



Accidents happen. You may get lost or injured while recreating outdoors. Help can take hours or days depending on your location, weather, and resources. Read and practice the Outdoor Emergency Plan to learn how you can prevent getting lost or injured and what to do in case it happens. Use the [NPS Trip Planning Guide](#) to plan your visit and include any family or friends traveling with you.

PREVENT GETTING LOST OR INJURED

BEFORE THE TRIP

Get a park map – Print one from the park’s website, download one from the [NPS app](#), or pick one up at the Visitor Center. Consider a trail or topographic map if your activity requires a more detailed layout. Practice reading the map.

Review your route – Review the map and your planned route. Take note of landmarks you can use as a reference point.

Pack the [10 Essentials](#) – Practice using your compass or handheld GPS. Pack extra batteries for your flashlight.

Pack a whistle – Blowing a whistle helps people find you and saves your energy from yelling.

Pack a mirror – Flashing your mirror helps signal people if you become lost and mirrors don’t run out of battery.

Wear bright clothing – Make yourself easier to see in the case of a Search and Rescue event.

Fill out a [Trip Plan](#) – Leave it with a Trusted Contact who is not going on the trip with you.

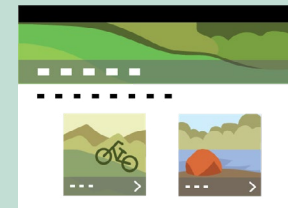
DURING THE TRIP

Stay on trail and designated areas – Reduce the risk of getting lost or injured while protecting the natural resources around you.

Stay aware – Pay attention to trail junctions, information signs, and landmarks. Frequently check that you are still on your planned route.



RANGER TIP



With a group? Check out the [Outdoor Emergency Plan](#) article to learn how to keep a group together.



Traveling with kids? Check out the [Junior Ranger Park Explorer](#) where they can learn about Hug-A-Tree.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST

Help can take hours or days depending on your location, weather, and resources. Use your knowledge, skills, and tools to retrace your steps if it is safe to do so. If you call for help and are waiting for rescue, follow the steps below to inventory your resources and conserve energy.

1. RETRACE YOUR STEPS



Use your knowledge, skills, and tools to find your way.

- **Stop and breathe** – Take a moment to calmly assess your situation.
- **Find your location** – Use your map, compass, handheld GPS, or visible landmarks to try to find your location.
- **Retrace your steps** – If it is safe to do so, retrace your steps to get back on your planned route.

2. CALL FOR HELP



If you cannot retrace your steps:

- **Call 911** – Tell them:
 - GPS coordinates from your phone, if available.
 - Name of the trail or area of the park where you started your activity.
 - Your last known location before you became lost.
 - Description of your surroundings including visible landmarks.
 - Types and colors of clothing you are wearing.
 - Equipment you are carrying.
 - Any medical conditions you may have.
- **Stay put** – Changing location will make it difficult for authorities to find you. Move only if there is an immediate threat to your life.

3. WAIT FOR HELP



If you do not have a cellphone or cell reception to call 911:

- **Find shelter** – Find a place that can protect you from natural elements such as sun, rain, snow, etc..
- **Inventory and conserve your resources** – Check your 10 essentials and other items you packed to help you stay safe until help arrives.
- **Keep warm** – The temperature outside can change throughout the day. If you begin to feel cold put on any extra layers of clothing you have with you.



Do not build a fire if there is a [high fire risk at the park](#) or if it is [wildland fire season](#). It could cause a wildfire and put you and others at great risk.

- **Signal for help** – Use the following signals to help search and rescue authorities find you.
 - [Blow your whistle often](#) – Save your energy by not yelling. Blow your whistle three times, take a break, and blow three times again.
 - [Flash your flashlight](#) – Flash the SOS pattern: three times quickly, three times slowly, three times quickly. Use your flashlight wisely as this will drain the batteries.
 - [Flash your mirror](#) – To alert planes and helicopters flying in the area.
- **Make yourself visible** – Lay out the shelter from your 10 essentials or use rocks to create a shape that can be seen by aircrafts flying in the area.
- **Conserve energy** – Wait patiently for help to arrive.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET INJURED

MINOR INJURIES



When dealing with minor injuries such as scrapes, bruises, and muscle strain:

- **Treat the injury** – Use the First Aid kit from your 10 Essentials to clean and cover the affected area.
- **Rest** – Take rest in a shaded area, if possible.
- **Drink water** – Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- **Eat a salty snack** – This will give you energy and help replenish electrolytes.
- **Turn around** – If the injury does not allow you to safely finish the activity.



MAJOR INJURIES



In the event of chest pain, difficulty breathing, or a major injury such as major bleeding or broken bones:

- **Call 911** – Tell them:
 - About your injury and any medical conditions you have.
 - If you have a first aid kit and any equipment that might help you stabilize the injury.
 - GPS coordinates from your phone, if available.
 - Name of the trail or area of the park where you are.
 - Description of your surroundings including visible landmarks.
- **Flag down help** – If there is no cellphone reception, flag down someone and ask them to travel back to an area with reception and call 911.
- **Stay put and minimize movement** – This will prevent further injuries. Move to another location only if there is an imminent threat to life.
- **Control bleeding** – Apply direct pressure to the wound.
- **Keep warm** – The temperature outside can change throughout the day. If you begin to feel cold put on any extra layers of clothing you have with you.
- **Make yourself visible** – If you can, lay out the shelter from your 10 essentials or use rocks to create a shape that can be seen by planes or helicopters flying above.
- **Stay safe** – Follow the steps for minor injuries while waiting for help.

SOMEONE IN YOUR GROUP IS INJURED?

- Send two or more people to alert authorities while the rest of the group stays with the injured person.
- If there is only you and the injured person, follow the steps above to help stabilize them and then go look for help.