

Making Emergency Shelter

Emergency Shelters

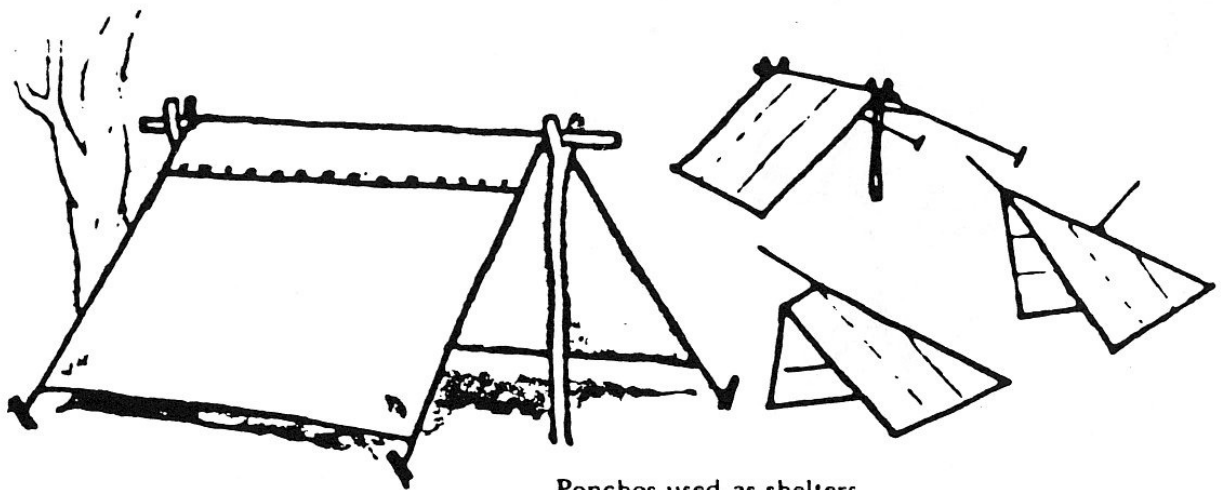
Your day of hiking may begin with clear skies and an excellent weather forecast, but hiking in the woods can often bring the unexpected. Even with the best planning, there may come a time you will need to create your own emergency shelter. In the mountains, you may need to shelter from wind, rain or snow. In the desert, you may need to shelter from sun and/or wind. With this in mind, you should always have a poncho or small ground sheet and some rope or twine in your backpack. Having these items readily available may help you create an appropriate shelter. If you use a walking stick, this can be an added bonus in an emergency.

Determining what shelter works best in each situation requires some thought and skill.

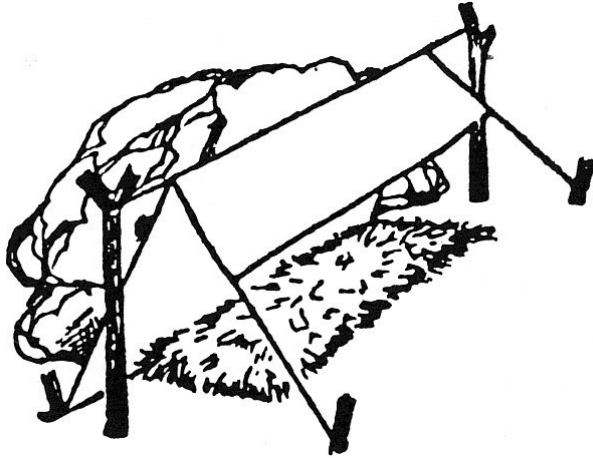
Rain Shelter

The easiest and fastest shelter would be to find a fallen tree or overhanging rock that can be used as a natural barrier to rain and wind. By wrapping yourself in your poncho or tarp you could stay reasonably dry through a short downpour.

But what if there was no natural barrier or the rain and wind required more protection? You can make a temporary shelter fairly quickly using your poncho or tarp, your walking stick or tree branches, and rocks that would shelter several people.

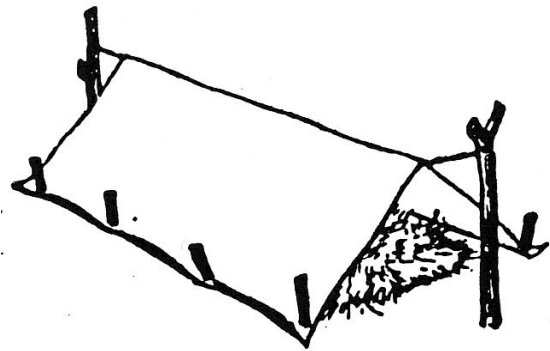


Ponchos used as shelters

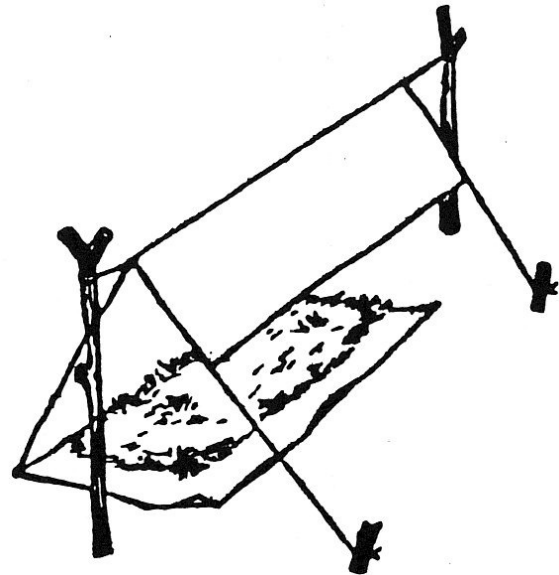


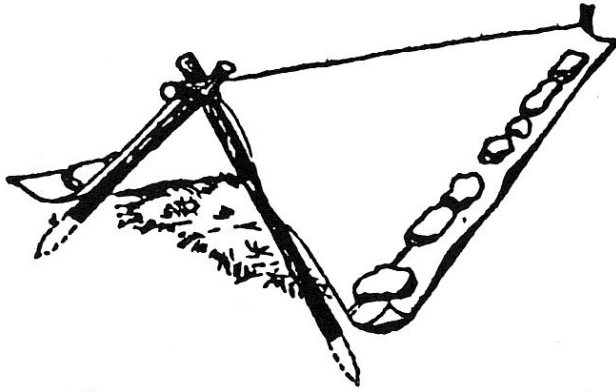
Always remember to check for wind direction, sloping in case of water runoff,

and when possible, use bracken or grass for a dry floor.



If your ground sheet is large enough, you can wrap it to cover the floor.





An open-ended shelter gives little protection when it is windy. A shelter staked to the ground with one opening (away from the wind and rain direction) will keep you dry and warm.

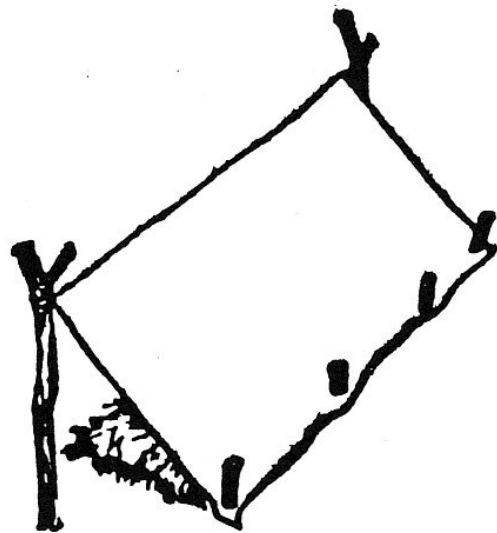
Ground duff (leaves and de-composting material) piled on top of your staked tarp edge works well to keep moisture from seeping under your shelter.

Sun Shelter

A shelter from the sun can be more open sided than one protecting you from wind and rain. The object with this shelter is to get out of the sun to protect you from dehydration and sunstroke.

If there were little or no wind, you would want large opening to help air circulation. If it is also windy, you may have to adjust your shelter to accommodate for this factor.

Regardless of which type of shelter the weather requires, because you are prepared you can create a structure to protect you from the elements until you can continue on your hike. In either case, always consider the following:



- Pick a safe place for your shelter, away from obstacles, potential for falling rocks or tree limbs, and animal dens/nests.
- Do not place your shelter in a dry watercourse. The potential for flooding in a rain storm is always high.
- While sunlight will supply warmth (not wanted in a desert situation!), open areas are more vulnerable to wind.
- Open-ended and large shelters do not retain heat. Determining how your shelter is to be used is very important. Smaller, closed shelters are better in rain and wind, while an open sided structure would be better in heat.