

HOW TO START A FIRE WITH WATER



**501 ESSENTIAL SURVIVAL SKILLS
FOR HOME, WORK, OUTDOORS,
TRAVEL, AND ANYWHERE
DISASTER STRIKES**

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P · R · E · S · S

San Diego, California



Thunder Bay Press
 An imprint of Printers Row Publishing Group
 10350 Barnes Canyon Road, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92121
 www.thunderbaybooks.com

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All notations of errors or omissions should be addressed to Thunder Bay Press, Editorial Department, at the above address. All other correspondence (author inquiries, permissions) concerning the content of this book should be addressed to:

Primrose Productions
 145 West 17th Street, Ste 5
 New York, NY 10011

Thunder Bay Press
 Publisher: Peter Norton
 Publishing Team: Lori Asbury, Ana Parker, Laura Vignale, Kathryn Chipinka
 Editorial Team: JoAnn Padgett, Melinda Allman

A Primrose Production
 Art Direction: Krzysztof Poluchowicz/Paper Plane Design

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Arama, David, author.
 Title: How to start a fire with water : 501 essential survival skills for home, work, outdoors, travel, and anywhere disaster strikes / David Arama.
 Description: San Diego, California : Thunder Bay Press, 2016.
 Identifiers: LCCN 2016001339 (print) | LCCN 2016009948 (ebook) | ISBN 9781626866676 (hardback) | ISBN 9781626867994
 Subjects: LCSH: Survival. | Survival and emergency equipment. | BISAC: SPORTS & RECREATION / Outdoor Skills. | REFERENCE / Handbooks & Manuals.
 Classification: LCC GF86 .W47 2016 (print) | LCC GF86 (ebook) | DDC 613.6/9--dc23
 LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2016001339>

ISBN: 978-1-62686-667-6

Printed in China

20 19 18 17 16 1 2 3 4 5

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The author would like to thank the following individuals, whose contributions and support have been invaluable in putting together this book: Frank Yamich, my first survival instructor and mentor; Paul Tarsitano, Chris Reid, and Connie Hammer; Primrose Productions, Krzysztof Poluchowicz of Paper Plane Designs, and everyone at Readerlink for making this book a reality.

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THE SURVIVAL MINDSET



THE SURVIVAL MINDSET



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READING THIS BOOK COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!

Every year, countless numbers of people find themselves in disastrous situations: they get lost in the wilds, caught in a flash flood, or slide off the road during a snowstorm. Increasingly, headlines are full of ice storms, wind storms, polar vortexes, blizzards, floods, forest fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, urban civil disturbances, and power grid blackouts, most of which catch the average individual or family utterly unprepared. Even the best prepared government agencies can handle only so much, and when faced with millions of victims who are caught in a disaster, official responses can be slow, inefficient, or even non-existent. Most people caught in these situations are woefully unprepared and react with shock and fear.

Why, when the news is full of disaster, does this continue to be the case? Certainly, there's a widespread overreliance on technology and social media for assistance, leading people to feel that they needn't learn even the most basic skills or keep any type of survival equipment on hand. Despite a documented worldwide trend toward extreme weather, many people refuse to take it seriously. Add to this the myriad types of unexpected events such as power grid failures, and the result is a lot of totally unprepared people stranded in

very precarious situations. In general, modern life, with all its ease and convenience, has left many of us feeling somewhat apathetic about being prepared. We think, "That could never happen to me" or "The authorities will take care of it." And that leads to disaster. Most of the victims of these kinds of situations could have survived had they taken an even slightly proactive approach. That's where this book comes in.

I have been teaching outdoor survival techniques and disaster preparedness classes for more than 30 years. During those years, I've also lived on my own at an off-grid wilderness retreat, where I've put many of these tips to the test. The most important lesson I've learned, and the first thing I teach my students: survival is about being prepared. Reading this book is a good start. The fact that you picked it up in the first place shows that the thought has at least crossed your mind that you might encounter a situation in which you or your loved ones could be in jeopardy. You understand that there are important things you need to know in order to have the best chance at getting out alive—and you are motivated to gain this information. In the chapters ahead, I'm going to guide you along the path to acquiring the basic knowledge and skills that every person needs to be able to face disaster and come out the other side. I call this developing a **"survival mindset."** That survival mindset is what is going to distinguish you from the victims of disaster.

Let's start with the fundamental concepts that underlie the survival mindset—the key to surviving any situation. Subsequent chapters will deal with specific situations, and give practical, step-by-step advice. But first, the basics—how do you acquire a survival mindset?

“Panic causes tunnel vision. Calm acceptance of danger allows us to more easily assess the situation and see the options.”
—Simon Sinek

1

Don't Panic!

This is the number one tip for very good reason. In my classes, I often refer to panic as “the killer.” From basic Psychology 101 courses, most of us know that when confronted with danger, humans typically respond with one of the classic reactions of “flight, fight, or freeze.” Your heart rate speeds up as adrenaline is released, your muscles tighten in readiness, your blood pressure increases, and your thoughts race. Though these responses can be lifesaving, it's better to calm down. The adrenaline rush of panic all too often leads to poor decision-making, with disaster as the result. Lost in the wilds, people typically race around in circles trying to find their way out, escalating exhaustion and the likelihood of injury, while making it difficult for searchers to find them. During natural disasters such as hurricanes, people frequently freeze, becoming immobile with fear, instead of evacuating or seeking safe shelter. Stuck in a car at a railroad crossing, victims have been known to frantically try to back up off the tracks or to use their cell phones to call for help rather than simply abandon the car and run like hell! Even worse, panic can be contagious, spreading rapidly in a wave, and further increasing the number of people in danger. So that is why my number one tip is “Don't panic!” But how do we tame our fight-or-flight reactions? Take a deep breath! Your brain won't work without oxygen. Read on to find out how to react calmly, tapping into your survival mindset.

2

Think Ahead

Before you embark on any adventure, ask yourself this important question:

“What could go wrong?”

For example, if you are taking the subway or bus to work, “What will I do if service is canceled?” Perhaps you have a weekend boating day planned. “How will I avoid drowning? What severe weather events could I face?” If you know you will be driving on a remote rural highway in the winter, you'll

need to think, “How do I deal with sliding into a ditch? What happens if I have a mechanical breakdown?” Getting into the habit of thinking through the potential hazards is a key behavior for people who survive. Practice this regularly!

Rehearse Survival

Preparedness is the key to survival. Studies (and basic common sense) show that planning, rehearsing, and simulating survival scenarios can help us to avoid panic—and instead respond intelligently to adverse situations. Thinking ahead is the first step, but it is planning and practice that transform the knowledge you gain from thinking and reading into actual skills. This book is going to show you how to get prepared; the following chapters review a variety of hazardous situations to help you develop the ability to recognize danger wherever you are and understand how to respond to it appropriately, remaining calm and making life-saving decisions. But actual practice is key—repetition imprints the skills into your brain and body, so that you can act swiftly and confidently even in the midst of chaos. I recommend that you find a way to practice your survival skills by taking classes, attending workshops, and keeping your training up-to-date—it could save your life.

Get Organized

The very first step in preparedness is to assemble basic information and supplies. People who attend my workshops often want to jump right into action-oriented skills such as building a shelter in the woods, but disaster often strikes in much less dramatic circumstances. For true disaster planning you have start a little closer to home. When embarking on your survival preparedness and prevention planning, an often overlooked but extremely important element is organization, including some necessary paperwork. It is crucial to have emergency information, contacts, important forms, and checklists prepared well ahead of time.

3

4

You should have a basic information sheet for each member of your family, plus an accessible location where you have stored the important details regarding your home(s), cars, boat, or any other vehicles, and office or business, as well as emergency travel plans (see Resources, pages 204–205). To get started, assemble your information and paperwork so you can fill out these forms all at once; if you leave them unfinished, you may find that you never come back to them. Once completed, keep a paper copy of each form in a safe place in your home (a fireproof safe would be a good choice) and off-site as well. Additionally, keep a digital copy stored on your computer and at a cloud storage location.

5 **Fill Out a Personal Information Form**

This form contains your name, address, contact information, emergency contacts and their information, and your basic medical information. You need one for every member of your family who lives with you. If you have elderly parents or children who don't live with you, make sure you have copies of their forms on hand as well. See Resources, pages 204–205.

6 **Fill Out a Family Emergency Form**

Families with children should be sure to develop an emergency plan in case of a disaster and make sure all family members are familiar with it (see Tip 101); contact and location information for the emergency plan should be part of this form. See Resources, pages 204–205.

7 **Review and Update the Forms**

All your organization is worthless if you don't review these forms regularly. Update your forms each year on the same date or whenever information changes.

8 **Get Basic Supplies and Equipment**

As part of your commitment to survival, you will need

some basic supplies. The specific supplies you need depend on your particular environment and situation, and you will find lists in chapters ahead. For now, commit to making your initial list of basic survival supplies and obtaining them immediately.

Stop and Assess

Despite all your thinking ahead and planning, disaster cannot always be avoided. So when you unexpectedly find yourself in a dangerous situation, what is your first move? **Stop and assess.** First, recognize your situation—you are in trouble—but do not act right away. Don't let adrenaline rush in and push you into poor decision-making. Even as your heart is racing, you need to stop, breathe, and tell yourself to remain calm. Your goal is to make a realistic assessment of your situation. In first aid, this is called a “scene survey.” So STOP and think. What has happened? Who is affected? What is the immediate danger? If you are thinking like this, you are exhibiting a survival mindset—you are already on the path to survival.

Determine Your Resources

No matter what the survival situation, once you have calmed down and admitted that you are in trouble, your next step is to immediately determine what resources you have to help you survive. You will locate resources that are internal or intrinsic (your personal knowledge, such as

“*Imagination is an instrument of survival.*”
—Rogier van der Heide

a familiarity with the local terrain), external (your basic emergency kit, if you have thought ahead, or if you haven't, whatever you have brought with you, such as a flashlight or an energy bar), and what you can use

that is around you (for example, an empty bucket you can fill with water or use to bail). The ability to recognize and improvise with resources on hand can make the difference between life or death. For example, many people lost in