

Gear

One of the biggest issues for CAP members new to Search and Rescue (SAR) is the amount and type of equipment required to do the job. Experienced SAR personnel know what type of equipment is needed in the field, and more importantly, what type of equipment is not needed. In addition, equipment cost can be an issue to personnel new to Search and Rescue. New students in the WESS program often have a number of questions regarding gear. First, there is generally concern over the amount of equipment that must be purchased in order to participate; to ease this requirement, not all the task equipment is required up front. We attempt to curtail the amount of equipment that is required to participate in the first few weekends. After participating in ES training, many individuals decide that emergency services activities simply do not interest them. Consequently, new (and possibly unused equipment) simply goes to waste. However, if participants feel as if ES activities interest them, they can acquire equipment slowly over time as they complete their training. This section serves to provide an introduction to the type of equipment necessary to participate in the WESS cycle. Three topics are covered: required gear, gear necessary to pass task O-0001, and prohibited equipment.

Required Items

The list of minimum required equipment is provided below; these are items that you absolutely must have to attend each WESS. If individuals do not have each item on this list, they will not be able to participate. It may not be necessary to go out and purchase each item on this list; many items can be found around the house. This list also includes the price taken from a local Wal-Mart to give an idea of how much this should cost.

- Clothing: this is your first line of defense against the elements. Make sure all clothing is clean and in good repair prior to WESS. It's a good idea to waterproof your extra underclothes and socks by placing them in Ziploc bags.
 - Battle Dress Uniforms (BDUs), 1 set, complete with all required name tapes and patches, cutouts, and grade insignia in accordance with CAPM 39-1
 - BDU cap
 - Combat boots, at least one pair. It is important that boots be broken in prior to the WESS cycle.
 - Blue belt with subdued tip and buckle for wear with BDUs
 - Underclothes and socks sufficient for three days. These should be appropriate to both uniform regulations and the prevailing weather. Black or brown shirts are required; socks should be heavy enough to keep feet warm.
- Toiletries: Travel size items available at any pharmacy or discount store are preferred because of their small size. Most of these cost around \$1 each. All can be stored together in a Ziploc bag or a small toiletries bag.
 - Soap (in case)
 - Toothbrush (in case) and toothpaste
 - Razor and shaving cream (as necessary)
 - Comb or brush (as necessary)
 - Items of feminine hygiene (as necessary)
 - Deodorant or antiperspirant
 - Other items as necessary (contact solution and case, Kleenex, etc.). Bring enough to last for the entire weekend.

- At least two quarts of water. Most people bring 2 military canteens or a Camelbak type system. Alternatively, just bring some store-bought bottled water, or fill a couple two liter containers with water.
- International orange reflective vest. You can find these in the hunting section of an outdoor store for around \$5.
- Pocket knife. A small Swiss Army Knife or Leatherman multi-tool is preferred. These are much more versatile than a plain pocket knife, and aren't very expensive (\$15 and up). No large or "specialty" knives (such as K-bar, survival knives, or switchblades) will be allowed.
- Flashlight (With Red Lens). Ensure that your flashlight has a red lens; this is very important for night exercises. A good mini-Maglight costs about \$10. Blue or other color lenses are not a permissible substitution for a red lens.
- Pocket note pad (3" x 5"), pen and pencil. Total cost is about \$1. These items should also be kept in a Ziplock bag.
- Inexpensive wristwatch. Total cost is around \$10. Expensive watches or jewelry should not be brought to WESS.
- Shelter material, preferably 8' x 10' (spare military poncho meets the need). A 6ft x 8ft tarp with grommets (metal rings along the edge) costs \$5 at Wal-Mart. A small tent may be brought; however, during the cycle, each student must construct and use a rescue shelter. As such, a tent is generally extra, unnecessary weight.
- Food for two days. Food must be compact, high in energy, and not need refrigeration or cooking. The following details ideas of what to bring, as well as what not to bring:
 - Good things to bring:
 - MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat). Military surplus or civilian equivalent, these are great for the outdoors.
 - Tuna lunch packs, canned soup, and canned pasta are good choices if you don't mind eating them cold. Beef jerky is also a good choice, as it's much more palatable when cold.
 - Dried or canned fruits are perfect for eating out in the field.
 - Trail Mix (known as GORP - Good Old Raisins and Peanuts) is a favorite among Ground Teams.
 - Crackers, dry cereal or instant oatmeal make solid breakfast and good snacks.
 - Energy bars (Power Bars, Kudos, Granola or cereal bars)
 - Water, Gatorade, or other drink powders
 - Bad things to bring:
 - Fast food – does not keep overnight, and is high in saturated fats
 - Candy and soft drinks are not permitted in the field.
 - Potato chips or other junk food is poor nutrition in a field environment.
 - Bananas and other fresh fruit. Although good and healthy food, fruit can be difficult to manage in the field. Dried fruits provide the same nutrition with easier field manageability. However, one or two pears or apples can be placed in gear without much problem.
 - Jell-O; almost no nutritional value and very bulky.
 - Sandwiches from home that should be refrigerated (mayonnaise goes bad very quickly).

- Be sure to bring utensils if needed. In addition, bring enough food to provide energy and nutrition for the length of the WESS. Total cost of food for one WESS should be between \$10-\$20, depending on personal taste and preference.
- Sleeping bag, bedroll or poncho liner. A sleeping bag is a simple requirement; students are not allowed to simply sleep under a coat. The proper amount of rest is critical when operating in the field. Bring a sleeping bag that is appropriate to the weather; don't bring a light sleeping bag in winter or a heavy one in summer. A simple sleeping bag is approximately \$20-\$40 at an outdoors store.
- Compass. Either kind (lensatic or orienteering) is permissible; however, a lensatic compass is preferred for WESS navigation. An inexpensive compass can be purchased at Wal-Mart for around \$3. More high quality compasses can cost \$50 or more, and are not required in our training. A compass should have a glow in the dark dial and be secured to gear by a lanyard or placed in a pouch.
- Whistle. A simple athletic whistle is fine. A ball whistle is preferred over a one piece plastic whistle; \$1.50 at a sports store.

The following are items that are not on the required list, but are very useful to have in the field, even on your first WESS.

- Backpack or Load Bearing Equipment (LBE). This carries all of your gear; consequently, it needs to be large enough to do the job without being too bulky. Many experienced Ground Team members use Camelbaks or Bashaw Rescue Vest systems; however, these items are expensive, specialized items for those committed to Ground Team operations. Don't go out and purchase one of these for your first WESS. Many units have LBE's (web belts, harnesses, pouches) available. Or, a simple regular school-type backpack is sufficient. Wal-Mart has several sturdy packs in the outdoors section for \$10 to \$20. A pack that is water proof or water-resistant is preferred, but not required.
- Small personal First Aid kit. This is meant for YOU, not an entire team, so it doesn't need to be big. Many students get small cuts or scrapes in the field; a small first aid kit is a good way to take care of them. A small first aid kit runs about \$10. Alternatively, a small first aid kit can be assembled with Band-Aids and ointments in a Ziploc bag.
- Bug spray and sunscreen. \$5 total for both.
- Paracord or other nylon line. Experienced GT members will tell you that this paracord is one of the most useful pieces of equipment in the field. 100ft can be purchased for around \$8 at an outdoors store.

As previously mentioned, many of these items can be found around the house. In addition, ask your local unit if they have any sleeping bags, compasses or packs available. Use what you have available before you decide to go out and get everything new!

Task O-0001 Items

The items listed below are required to pass task O-0001 (these items are **in addition to** the minimum required items; everything on the minimum required list is also on the task list). Each student must pass this task at some point during the WESS cycle. A brief description of the item as well as advice on where to find it is included. The entire gear assembly is split into two sections: the 24 hour pack and the 72 hour pack.

24 Hour Pack

This is the equipment that is carried during normal ground operations. As the name implies, it is intended to support you for 24 hours in the event of an emergency.

- Backpack or other LBE, as discussed under Required Items.
- Signal mirror. A small, pocket sized mirror or other reflective device will work. Specially made signal mirrors cost around \$10 at an outdoors store. More inexpensive signal mirrors can be purchased for around \$5.
- First Aid kit. This is required in the 24 hour pack. The following items are recommended for the kit, and can all be found at a pharmacy or discount store. Most store-bought first aid kits include some of these items already, so you may be able to cut your costs by getting one. Also, keep in mind that this is a recommended list only; other items might be practical to include based on personal needs. For example, someone may require contact solution or hand sanitizer.
 - 2 Antiseptic cleaning pads (alcohol swabs)
 - Antiseptic ointment (Neosporin)
 - 6 Band-Aids of various sizes
 - Sheet of Moleskin, 2x4 inches (for blisters)
 - Roller bandage
 - 2 large safety pins
 - 4 gauze pads
 - 1 Triangular bandage (for tying splints)
 - First aid tape (trainer's tape)
 - Any personal medications you need (be sure to tell your team leader if you are carrying meds)
 - Surgical gloves (2 pair, latex or rubber)
- Survival kit. Store these items in Ziploc bags or other waterproof container to keep them dry.
 - Duct tape, 5 to 10 feet. An entire roll is not needed; duct tape can be wrapped to cut down on the amount of space it takes up. Some hardware stores carry duct tape in flat packs that are perfect for SAR use.
 - Large leaf bag. Hefty, Husky and Glad all make them in a variety of sizes and thicknesses. These have a huge number of uses out in the field (trash bag, make-shift poncho, gear covering, ground-cloth, etc.) and take up very little space. As these bags are very useful, it is recommended that a few be carried in the 24 hour gear.
 - 12 wooden, waterproofed matches. Matches are better than a lighter in the field and a lot more compact. A box of matches is very inexpensive and can be found in most stores. Be sure that the box has a striking surface on the side (rough looking strip of red diamond shapes).
 - Waterproof match container. A cylindrical metal container for this purpose can be found at any outdoors store. Or, a match box can be wrapped in a Ziploc bag.
 - 1 green chemical light stick. These are sold in pairs for about \$3 at Wal-Mart. Chemical sticks have many uses in the field; as such it is recommended that more than one be carried.
 - 50 feet of paracord or other nylon line. As previously mentioned, paracord has a number of field uses. It can be used for everything from tying up your shelter to

replacing your shoelaces. 100ft can be purchased for around \$8 at an outdoors store.

- SAR equipment. Again, store these items in Ziploc bags or other waterproof containers.
 - Change of socks. It's always a good idea to have an extra pair of socks handy in the field in case your feet get wet.
 - Roll of orange flagging tape. Flagging tape can be found the hunting section of an outdoors store for less than \$5. A large roll is not required; 50 feet is sufficient.
 - Spare flashlight. An inexpensive pocket sized pen light is sufficient. In addition, extra batteries and bulbs for your spare and main flashlight should be brought.
 - Insect repellent.
 - Lip balm, with sunscreen (such as Chap Stick)
 - Sunscreen based on personal preference (30 SPF, 50 SPF, etc.). Note that tanning oil is not a substitute for sunscreen.
 - Tissue paper. Travel sized packs of toilet paper or Kleenex can be purchased at a pharmacy or grocery store for \$1 or so.
 - Leather work gloves. Be sure that gloves are leather and in good repair; cloth gloves tend to rip easily in the field.
 - Blank Interviewing Forms. Also known as a CAP Form 106, this is used to record information gathered from interview subjects. Interviewing forms are available from a local unit, "The Next Step" CD, or from the CAP website.
 - 4 moist Towelettes. Wet naps or other wet wipes are ideal.
- Coat for appropriate climate, if necessary. During some of the colder months, heavier undergarments and gloves might be needed as well.
- Poncho or other raingear. There are numerous types of ponchos and raingear available. The simplest is a clear plastic "emergency" poncho you can find at Wal-Mart for a few dollars. The adage "you get what you pay for" is true regarding raingear; it is recommended that raingear be something more durable than an emergency poncho. Military ponchos are light, cheap (\$10) and can be found in any surplus store, but are often old and used. Heavier rubber ponchos can be purchased at an outdoors store (\$10), as can two piece rain suits (pants and jackets). However, some of these heavier materials can also be much hotter to wear.
- Ground Team Leader's Equipment: These items are required ONLY for those training to be Ground Team Leaders.
 - Protractor. A clear plastic half-circle or full-circle protractor is recommended. Look in the school supplies section of Wal-Mart.
 - Map case. Either a specialty map case or a large Ziploc bag is sufficient for this purpose. The main purpose is to keep maps and mapping equipment dry and secure.
 - Pencil with eraser. A mechanical pencil is ideal, just ensure that it contains enough lead; a regular No. 2 pencil will suffice, but will require a small sharpener.
 - 2 colored, fine tip alcohol pens. Make sure that neither color is red, as it won't show up under the red lens on your flashlight.
 - Eraser for alcohol pens (alcohol swabs or special alcohol pen eraser).
 - 6 inch straightedge ruler. Again, a clear plastic one is best; some half circle protractors will have this on the straight edge.

72 Hour Gear

Commonly referred to as “base gear,” this is designed to support an individual for an extended period of time (up to 72 hours). This portion of the gear includes sleeping bag, toiletries and additional meals.

- Backpack (preferably with a frame [internal or external]). During the day, this pack is left at base camp and the 24 hour pack is removed for the actual sorties.
- Tent or other shelter material. As previously discussed, tents are allowed at the beginning of the cycle, but are not recommended. The best option is a tarp or a pair of ponchos; using these for shelter allows a student to immediately pass the task for shelter building.
- Spare rank and CAP cutouts. As cadets know, “frogs” have a bad habit of coming off at bad times. Keep an extra set of cutouts in your gear in case you lose your insignia. It is important to keep uniforms in good order when we might be out in the public view.
- 5 meals. See discussion regarding food above.
- 2 large leaf bags.
- Spare uniform and 3 changes of undergarments and socks in a waterproof bag. During an extended stay in the field, a spare uniform may be needed.
- Sleeping pad, foam or inflatable. Foam pads are an inexpensive way to cushion sleep. The foam pads are pretty cheap (\$10 at Wal-Mart), while the inflatable pads can be pretty expensive (upwards of \$50 at an outdoors store). The benefit of an inflatable pad is that it can be more comfortable and is more compact when deflated.
- Spare boot laces. In the field, boots can take a tremendous amount of punishment. The laces are their weakest point, so an extra set can be necessary. Pre-cut paracord can meet the need until replacement laces can be purchased.
- Sewing kit with spare buttons. A military sewing kit can be purchased at a surplus store or military clothing sales for \$5; they often include the correct buttons for BDU's, as well as needles, thread and safety pins.
- Shoe shine kit. Shining boots helps waterproof the leather and can help present a professional appearance to the public.
- Toiletries kit, as described in the required items list.
- Sleeping bag, as described in the required items list.

Optional Items

These items are not required by the task guide, but the staff has found them to be incredibly useful in SAR operations.

- Tent stakes. NO ONE packs them, but everybody needs them. It's much easier to set up a shelter with store bought tent stakes. Aluminum or steel tent stakes are light, cheap, durable and effective.
- Water Purification tablets or water purifier. In most circumstances, these are not necessary, especially during training. In an emergency, however, they can come in handy.
- Entrenching tool. Also known as a camp shovel, having one of these can greatly assist setting up a base camp. However, they are heavy and bulky, making it inefficient for all members of your team to bring one. Coordinate beforehand with teammates on such tools.
- Extra Ziploc bags. Keeping your clothes, food, notepad and other items in Ziploc bags can help keep you comfortable and effective under adverse conditions. Bringing a few

extra bags along to replace bags that break or hold bits of trash and other items is recommended.

Items Not to Bring

There are a number of items that are not to be brought to any WESS

- Combustible materials: fireworks, butane lighters, propane stoves, or sterno
- Weapons: firearms, knives with blades greater than six inches in length or otherwise prohibited under task O-0001, pepper spray, tazers, etc.
- Radios or other electronics
- Alcoholic beverages
- Medical supplies that an individual is not qualified to use