugged). It's alive and it won't talk back. Try to avoid a "Why me!?" outlook on the situation. Instead, think of all the people out there looking for you and how you can help them find you alive!

To help deal with boredom, as well as keep warm while inside your shelter, tense up all your muscles for 5 – 10 seconds, and then relax them. Repeat this exercise with your feet and hand muscles to warm them also. Remember if you exercise outside your shelter, you should do so in a sheltered area and only enough to warm up. If you get wet or stay out in the wind too long, the heat loss that could result may outweigh the benefits of exercise. Overdoing it could lead to physical exhaustion, thus speeding up fatigue, so be careful. To avoid the effects of fatigue, you must think before you act to help reduce physical exhaustion, while at the same time keeping your mind active on the tasks at hand. Think of all the people working hard to find you.

SHELTER

With heat loss being your greatest threat, finding or constructing a shelter to keep you dry and out of the wind the first day is critical to your survival. Man made shelters such as the tepee, the lean-to, the tripod, the snow trench, the quinsy, to name a few, all provide the best overall chance for prolonged survival, but may require some advance training and practice to perfect.

If daylight and conditions permit, you could look for a natural shelter, like the windless side of an overhanging rock, a cave, the spreading roots and

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trapped earth at the base of a fallen tree, the fallen tree itself, a hollow log, or a niche under an evergreen tree. Remember these are also the natural homes for wildlife, so caution is required.

A simple shelter can be constructed right at the base of the tree you have befriended (hugged). First, pick a tree near an opening in the forest that is on fairly level high ground where you can see and be seen. Avoid solitary trees as there is the risk of attracting lightning, and check above your head for dead branches or trees hung up just waiting for a strong breeze to drop them. Look for branches low to the ground on your tree or nearby to supply ample shelter and bed making material. Also look out for bee or hornet nests in the branches or at the base of the tree.

Do not choose a site near trails leading to water, as these are often routes used by animals. Locating close to water has its benefits, but if you are too close, you can be troubled by insects and during storms, could be subjected to winds coming off the water or flash floods caused by heavy rainfall. The sound of running water can also drown out the sound of search parties.

While working slowly and remembering to take frequent rest, start your shelter by breaking evergreen boughs or leaf covered branches off other trees and arranging them with the heavy ends of the branches leaning against and encircling the base of your tree to make a teepee-style shelter. The leaves or needles will naturally shed rain, as well as act as a windbreak. Your shelter should be just big enough for you to fit into snugly, to help conserve the heat radiating from your body.

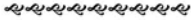
Build a windbreak for the entrance and if needed, build a roof out of boughs, sticks, logs, leaves, moss, snow or anything that will keep the cold air out. The opening should ideally face east or south-east for the warmth of the morning sun.

In the winter, pick a medium-sized evergreen tree with branches close to the ground that has snow piled around. Dig out a trench around the trunk or, if a large branch is buried in the snow, dig a pocket just big enough for you beneath it, using the branch as a roof. Snow is an excellent insulator and windbreak but try to avoid contact with it because it cools the body.

No matter what type of shelter you find, you should build a nest or bed out of evergreen boughs or leaves to provide insulation from the cold and damp ground. Take special care in constructing the nest or bed. Select boughs from ground level and work around the tree.

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FIRE

Only after you have slowed your heat loss should you concern yourselves with heat again. While psychologically a fire can mean security, peace of mind and safety, all while keeping you warm, drying clothes, boiling water, or signaling for help, it can also burn you, your clothing, your shelter or the forest, so treat it with the respect it deserves. Check your local library for books on wilderness survival or the “Field Book for Canadian Scouting” to become familiar with the methods used to start and use different types of fires.

As well as knowing how to build a fire, you need to know when to use one in a survival situation and when not to use one. Always take into consideration the conditions in the forest and the ground cover surrounding you. Never build a fire on dead leaves, pine needles, or peat moss, or leave it unattended when the forest is very dry. You could have a forest fire to deal with! Build your fire on sand, earth or gravel and don't make it too large. Small fires require less fuel, are easier to control and their heat can be concentrated. In cold weather, small fires arranged in a circle around you are more effective than one large fire. A fire can also act as a weather indicator. When smoke rolls low off the fire, it means a low-pressure weather front is moving in, which usually indicates a storm.

ANIMAL THREATS


In Canada, contrary to popular belief, most animals will not harm humans unless they are provoked, feel they are threatened or are protecting their young. Despite this fact, it is advisable to avoid a wild animal, especially if it looks ferocious when it would usually show fear, or behaves abnormally friendly. Lack of fear for humans should be considered a bad sign. The animal may be old and suffering from starvation, or if it appears to be sickly or is frothing at the mouth, it may have rabies. Nearly all warm blooded animals can get rabies, but it is most often found in racoons, mice, chipmunks, foxes, skunks, bats and groundhogs.

The best thing to do if you see a wild animal is to yell out or blow your whistle to scare it away. At the same time, you also may be heard by a searcher.

Like all things in nature, there can be and are exceptions to this rule and that exception is the bear. Generally, bears will leave you alone if you leave them alone.



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SIGNALLING

A pattern of three signals (e.g. three gunshots, three blasts on a whistle, three shouts or three fires) is universally recognized as a distress call. Blowing a whistle is very easy and its sound can travel further than your voice, so always pin one to your shirt or hang one around your neck before going into the wilderness. Choose a plastic whistle that has no pea inside it as the moisture from your breath can freeze the pea, thus disabling the whistle. Also, a plastic whistle will not stick to your lips in the winter.

A simple visual way of signaling aircraft for help is to use tree boughs, logs, light-coloured rocks, or scratches in the earth to make such commonly used attention-getters as a giant “V”, “X” or “↑”, pointing to your tree to say, “here I am!” You can also spell out the international distress signal, “S-O-S” (Save Our Souls). Each letter should be at least 3 metres (10 feet) in size and 3 metres (10 feet) apart. In the winter, tramp out these signs in the snow and lay tree boughs in the tramped depressions to increase the contrast between your signal and the snow. Remember the bigger the better, so make your signals in large open areas of the forest to avoid the branches of the surrounding trees.

Fires can also be used to attract attention. Several fires are far more effective, so arrange three in a straight line, or in a triangle shape, in such a way that the smoke from one fire will not obscure either of the others. Space them out about 6 to 30 metres (20 to 100 feet) apart, depending on the size of your clearing. If you use the triangle formation, sit in the middle of the triangle so you receive the radiant heat from all the fires to help keep you warm. When the ground is wet or snow covered, build the fires on a log platform to prevent self-quenching. Keep a pile of spruce or pine boughs at hand to throw onto the fires the moment you hear an aircraft, as this will create more smoke at first, followed by a brighter fire. If the forest is very dry, a fire can quickly get out of control and become a danger to your survival. Make sure to build your fires on rock or bare ground, clear the area around them so a spark does not start a forest fire and there are no branches hanging over the fires.

Signaling with a mirror or shiny object can also be extremely effective in bright sunlight or even on hazy days, as the flash from the reflected sunlight can be seen for several miles by an aircraft. To signal with a mirror or shiny object, hold it next to your eye, hold one hand out with a finger or thumb following the aircraft, and repeatedly flick the spot of light from the mirror across the thumb and the aircraft. Do not bother with a series of three; hit the plane repeatedly with the flash.

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CLOTHING

Too many people found in the wilderness have suffered needlessly because they were not appropriately dressed for their environment. The wilderness is not a place for a fashion statement. Taking the time to determine what sort of clothing and footwear is required for the terrain and weather conditions you may encounter while on your hike, picnic or camp, can make the difference between an enjoyable adventure or a life-threatening experience.

When deciding what to wear, always remember that it should keep you warm, dry and protect you from injury. Clothing too brief or too heavy can result in the fatal loss of body heat and fluids. Instead of wearing one thick piece of clothing, use the layering system and wear two or more layers of clothing to equal one heavy garment. This way, if you become cold or too hot, you can easily add or remove one layer at a time to prevent under-protecting or overheating your body.

Whether you are going for a picnic or exploring our vast wilderness, you should always have on you the following minimum items:

- Hat to help retain body heat and provide shade from the sun
- Good boots or shoes with socks
- Whistle around your neck on a string
- Orange plastic bag or Emergency foil blanket
- Pocket-knife
- Handkerchief (can be used as a hat, sling, or bandage)
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Matches in a waterproof container and a cigarette lighter

There are many additional items you could and should carry with you to make your venture into the woods a comfortable experience, but if you make a point of carrying these few items and take with you a prepared attitude, you will always be ready to enjoy our great outdoors.



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PREPARE YOUR CAR FOR WINTER

During winter storms, the leading cause of death is a road accident. For safe winter driving, prepare your vehicle for the winter season and know how to react if you get stranded or lost on the road.

Check fully and winterize your vehicle before winter starts. Try to remember to keep your gas tank near full in order to avoid ice in the fuel lines and the tank. Try not to travel alone and let someone know your timetable and your preferred route or any alternates.

Before winter, have a mechanic check:

- Battery
- Antifreeze
- Thermostat
- Ignition system
- Exhaust system
- Lights
- Flashing hazard lights
- Heater
- Brakes
- Defroster
- Wipers & windshield washer fluid
- Oil level (if necessary, replace with a winter grade oil)

CAR SURVIVAL KIT FOR WINTER

Before winter, make sure you have these in your vehicle:

- Clothes, blankets & sleeping bags
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit & pocket knife
- Survival candle & matches
- High-calorie, non-perishable food
- Large empty can and plastic cover with tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes
- Small can to melt snow for drinking water
- Sack of sand (or cat litter) for traction
- Shovel & booster cables
- Windshield scraper & brush
- Tool kit & tow rope
- Compass and road maps
- Brightly coloured cloth to use as a flag
- Necessary medications

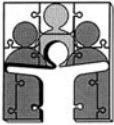


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WINTER TRAVEL

Be safe – pay attention to these:

- Check the latest forecasts and road conditions
- Dress for the outdoor conditions
- Winterize your vehicle and check it fully
- Check such things as the battery, heating system, and belts
- Have a winter survival kit
- Leave a route plan indicating your approximate time of arrival
- Keep your gas tank as full as possible

A winter storm watch indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area.

A winter storm warning indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way.

A blizzard warning means that large amounts of falling or blowing snow and sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.

“Wind chill” is a calculation of how cold it feels outside when the effects of temperature and wind speed are combined. A strong wind combined with a temperature of just below freezing can have the same effect as a still air temperature about 35 degrees colder.





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TRAPPED IN A CAR DURING A BLIZZARD

If stranded:

- Stay with your vehicle and don't try to walk to safety.
- Try to make sure you're parked in a safe spot, especially during a snowstorm or whiteout.
- Don't search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. You may become disoriented and lost in blowing or drifting snow.
- Run the motor for about 10 minutes each hour for heat. Slightly open a window on the leeward side for fresh air.
- Light the survival candle from your winter kit. Remember the dangers of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Also, turn on the car's dome light when the car is running, making your car more visible to rescuers.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked. This can stall the engine and cause fume problems.
- Tie a bright coloured cloth to the antenna if your car has one, or where you can on the vehicle.
- Raise your hood to indicate trouble except during a major snowstorm. A snow clogged engine compartment could stall the engine.
- Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving your arms, legs, fingers, and toes to keep the blood circulating and to keep warm.
- Don't stay in one position for too long and huddle together for warmth. All the occupants shouldn't sleep at the same time.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Don't overexert yourself. Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart and unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or worsen existing medical conditions.
- Be aware of symptoms of dehydration.
- Use newspapers, maps, and even the removable car mats, including those in the trunk, for added insulation.





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PROJECT LIFESAVER

Project Lifesaver is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting and responding to the challenge to caregivers of finding wandering or bolting loved ones who may suffer from Alzheimer's Disease, Autism or any other special needs requirements.

Clients registered with Project Lifesaver wear a personalized bracelet. It is a one-ounce battery operated radio wrist transmitter that emits a unique automatic tracking signal every second, 24 hours a day.

Project Lifesaver equips and trains search & rescue agencies in an active response system to help with the increasing problem of locating wandering patients before they fall victim to the elements, accidents or predators.

It is the opinion of Project Lifesaver that radio frequency tracking equipment, in the hands of trained public safety personnel, represents the most reliable and effective technology available to locate wandering loved ones.

Project Lifesaver saves lives and further serves the community by significantly reducing the need for extensive search and rescue operations that are often extremely costly in human and financial terms.

Project Lifesaver has become the lead organization in Canada and the United States to effectively train, equip and deploy law enforcement and search & rescue agencies to rapidly locate people with Alzheimer's, Autism, Dementia and other special needs persons.

Our Vision

Helping people with dementia lead safer, more secure lives.

Our Mission

"Working together to bring loved ones home"

Our Mandate

We cannot predict when someone will become lost... however we can prepare!

Our Values

Provide education, training, support and co-ordination with community partners.



Contact us for more information about this life-saving project.

35 Webster Street, Suite 201, Kentville, NS B4N 1H4

Phone: (902) 365-3362 Email: contactus@projectlifesaver.info

www.projectlifesaver.info



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County Ground Search and Rescue is still responding to searches for missing persons. We also present preventative programs to all ages, including Adventure Smart Hug-a-Tree program to young children. As well, we have partnered with Project Lifesaver - an organization that tracks vulnerable people such as those with dementia or autism. We also assist with civil emergencies and community events in Annapolis County. To learn more about our team or to contact us, visit www.acgsar.ca.





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BARRINGTON GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Barrington chapter of Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue serves Shelburne County in the southwest region of the province. We keep involved in the community through parades, parking for various events, traffic control, and annual raffle fundraisers.

The heartbeat of our team is to save lives, and we actively pursue that mission through: searcher training both in the classroom and in the

field; command bus training in radios and computers; ICT training; First Aid and outdoor survival skills training; the **Hug-a-Tree** program in local schools; and Project Lifesaver. In cooperation with other agencies, we work hard to be prepared to save lives.

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CAPE BRETON GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



WHENEVER. WHEREVER. PERIOD.

Cape Breton Search & Rescue (CBSAR) is an emergency service provider dedicated to locating and rescuing lost persons in the Cape Breton area (and beyond). Established in November 1969, CBSAR work closely with the Emergency Management Office of Nova Scotia (EMO-NS), Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Cape Breton Regional Police Service and local agencies to provide a number of lifesaving services to our community. These services include: lost and missing person searches, police evidence searches, Project Lifesaver, lost prevention education, civil emergency response and more.

A registered charitable organization and member of the Nova Scotia Ground Search & Rescue Association (NSGSARA), CBSAR is one of four (4) teams that serve the Cape Breton area (Eastern Zone) alongside Cheticamp, Inverness and Straight Area GSAR.

CBSAR is always looking for community-spirited volunteers to join our growing family. New member intakes are performed twice per year (usually spring and fall) but applications for membership are accepted and pooled year-round. While we prefer that applicants have some level of outdoor experience, this is not necessary as full training will be provided.

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RECHERCHE ET SAUVETAGE CHÉTICAMP SEARCH AND RESCUE

The formation of Recherche et Sauvetage Chéticamp Search and Rescue was a result of a fatal tragedy in 1971. The community felt it was important to form a team to help with search and rescue response in the region, and on March 6, 1972 the organization was formed. A 50th anniversary celebration occurred in 2022, with special recognition given to 3 members (Roger Larade, Patrick LeBlanc and Leo LeFort) for their 50 years of volunteer service.

The organization had limited capacity in its early years, challenged with recruiting volunteers, organizing training, and raising funds for equipment. Meetings took place in the Chéticamp Fire Hall, and equipment was stored in the basement of the local RCMP detachment. A few years later, as operations and equipment needs grew, Chéticamp SAR moved to the old Belle Marche School, which was

shared with the Kinsmen Club, until eventually moving into a purpose-built hall built by members in 1990.

Chéticamp SAR is presently made up of both long-standing and new members. Area coverage includes parts of Inverness and Victoria Counties - from Ingonish, Cape North, Chéticamp, Margaree, and up to Hunter Mountain. With broader interest in backcountry experiences in the area, which includes Cape Breton Highlands National Park, searches have included the need to respond to both regional and visitor occurrences.

The organization is strongly supported by the local community and the surrounding areas served.

Contact: Chris Bellemore, President
Email: cheticampsearch@gmail.com
Phone: 782-777-1117
Address: PO Box 596 171 Cemetery Rd.
Chéticamp, NS B0E 1H0



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RECHERCHE ET SAUVETAGE CLARE GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



CGSAR was founded on 4 December 1984. Clare Ground Search & Rescue, a volunteer organization, participates in ground search and rescue and civilian emergencies in Clare and other communities in Nova Scotia [mutual aid].

Clare incorporated in 1879, the Municipality of Clare is the only municipality in the Province of Nova Scotia that conducts business and offers services in both official languages, French and English.

With an approximate population of 8,500, Clare is located at the south-western tip of Nova Scotia.

Clare occupies the western half of Digby County. Most of the Municipality's settled areas are located along Saint Mary's Bay.

The Municipality is mainly inhabited by Acadians and conducts its business in both French and English, although over 75% of the residents of Clare are able to communicate in both official languages the most commonly used language is French.

Contact Information

Recherche et Sauvetage - Clare -
Ground Search and Rescue
Président: Yvon Thibodeau
E-mail: thibodeauyvon@gmail.com
Facebook page:
[https://www.facebook.com/groups/
claresearchandrescue](https://www.facebook.com/groups/claresearchandrescue)

Postal Address:

PO Box 182, Saulnierville, NS
B0W 2Z0

Civic Address:

655 Hwy 1, Comeauville
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COLCHESTER

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association (CGSARA) is a vital emergency response resource serving Colchester County and surrounding regions, providing trained ground search teams capable of responding quickly to missing persons calls, major incidents, and prolonged multi-day operations. In 2025 alone, CGSARA's 75 dedicated volunteers contributed over 13,000 hours to search operations, specialized training, administration, public education, and emergency response—demonstrating the depth of commitment and readiness maintained year-round.

CGSARA continues to expand and strengthen its operational capabilities to meet growing community needs. The team now includes a certified K-9 unit, one of only two civilian GSAR K-9 teams in Nova Scotia, adding an advanced tracking and detection capability that greatly improves search effectiveness. In addition, CGSARA operates a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) unit providing 24/7 thermal and infrared aerial search capability, allowing for faster area coverage, improved detection in low visibility conditions, and stronger coordination with RCMP, EHS, fire services, and partner SAR teams. Beyond specialized units, CGSARA has continued to improve its facilities and operational readiness to support large-scale incidents. Recent base upgrades,

including emergency power generation and expanded vehicle bay capacity, have enhanced the team's ability to sustain prolonged deployments and have positioned the base as a potential community comfort centre during emergencies. Planned improvements for 2026 will further strengthen CGSARA's ability to operate effectively during extreme weather events, extended searches, and regional emergency situations.

CGSARA is proud to serve as a dependable, highly trained response organization for the residents of Colchester County, standing ready at all times with the people, training, equipment, and specialized resources needed to protect and support the community when emergencies arise.



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DIGBY

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Digby Ground Search and Rescue has been active in Digby County since 1973. They cover an area from Bear River, Digby Neck and Islands, and Weymouth.

At present there are 33 active members. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 1900hrs at the Ground Search Building at the Digby Municipal Airport. On all other Thursdays at 1900hrs training is scheduled. Members are trained in Map & Compass, GPS, Wilderness Survival, Radio Operation, First Aid, Clue Awareness, Tracking, etc.

Members are also trained in the use of advanced mapping software, and search management/record tracking software. Other members fill a number of support roles, such as computer and radio operation, logistics, transportation, equipment maintenance, fund raising and more. Fundraising is carried on throughout the year, with BBQ's, raffles, etc.

Digby Ground Search and Rescue provides traffic control for events when asked to do so, and provides traffic control for the Wharf

Rat Rally (the largest multi-day Motorcycle Rally in Canada) every year. They also participate in local Parades.

Digby GSAR has a functioning Project Lifesaver Program. Several members of Digby GSAR are certified to present Adventure Smart Programs, **Hug-a-Tree**, and Survive Outside for the children of the community.

If you like to volunteer, love the outdoors, and want to make a difference in your community, contact Larry Brooks at (902) 837-7228 or digbysar@hotmail.com for more information.





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EAST HANTS GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

East Hants Ground Search and Rescue is a non-profit organization with 32 (and counting) volunteers that are on-call 24/7 and dedicated to saving lives through search and rescue.

Our members donate their time, energy and skills to search for subjects that may be missing along shorelines or in wooded and urban areas.

The East Hants Ground Search and Rescue team was founded in 1980 to assist the RCMP and local authorities in searching for and rescuing people in distress. After a meeting at the Noel Shore Community Hall, it was determined that there was a need for this considering our large amount of wooded area. Our first search was December 12-15, 1980 in Lake Killarney near Oxford. On September 25, 1984, East Hants Ground Search and Rescue was declared an official agency of the Municipality of East Hants.

East Hants Ground Search and Rescue is partially funded by the Provincial Government and the Municipality of East Hants. We do, however, rely heavily on fundraising and donations. Our main fundraiser is our Annual Easter Egg Hunt and BBQ. It is always a great event and a great opportunity to get back into our community, as well.

East Hants GSAR is trained and active in Project Lifesaver; a program that uses directional radio frequency receivers that are able to track a one-



ounce battery operated radio transmitter for several miles, which a client wears. This program helps with wandering patients and reduces search times from hours and days to minutes. “This program is available to people with cognitive conditions that wander and are continually supervised by a responsible family member or caregiver.”

Our team is always looking for new volunteers and new opportunities to give back and support our community. You can check us out on our social media pages or send us an e-mail.

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EASTERN SHORE GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Eastern Shore Ground Search & Rescue, located in Chezzetcook, is a community-based organization made up entirely of volunteers who believe in, and share, the common goals of serving their community and saving lives. Our membership comprises people of all ages and backgrounds, with experience, training and expertise in many fields.

We are one of four GSAR teams in HRM, and are affiliated with HRM Department of Public Safety, and the NS Emergency Management Office. Our work is carried out under the auspices of the RCMP, Halifax Regional Police or other Authority Having Jurisdiction. Our mission is to search for lost and missing persons in urban and wilderness areas, on inland and coastal waters, and to carry out the rescue of injured

persons in remote areas. We also respond as Emergency Service Providers in times of civil emergency, to carry out door to door evacuations and wellness checks, staffing of blockades, and do weather-related safety checks at encampment sites. We are on call 24/7/365 to respond to whatever is required of us.

To accomplish this, we provide a wide spectrum of purpose-based training, and offer numerous forms of learning opportunities to our team members. We do new member orientation and intake sessions several times a year. Our main requirements are a commitment of time and a willingness to learn. Check our website for information on our team, and how to join.

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INVERNESS COUNTY

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Inverness County GSAR started around 1988. The inset photo is from one of many annual Fishing Derbies we held in Margaree Lake-O-Law. Our team looked forward to seeing so many loyal people that attended every year, in hopes of catching the biggest fish. The fundraiser helped us socially and financially. In this unprecedented time with COVID-19, all our fundraisers were stopped. We would like everyone to know that Inverness County GSAR is always waiting on-call when you need us 24/7.

We are keeping up with searches, training, having meetings by phone and keeping our distance. We all look forward to seeing people once again at our BBQ,

Fishing Derbies, bingos, ticket sales, etc. We would like to thank everyone for their continued support. **MANY THANKS** to the RCMP, EMO and NSSAR Association. We would not be a team without you.



LUNENBURG COUNTY

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Lunenburg County Ground Search and Rescue Team was formed in 1978 in response to several searches in the area and started to organize as a group. In 48 years the Team has advanced to a highly trained group of searchers with always one goal in mind and that is to locate that lost or missing person.

We are dispatched through the RCMP or Municipal Police Services. The Team also assists REMO in disaster emergencies. We help educate the public through the **Hug-A-Tree** program on what to do if you get lost and how to get found.

The Team has members trained and certified with the Project Lifesaver program in Nova Scotia. It is a program developed to easier locate adults, children and others who are at risk to wander.

Everyone is trained in First Aid and CPR, survival, GPS, map and compass and many other qualifications needed to perform our tasks. The Team is always looking for volunteers - please contact us at 902-644-2599, if you are interested.



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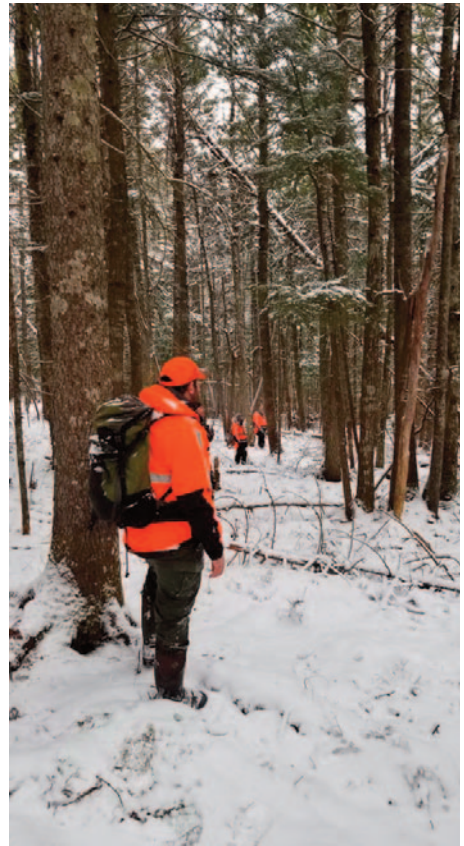
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MUSQUODOBOIT VALLEY

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



Musquodoboit Valley Ground Search & Rescue is celebrating over 40 years of service. Formed in April 1983, our primary area of operation is within the Halifax Regional Municipality, serving the Musquodoboit Valley and surrounding communities from College Lake in the North East, to Devon and Oldham in the South West. We are a 40 member team whose mission is to provide professional search, rescue, and civil emergency assistance to the residents of the Musquodoboit Valley and beyond, working in partnership with the RCMP, Halifax Regional Municipality, Department of Emergency Management, and other Ground Search & Rescue Teams. You can find us on Facebook, email at president_mvrsar@outlook.com, or at our headquarters located at 5802 Hwy. 357, Elderbank, N.S.





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NORTH QUEENS

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

North Queens Ground Search and Rescue has been serving Queens County and surrounding areas since 1984. Based in Caledonia, we are a dedicated team of 14 volunteers committed to search and rescue operations, disaster response, and community safety. With Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site nearby, we work closely with Parks Canada officials, the RCMP, and the Department of Emergency Management to assist in search and recovery efforts for lost or stranded individuals. Our team also provides support during natural disasters such as wildfires, flooding, and prolonged power outages.

In 2023, while there were fewer missing person searches, devastating wildfires and floods placed significant demands on emergency services. NQGSAR assisted with evacuations in the Shelburne area, ensuring the safety of those affected. Throughout 2024, our members continued to develop

their skills, participating in specialized training such as Advanced Wilderness and Remote First Aid, Incident Command System (ICS) Training, Lost Person Behaviour, Managing the Lost Person Incident, and Ice Rescue Training. Regular training sessions also cover search tactics, navigation, tracking awareness, wilderness survival, water rescue, boat

operations, night operations, rope use, and remote rescue. We have also partnered with other teams in the region on several successful mock searches.

Our work is made possible through fundraising efforts, generous donations, and grants. We continue to give back to the community through initiatives such as biannual roadside cleanups and always welcome community help for these events. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Parks Canada, and other local teams and groups to continue improving our team's expertise, readiness, and responsiveness.



We are always looking for new members to join our team, so if you're interested in joining, we meet on the **second Tuesday of every month at Georgie's Campground in Caledonia at 7:00 pm.** You're also welcome to attend a training session to see what we're about! Find us on Facebook or call **902-521-4463** for more information.



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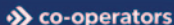
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Our GSAR team is constantly moving forward with the challenges of our times.

Two projects are underway recognizing the need to modernize our approach to GSAR with the public and our team.

1. Our team website, www.pictousar.ca, is being developed through one-time funding from the Government of Canada's Community Services Recovery Fund administered by the Canadian Red Cross. The website will give our team a "face" to the community for recruiting, fundraising, donations, and outline our GSAR services. The [Team Log In](#) on the website will provide our members with a method to communicate, organize, and to do online learning.

2. We are also modernizing our 2005 Incident Command Post (trailer) to create more computer stations which will help team members to plan and coordinate training exercises, search and rescue operations, and civil emergency response. Computer programs provide real-time tracking and recording allowing our searchers to work more efficiently with team members and other supporting teams and agencies. Computers compliment but do not replace the volunteer "in the field".

Volunteers are the key to our GSAR service.

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PUGWASH GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



The Team was formed in 1978. In 1988 the members financed and built the PGSAR building in the Village of Pugwash and is used for meetings, training and events. We have purchased and designed a mobile command post and support PLANS which helps us search for clients who have transmitters.

To date, there are 32 volunteer members who dedicate time and knowledge to this organization and continue to train. We especially enjoy putting on the annual Storm The Mountain Snowshoe Challenge and supporting a variety of community events.



*If you're interested in joining the Pugwash
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QUEENS

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Queens GSAR team was formed in 1981 by Richard Buchanan and Archie Mason, both were members of the Liverpool RCMP Detachment. Over the years our team has participated in many searches both locally as well as elsewhere in the province of Nova Scotia. Some of these include a search for Cessna 172M aircraft with 2 souls on board that crashed near Greenfield in 1998, Swiss Air 111 in 1998, the Delory Search in Cape Breton in 2009, just to name a few. The team is also active in the community of Queens by providing traffic control for events such as the Hank Snow Music Festival, the Wickwire Academy Spring Fling, etc., assists EMO, VFD and EMS in training for and being prepared



for community disasters i.e.: flood, fire, hazmat release, etc. Our membership stands at 30 with about 20 of those being actual searchers. Approximately 10 of our members belong to our auxiliary, whose main purpose is to fundraise for Queens GSAR requirements. All of our personnel have received training in Map and compass, GPS, Searcher Training, Backpack required equipment, Clue finding, Wilderness survival, etc. Other members have received specialized training such as SMART, OZZIE, RTT computer program operators, Drone piloting to name a few. Recently our team has been conducting PLANS ESS training, searcher training, and monthly meetings.



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SHEET HARBOUR & AREA GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



Sheet Harbour & Area GSAR will be celebrating 50 years of service to Nova Scotia residents on August 8th, 2026. With approximately 40 members we have a variety of expertise and experience. From drone pilots to boat operations with side scan sonar and underwater camera capabilities. From searches to rescues to recovery operations our members train to provide those services to our various police and emergency management agencies.

Our team is also a member under the Regional SAR with Halifax Regional Municipality (RESAR) along with three other teams. As a member of the Nova Scotia GSAR Association we respond as needed to assist other teams. In the recent past we have seen more calls to assist in non search & rescue events. Such calls as wildfires, floods, and severe weather. Last year we assisted HRM in dispersing thousands of bottles of water to residents during a severe drought.

We receive tremendous support from our community especially during our Annual Fish Derby fundraiser which is now into its 28th year. Held the first Saturday in June. We are also supported financially by Halifax Regional Municipality and the Nova Scotia Government.

In 2025 our team responded to two search calls locally along with three other calls to assist in other GSAR Team's areas.

We are currently seeking new members. There is something for everyone. We will be hosting an open house and orientation session in early April. For any further information can contact Neil Parnell at parnell.neil@gmail.com or 902-471-7822



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SPRINGHILL GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Springhill Ground Search and Rescue was incorporated in 1975. It was formed from the old Springhill Fish and Game Association. We still have members that were active before 1975. Our main building was constructed in 1979-80 which finally provided a base of operations for our team. We have currently around 35 active members.

Because we are a non-profit, volunteer organization, all of the funds that we raise are used for equipment, training, maintenance of the hall and day-to-day expenses.

Our members are very dedicated to doing what we do, spending hours training and preparing, taking courses or refreshing skills that we do have.

Some of our members donate more than 200 hours a year.

We are a vital element for Springhill and the Cumberland County area. We provide assistance to the RCMP for missing person searches and evidence searches, to Cumberland EMO and Nova Scotia EMO during any emergency situations or disasters.

We are active in Project Lifesaver, and we have been teaching the Hunter Safety courses since their inception. We have been teaching the Canadian Firearms Safety course since its inception, as well. We even provided a highly-trained group in the recovery effort of the Swiss Air disaster.





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Individual members are trained to various degrees in Map and Compass, Winter Survival techniques and Global Positioning Systems, Lost Person Behaviour, as well as; Boater's Safety, safe use of all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles and Project Lifesaver.

The RCMP calls upon S.A.G.S.A.R. primarily for lost or missing persons such as hunters, fishermen, boaters, hikers, seniors and children, but may also request assistance with evidence searches. S.A.G.S.A.R. members respond to all manner of disasters and are readily available to assist teams in other areas for relief on extended searches.

Courses offered to the general public and new members include:

Wilderness First Aid Training

Search Techniques

Map and Compass Training

Winter Survival Techniques

GPS training

Hug-A-Tree Program

Team Captain Training (members only)

Search Managers Training (members only)

If you are interested in becoming a member, or for any of the above training, please email our membership officer Judy Burke at judyanneburke@gmail.com.

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VALLEY GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



Valley Search and Rescue serves the citizens and visitors of the County of Kings. We have a proud heritage as one of the first Ground Search and Rescue (SAR) teams in the province, and will be celebrating our 53rd anniversary this year. We pride ourselves on being innovative leaders in SAR, and have marked milestones such as bringing Project Lifesaver to Nova Scotia, and training all teams in the province to be able to offer the program. Likewise, we make use of new technologies as they become available, such as Forward Looking Infrared Radar (FLIR), Real Time Tracking (RTT) radios, and specialized GSAR software. Our members train every week to be ready to meet the need when the call comes, and we respond 365 days a year, 24 hours a day – at any time and in any weather.

Valley SAR members come from many walks of life and bring with them a diverse skill-set – this is our strength. One of the things that you will find with all members of the team is a positive attitude and a strong desire to work together as a team. As volunteer professionals, we consistently deliver a remarkable effort when called upon to rescue someone who is lost or injured in a wilderness setting.

Our base is located at 177 Middle Dyke Road, Port Williams. If you are interested in joining the team, for more information, or to donate, please see our website at www.valleysearchandrescue.org.

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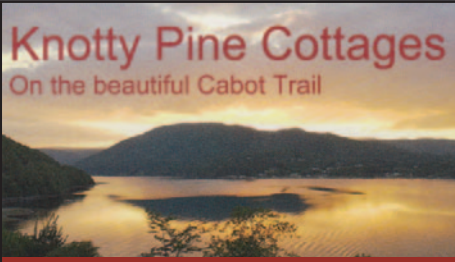
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WEST HANTS

GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE



West Hants Ground Search and Rescue is a small, but vibrant rural team located in Mount Denson, Hants County, Nova Scotia. The team has been active in searches for both its local Search and Rescue zone as well as providing mutual aid for searches across the province.

The team has been in existence since 1977 and has a good mix of long serving members and new recruits, with members coming from a variety of backgrounds. While experience is always nice, we will gladly work with new members to improve their skills and knowledge.

The team actively trains and holds realistic and engaging sessions the second and fourth Thursday of the month in addition to courses and participating in zone and provincial level training throughout the year. On a typical team training night, the

team members may train outdoors in all weather conditions to best prepare members for the reality of searching in Nova Scotia. General team meetings are the last Sunday of every month at the Base in Mt. Denson.

Like other search and rescue teams, WHGSAR serves the local community in an educational role and in particular provides Adventure Smart programs for groups in the area such as the **Hug-a-Tree** Program. The team also assists Municipal and Provincial EMO for particular events as requested.

Due to the fundraising efforts of the team and the generosity of many local businesses and the municipality, the team has been able to build and maintain a command trailer to direct searches as well as trucks and trailers to support search efforts.

The team's building, located at 821 Highway 1 in Mt. Denson, serves the local community as a comfort centre and is used for a variety of events from parties to local music nights.

Team Information:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069832579906&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

Training page:
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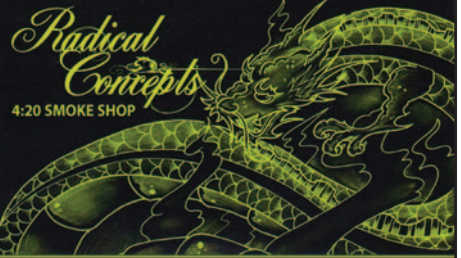
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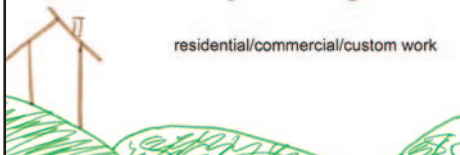
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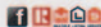
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YARMOUTH COUNTY GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Yarmouth County Ground Search and Rescue Team has been around for approximately 33 years with our home base located in Arcadia, Nova Scotia.

We have a membership of 45 dedicated volunteers and operate two vehicles consisting of a command and a logistic cube-style truck and a Kioti side-by-side with Kimtek rescue kit installed.

Our team is actively involved in the community providing search and rescue and evidence searches for the RCMP.

We provide services for approximately 4 searches a year and participate in several local events in our area.

Our team teaches **Hug-A-Tree** to the local schools and is very active in the Project Lifesaver program.

Find us on Facebook:
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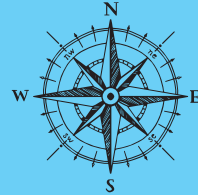
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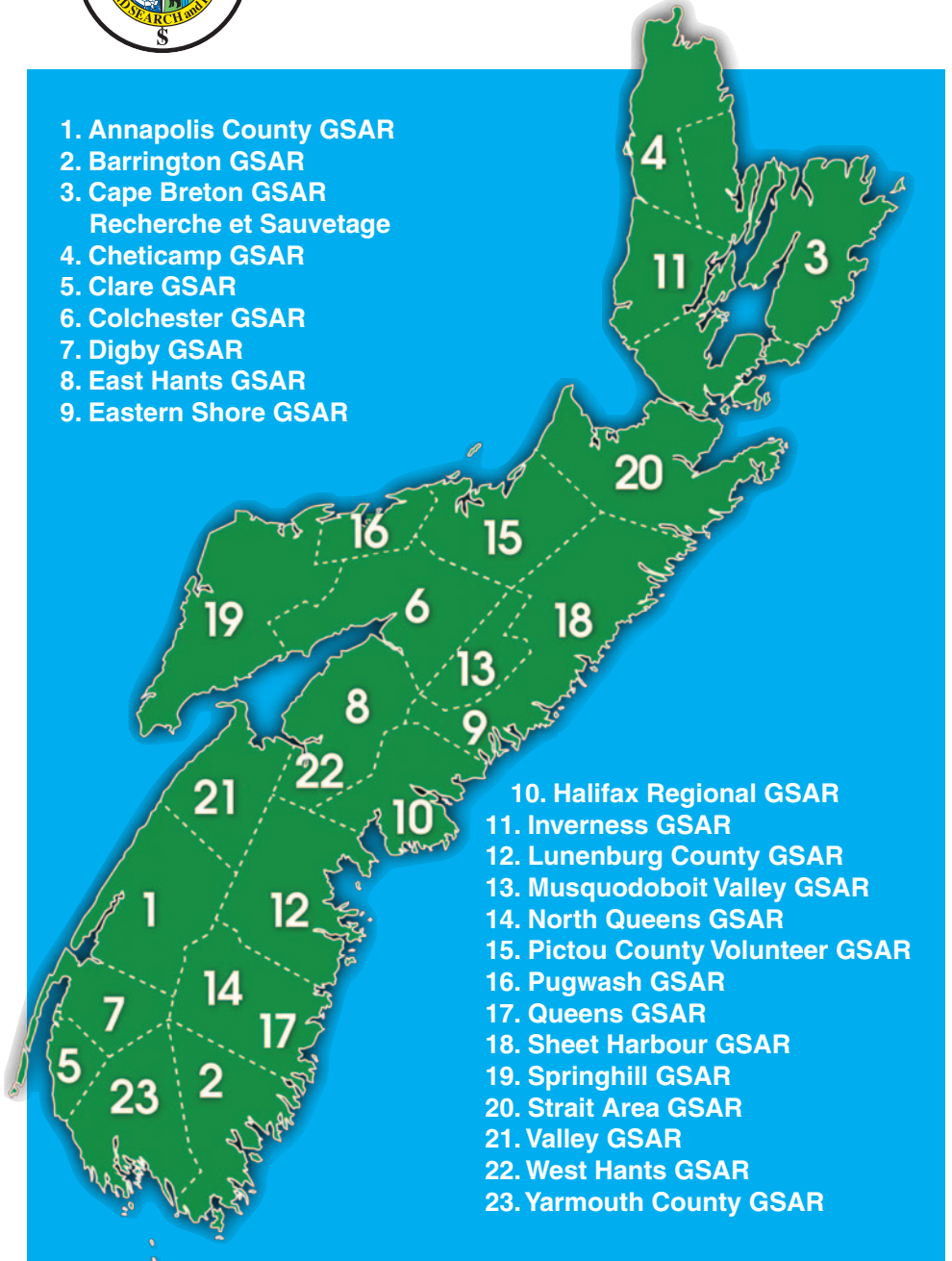
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