

4x4 Survival

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The best way to generate your own survival is to be prepared. This is true in almost all aspects of life, but especially when leaving civilization and heading out into the great outdoors. There are a few basics everybody should have with them when heading for the trails.

Friends: Real friends don't let friends wheel alone, and anyone who wants to increase their own chances of safe return will always wheel with at least one other rig. Ideally it is best to have at least two people in each vehicle. Following this simple rule allows for recoveries, as well as having someone to go for help if it is needed, and not possible with the personnel and equipment at hand.

Planning: Be sure you have a plan for your outing and let someone who is staying home know the area you plan to cover and when you will be back, as well as all possible information as to who will be traveling with you (as well as contact numbers for them or their friends), medical conditions or medications needed, vehicle descriptions (including tire tread pattern if possible), what supplies you have with you, what types of communication you have (and what channel or phone numbers), and a good overall idea of what your limitations are and how extreme you plan to wheel. It is also a very good idea to have a good map of the area, and if possible, a guide who is familiar with the local hazards along the trails.

Communication: You should always have a way to communicate between vehicles, and if necessary, call for help should the need arise. CB radios are the most common mode of communication on the trail and has been since the beginning of the sport. Most areas have a common channel that is used while wheeling. I believe it is channel 4 in the Western Washington area, although channel 10 is used up in Whatcom County. Lately FRS radios have become quite popular for almost all outdoor activities. It is also a good idea to take your cellular phone along since there have been many times when people have been able to get a call for EMS or SAR response just by dialing 911 out on the trail.

Recovery Equipment: It is never a good idea to leave pavement without basic recovery gear. This includes a good snatch strap, come-a-long with tree strap, shovel, ax and jack. I also encourage people to carry snow chains for their tires year round. The difference in traction in mud, sand or even snow is incredible. Once you get more involved with wheeling, you may get more and better equipment such as a recovery winch, extra lengths of cable, tow chains, D-rings, and a whole list of other exotic toys. One more item I consider to be absolutely necessary for any off road vehicle is proper tow points on both ends of the vehicle. It is highly recommended that you never use a tow ball, spring shackle, or any kind of sway bar as a tow point. Doing so could do permanent damage to both the vehicle and the people involved.

Survival Necessities: The most basic of survival requirements are food, water, shelter, and possibly the most important, the right attitude. Water is one of the most overlooked

necessities of life when people go out to play. The harder you exert yourself and the hotter you get can easily lead to heat stroke if you don't drink enough water. Even in the winter when the weather is cold, you can easily overheat yourself by doing strenuous activities while wearing enough clothing to keep warm in that environment. You should start drinking water before you get thirsty if you are in a situation where you could easily become overheated, since you will be trying to play catch up if you wait until you feel thirsty. Also be aware that sugary drinks, alcohol, or drinks with caffeine will not help since they cause more dehydration. It is always a good idea to bring along enough water and food for at least a couple of extra days in the event of delays or emergencies. Shelter is also something that can be overlooked since most people consider their vehicles to be all the shelter they will need. In extreme situations such as a rollover, you may not have the shelter needed, and having a few extras such as tarps, space blankets, rain gear, sleeping bags, or my favorite, wool blankets can make a real difference in either surviving or just the level of comfort you experience. It is also a good idea to have an extra change of clothing and footwear along, just in case you manage to get yourself soaked to the skin. A real handy item that can be used as almost all the above items, with varying levels of comfort, are large plastic garbage bags. If you choose this option, make sure you also bring along lots of duct tape. I hope everyone knows that almost anything is possible with the right attitude, and survival is no exception. If you have a bad attitude, you can almost always count on things not going as well as possible, so keep an upbeat attitude and keep trying to find solutions to any problems you face.

Noise Making Devise: From a Search & Rescue standpoint, I would like to see everyone who leaves pavement to carry a whistle. If you get lost, you can only scream for help for so long before your voice gives out. If you have a horn, the power supply is limited. If you count on using a firearm for signaling, you will eventually run out of ammunition, but as long as you can breath, you can blow a whistle. I have personally been on several searches where we were able to locate our victim quickly because he had a whistle, and let us know his location by just blowing his whistle every minute or so.

Lights: Even if you have no intention of wheeling after dark, it can sometimes sneak up on you, and though it may not be life or death, a good flashlight (or one per person) can really feel like a lifesaver, especially in the event of mechanical difficulties. Remember to carry extra batteries and possibly even an extra bulb. Having a spotlight with you can also be handy in seeing your surroundings or as a signaling devise.

First Aid Kit: Having a first aid kit in your vehicle and taking some basic first aid training is just common sense. You should carry as much stuff as you would like to have available if someone was using this first aid kit on you.

Vehicle Inspections: A quick inspection should be done before you go out on the trail to make sure any and all modifications are still where they are supposed to be and should work properly on the trail, and an other inspection should be done just prior to returning to pavement to make sure nothing was damaged on the run.