

Emergency Preparedness Mini-Manual (Shelter + Fire)

A. Core Shelter Priorities (Per Person)

- **Stay dry** — moisture kills faster than cold.
- **Block wind** — wind chill accelerates hypothermia.
- **Insulate from ground** — ground steals heat rapidly.
- **Ventilate** — avoid condensation buildup.
- **Size correctly** — smaller spaces retain heat better.

A. Tarp Shelter (Most Versatile)

- Works in rain, snow, wind, desert sun.
- Can be pitched as A-frame, lean-to, plow-point, or closed wedge.
- **Per-person standard:** 8x10 ft tarp minimum.

Recommended gear:

- Budget: AquaQuest Defender, Free Soldier tarp
- Mid-range: DD Hammocks 3x3, Rab Siltarp

Required accessories:

- 50 ft paracord
- 6–8 stakes & 2–4 carabiners

B. Bivy + Emergency Blanket

- Fastest to deploy.
- Good for wind, cold, and rain when paired with tarp.
- **Per-person standard:** 1 bivy + 1 Mylar blanket.

Recommended:

- SOL Emergency Bivy
- Snugpak Bivvi Bag (mid-range)

C. Improvised Shelter (When Gear Is Limited)

- Use: trash bags, ponchos, vehicle interiors, natural overhangs, branches + debris.
- Prioritize: roof → windbreak → insulation → ground barrier.

3. Seasonal Adjustments

Cold Weather

- Add: sleeping pad, wool hat, gloves, dry socks.
- Pitch low to ground; close ends of tarp.
- Use natural windbreaks.

Hot Weather

- Prioritize shade + airflow.
- Raise tarp high; create cross-ventilation.
- Avoid metal surfaces (heat conduction).

Rain

- Steeper tarp angle for runoff.
- Keep sleeping area elevated and dry.
- Dig micro-trenches only if absolutely necessary.

Wind

- Pitch low and narrow.
- Stake corners aggressively.
- Use natural barriers (boulders, trees).

4. Fire Priorities

- **Heat & Signaling**
- **Water purification**
- **Morale**

5. Fire Starting Methods

- **Bic lighter** (works anywhere; carry 2–3)
- **Stormproof matches** (UCO, REI)

- **Tinder:** cotton balls + petroleum jelly, commercial tabs, dryer lint

2. Secondary (Intermediate)

- **Ferro rod** (works wet, cold, windy)
- **Magnesium block** (shavings ignite easily)

3. Backup (Last Resort)

- **Battery + steel wool**
- **Lens (sunlight)**
- **Improvised tinder:** birch bark, fatwood, feather sticks, pine resin

6. Fire in Bad Conditions

Wet Weather

- Use: birch bark, fatwood, magnesium shavings.
- Build platform of dry sticks.
- Feather sticks for surface area.
- Shield flame with tarp edge or body.

Wind

- Dig shallow fire pit.
- Build windbreak with rocks/logs.
- Light fire from upwind side.

Snow

- Create base of logs or rocks.
- Use more tinder than usual.
- Keep fuel dry under tarp.

Extreme Heat

- Clear area to avoid wildfire risk.
- Use small, controlled flame.
- Prefer stoves if available.

7. Fire Lay Types

- **Teepee:** fast ignition, good for warmth.

- **Log cabin:** stable, long-burning.
- **Lean-to:** best in wind.
- **Dakota fire hole:** concealed, efficient, low smoke.

8. Per-Person Fire Kit (Budget → Mid-Range)

- 2 Bic lighters & 1 ferro rod (Exotac, Light My Fire)
- Stormproof matches
- Tinder (cotton + petroleum jelly, or Tinder-Quik tabs)
- Small folding knife & 6–10 fatwood sticks
- Waterproof container

9. Per-Person Shelter Kit (Budget → Mid-Range)

- 8x10 or 10x10 tarp
- Emergency bivy & Paracord (50 ft)
- Stakes (6–8) & Carabiners (2–4)
- Mylar blanket
- Small folding saw (optional)
- Groundsheet or foam pad

10. Quick Deployment Checklist

Shelter

1. Pick safe site (no dead branches, no flood zones).
2. Set windbreak & Pitch tarp.
3. Lay ground insulation.
4. Add bivy + blanket.

Fire

1. Gather 3x more wood than you think you need.
2. Prepare tinder → kindling → fuel.
3. Choose fire lay.
4. Light with primary method.
5. Maintain airflow.