

FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

WILDERNESS SIGNAL CARD

Stop moving. Send the signal that travels. Then get loud and get seen.

FIRST TEN MINUTES

- ☐ **STOP WALKING**
Every step widens the search area from your last known position
- ☐ **S.T.O.P. — Sit, Think, Observe, Plan**
Sit down, drink water, inventory the pack, treat injuries
- ☐ **Activate beacon or satellite messenger**
Only signal that leaves the valley on its own
- ☐ **Call AND text 911 if any bars**
Text sometimes gets out where a call will not
- ☐ **Get shelter and warmth handled**
Exposure kills faster than being unfound

WHAT TO TELL 911

- ☐ GPS coordinates from your phone
- ☐ Trail / area where you started
- ☐ Last location you were sure of
- ☐ Surroundings and visible landmarks
- ☐ Clothing type and colors
- ☐ Equipment carried + medical conditions

SOUND & LIGHT — THREE OF ANYTHING

- ☐ **Whistle: 3 blasts, pause, 3 blasts**
Saves your voice and carries far further than a shout
- ☐ **Flashlight SOS: 3 quick, 3 slow, 3 quick**
Use deliberately — batteries are finite
- ☐ **Strobe: up to 9 hours continuous**
- ☐ **Chemical light on a cord, swung in a circle**

Time is the enemy. The National Search and Rescue Plan states that an injured survivor's life expectancy drops as much as 80% in the first 24 hours. Signal early and keep signaling.

DAYLIGHT SIGNALS

- ☐ **Mirror: sweep the flash along the horizon**
FAA: flashes spotted from over 25 miles; works even under overcast
- ☐ **Anything reflective works**
Phone screen, foil blanket, polished gear
- ☐ **Fire: three fires in a triangle**
ONLY if fire danger is low and fires are permitted
- ☐ **Dark smoke against snow / pale rock**
Rubber, plastic, petroleum, evergreen boughs — stay out of the plume
- ☐ **White smoke against dark timber**
Green wood, damp leaves, moss, ferns

BEING SEEN FROM THE AIR — CCLAS

- ☐ **Condition**
Check and repair the signal daily
- ☐ **Contrast**
Hard color against its background
- ☐ **Location**
High and open, not a shaded creek bottom
- ☐ **Angularity**
Straight lines read as human from above
- ☐ **Size — 6:1 ratio, aim for 18 ft x 3 ft**

- | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| I | A doctor is needed |
| II | Medicine is needed |
| X | Unable to continue |
| F | Water and/or food is needed |
| K | Which direction do I go |
| LL | Everything is OK |
| N | No |
| Y | Yes |
| → | Proceeding in this direction |

TRIP PLAN — LEAVE THIS BEHIND

- ☐ **Trailhead / area:** _____
- ☐ **Route:** _____
- ☐ **Back by:** _____
Call for help if I am not back by this time
- ☐ **Vehicle / plate:** _____
- ☐ **Photo of the group taken at the trailhead**