

WINTER SURVIVAL EXERCISE by MAJ Bob Fields

PAGE 2

Ranking of survival items by Mark Wanig, Survival and Reconnaissance School
Instructor - 101st Division US Army -now a civilian Survival Instructor

The first problem that survivors face is to preserve their body heat and to protect themselves against its loss. This problem can be met by building a fire, minimizing movement and exertion, and using as much insulation as possible. Once the survivors have found ways in which to keep warm, their most immediate problem is to provide signaling methods to attract the attention of search planes and search parties.

THUS ALL THE ITEMS THE GROUP HAS MUST BE ASSESSED ACCORDING TO THEIR VALUE IN MEETING THE NEEDS OUTLINED ABOVE.

There is no question that the various items can be ranked differently depending on the survival scenario and climate conditions. Also, speculation on various methods of tool fabrication and use may lead the inexperienced into believing the practicality of one method over another without ever testing the procedure to see if it really works. A case in point is the Hollywood fallacy of what can be done with piston cartridges. All you have to do, say the experts, is pull the bullet out of the case and sprinkle powder on whatever you wish to ignite and fire the primer in the mess and Voila! You have a fire. In real life, however, unless you have rudimentary tools and knew what you were doing here's what probably happen:

A .45 Automatic Colt Pistol cartridge is a very small item to manipulate with numb fingers and icy cold hands. The bullet is typically a copper jacketed piece of lead pressed down tightly into the casing. The protruding bullet is about the same size and is smooth as a glass marble. Unless you had iron jaws, you probably could not "bite the bullet" and work it out of the casing. Aluminum surfaces found in airplane door and window frames make very poor vises in which to hold a bullet. Suppose you did remove the bullet and sprinkle powder in a pile of kindling. The blast of a large pistol primer fired point blank into the pile would scatter the powder and kindling without even a tiny flame to reward you.

The correct ranking is as follows.

- 1. FLINT CIGARETTE LIGHTER (NO FLUID)** The gravest danger facing the group is exposure to the cold. The greatest need is a source of warmth and the second greatest need is for signaling devices. This makes building a fire the first order of business. Without matches something is needed to produce sparks to start a fire. Even without fluid, the cigarette lighter can be used to produce sparks. The fire will not only produce warmth, it will also provide smoke for daytime signaling and firelight for nighttime signaling.
- 2. BALL OF STEEL WOOL** To make a fire, a means of catching sparks made by the cigarette lighter is needed. Steel wool is the best substance with which to catch a spark and support a flame, even if it is a bit wet.
- 3. EXTRA SHIRT AND PANTS FOR EACH SURVIVOR** Clothes are probably the most versatile items one can have in a situation like this. Besides adding warmth to the body, they can be used for shelter, signaling, bedding, bandages, string when unraveled, and tinder to make fires. Even maps can be drawn on them. The versatility of clothes and the need for fires, signaling devices, and warmth make this item number three in importance.
- 4. FAMILY SIZE HERSHEY BAR (ONE EACH)** To gather wood for the fire and to set up signals, energy is needed. The Hershey bars would supply the energy to sustain the survivors for quite some time. Because they contain basically carbohydrates, they would supply energy without making digestive demands upon the body which require more energy from the body or energy source.
- 5. CAN OF SHORTENING** This item has many uses--the most important being that a mirrorlike signaling device can be made from the lid. After shining the lid with steel wool, the survivors can use it to produce an effective reflector of sunlight. A mirror is the most powerful tool they have for communicating their presence. In sunlight a simple mirror can generate 5-7 million candlepower. The reflected sunbeam can be seen beyond the horizon. Its effectiveness is somewhat limited by the trees, but one member of the group could climb a tree and use the mirror to signal search planes. If the survivors had no other means of signaling, they would still have better than 80% chance of being rescued in the first 24 hours.



**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**