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OUTDOOR SURVIVAL TIPS

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Know How To Build A Bough Bed And A Lean-to Shelter In An Emergency

Building a bough bed and lean-to shelter is something to think about. In the northwest it is an easy matter for almost anyone to become lost. Knowing what to do to make yourself as comfortable as possible if you have to spend a night in the wilds could mean the difference between life and death. It could also come in handy on an ordinary camping trip.

Tips On How To Do The Activity

The secret of making a good bough bed is to lay and mat the boughs so you can get the advantage of the natural curve and spring of them. The coarser boughs are laid first with the curve down. You then build up with the small bushier boughs being careful to bury the coarser stems into the layers beneath. The bushier and heavy needled boughs are best.

Select a reasonably level location preferably on heavy duff. Then find and bed down a couple of small side logs to keep boughs from spreading too much. The logs should be spaced wide enough apart to make a bed of 3 or more feet wide. Between these logs lay down and lace together a matting of boughs 6 to 8 inches deep. Use only the softer and bushier bough ends for the upper two inches. This covers the coarser boughs underneath and allows the body to settle down into more comfort.

Cutting boughs to make a bed need not be harmful to the trees if the lower branches are used. If the lower branches are carefully removed as in pruning, the removal will be beneficial. Likewise, trees removed as a thinning will do more good than harm.

Lean-to shelters must be made of the materials at hand. Large pieces of Douglas-fir bark from windfalls and old stumps are one example. Under all circumstances it will be necessary to prepare a framework of some kind on which to hang or lean the covering material. Large pieces of Douglas-fir bark leaned against a fallen log could be a simple way to get two sides for a shelter quickly.

A natural cave in a hillside, or the protection of a large windfall root are other examples of places that might be quickly adopted for emergency shelter. Protection from wind and rain can also be secured by using a number of small poles to support a matting of cedar and fir boughs laid over them. The poles could be leaned against a large log or support for them could be made by driving two poles into the ground and lashing a cross piece between them. The covering should be laid steep enough so the rain will run off and not seep in. Boughs should be laid on the poles stem end up and they should be laid in courses much as you would lay shingles. The branch ends of any course should overlap the next lower course fully half way. In every case the job will be easier if you can take advantage of natural cover and improve on it.

Every time you are in the woods make a practice of looking for places that could serve as emergency shelter and think about what you could do to improve on it with the materials around you. Select a spot on your woodlot and practice making it into an emergency shelter under which to make a bough bed.

Plan a good location for your fire. The fire will be a very important part of your comfort and it should be located so as to reflect the most heat into the shelter. If rocks are available these can be piled up against the fire and serve to reflect heat into the shelter. These same rocks can also be heated and placed under the outer edge of the bough bed to give additional warmth. A large heated rock at the foot of the bed against which your feet could be held will do much to keep you warm. Remember the secret of survival when lost is to keep as warm and dry as possible. Panic is probably the biggest hazard to be overcome. There will be a lot of comfort and assurance in your ability to make a satisfactory emergency shelter. It is worth practicing and planning for.

Available Reference Material For This Activity

1. Handbook for Boys - Boy Scouts of America pp. 136-142; 155-158; 331-339

Local People And Organizations Available For Help

1. All local foresters
2. Scout leader or any advanced scout
3. Any experienced local woodsman