

BRMRG Personal Winter Preparedness Checklist

prepared by William Dixon

Winter operations are usually the most challenging activities in mid-Atlantic SAR. Weather differences range from the typically below-freezing, snow covered, windy mountainous areas of western VA and the typically rainy, windy eastern coastal areas. Temperatures could get as cold as -10F then add wind chill. In order to effectively carryout SAR functions in these environments, one should prepare oneself not only for this weather, but *also to assist others who are not as well prepared*. Members should consider how well they are prepared for both day and night field (search tasks, evac and overnight) and base duties (CP in the car, mud, wind) with freezing rain. As a SAR team member you are expected to function for two tasks during the day, one task at night and be able to provide your own overnight sleeping accommodations in a remote area.

The following checklist serves as a guide to preparing yourself for this type of winter SAR operations. In many cases it would be wise to have or carry duplicate items in order to remain functional after you lose or damage your first one/set on a task.

Clothing - Wear some and have the rest in your field pack

Underwear

- Synthetic Top and Bottom long underwear - lightweight or medium weight
- (3) pair heavy wool or synthetic socks

Middle Layer

- (2) pair wool or cotton blend or nylon field pants
- Wool or synthetic shirt or sweater
- Wool or synthetic insulating hat, preferably with ear protection
- Pair synthetic glove liners - for hand warmth protection from exposure and when handling cold technical gear.
- Synthetic balaclava for face and neck heat retention

Outer Layer

- Waterproof boots - either externally by non-leaking Goretex barriers or wax/silicon based treatments for leather.
- Snow "gators"
- Rain Jacket - insulated or shell, preferably with hood
- Rain Pants
- Leather gloves big enough to accommodate insulating liners underneath
- Waterproof Insulated gloves - ski glove type, or Shell/Liner combinations
- Helmet adjustable to fit over balaclava and hat and/or rain jacket hood.

Equipment

Backpack suitable to carry extra clothing and gear

Waterproofing

- Extra plastic bags to waterproof dry clothing, dry gear, store wet clothing, etc.
- Large zip lock bag for radio
- Zip lock bags for grouping and waterproofing other small items such as toiletries, food, maps, etc.

Shelter

- 4-season tent or waterproof bivvy sack.

Miscellaneous (but just as important)

- Sleeping bag - rated to 20 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, prefer synthetic in case it gets wet/damp. (Waterproof packed)
- Insulated ground pad
- Plastic ground tarp for protection from ground wetness for you or your equipment
- Plastic tarp to be rigged as quick shelter from rain or wind- to allow changing in rain into dry clothes, keeping you and equipment or subject dry or out of the wind when stationary (as relay, working on subject, bivouac, containment station)
- (5) 20ft sections of utility cord for rigging tarps, wind breaks
- metal whistle should be taped around mouthpiece to prevent contact freezing of lips on cold metal.
- Antifog stuff for people wearing glasses, soft wipe for clearing fog on glasses.
- Pair of current prescription glasses for people wearing contacts, along with your contact storage case.
- Bandanna or other absorbent material for nose drainage
- Fire starter