**THE FIRST DECISION TO MAKE:**

**To Stay or to Walk Out**

Whether to stay and camp, or to attempt to walk out, is the first decision for you to make. If you are lost, you should stay. You do not know where to go anyway. That is why you are lost. Stay put so you can assess your situation.

When you first realize that you may be lost stop, find the closest tree and give it a bear hug. The term, “Hug a Tree” is used so that when you determine that you are lost, or think you are lost, you hug a tree till the initial panic phase passes, you calm down and clear thought prevail.

If you are lost it is imperative that you have a clear mind with logical thought patterns to be able to assess your situation. Clear and logical thoughts, from the start of any situation, raise the possibility of a successful outcome.

Circumstances may require that you leave the immediate area, if you have been forced into a survival situation because of an airplane crash or a canoe overturning, you could attempt to walk out if you have a map and a compass and are not more than a few days from a road, a railway, or a human habitation. Otherwise you should stay. Make camp near an opening or a lake where a searching aircraft will have a better chance of spotting you.

The decision to walk out should not be a decision made in hast. If you are by a vehicle that has broken down, it can provide you with a shelter to sleep in and get out of the elements. The floor mats and trunk lining can be used to wrap yourself in to keep you warm. The vehicle also provides you with a huge marker or beacon for searchers to find. The fuel in the gas tank should be used very cautiously as the fumes from gasoline are extremely flammable and other petroleum products can be very volatile or have other undesirable side effects . Burning petroleum products leave a residue on things and if you cook over a fire that has or is using petroleum products, this residue will be on your food.

An aircraft can provide you with even more options over a car or truck. Most aircraft have emergency locator beacons that will bring rescuers to you. Shade from the wings and seats from the passenger compartment can make you quite comfortable if they are still intact. The one downside to a plane accident is the fuel on board. Aviation fuel can be found in large quantities onboard airplanes and you need to pay attention to where any fuel is or has leaked out of the plane as this could result in a very serious fire hazard that could jeopardize your health.

You often hear reported on the news that the rescuers have found the missing car, truck or plane well before they find the people who have left these vehicles to walk out on their own to safety.

Do not risk getting more lost. Searchers are more likely to find you if you are near a car, truck or aircraft.

On the other hand you may not be able to stay with the vehicle. If the vehicle, (car, truck or plane) is no longer usable or is rendered unusable or dangerous to be around you will have to seek shelter elsewhere. Will you stay in the area? Will you try and walk to find your way out of the situation? These questions can only be answered by determining how prepared you are to deal with what is ahead for you in each situation.

What you have just read may have confused you as to what you are supposed to do and it was meant to do just that. Survival is making decisions and then following through on those decisions. Every decision you make in a survival situation can mean the difference between life and death. No one decision works in every survival situation. This unit will give you the information and skills needed to make those decisions to help you, survive.