

IMPACT



Camas County, PO Box 429, Fairfield, ID 83327; 208-764-2230; Fax: 208-764-2454

Youth use Survival Skills on Compass Course Challenge

The Situation

Many organizations are encouraging outdoor family recreation activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, and winter time sports. Our Nation's natural resources are becoming more accessible to many individuals through the use of horses, bikes, all terrain vehicles and establishment of more trails. The number of individuals getting lost during these activities has increased over the years. The cost of rescues can range from \$500 to \$5,000 depending on the number of search and rescue personnel involved and the equipment used. The majority of the cost is absorbed by local communities. The increase in lost person incidents can be attributed not only to more people participating in these types of activities and ease of location accessibility, but increasingly to lack of safety precautions. In order to achieve a positive outcome, survival skills are extremely important. There is a definite need for teaching survival skills.

Our Response

University of Idaho 4-H volunteers and Extension personnel provided southern Idaho youth, ages 13-19, with a winter snow camp experience. Three days of fun filled activities were packed into the Central Idaho 4-H Camp (north of Ketchum, Idaho).

The objectives of the camp workshops were to teach survival skills including:

- First aid
- Packing a survival pack
- Navigating by compass use

- Building emergency shelters
- Constructing fire in snow



Youth learn about compass use from caring adults.

The teen and adult camp planning committee proposed to test workshop skills youth gained, and have fun by creating a Compass Course Challenge. The course was patterned after the reality television show *The Amazing Race*. During workshop sessions, youth rotated into various classes allowing them to gain knowledge of all topics. In the afternoon, youth were counted off into groups of 3 or 4, and were given 30 seconds to select items from a table. The table was packed full of important items such as; string, matches, candles, plastic bags and food, and non-important items such as; lipstick, hairdryer, light bulbs and "strike on box" matches (without the box). After pack items were selected, teams were given compass coordinates to start their trek. Teams were to travel by snowshoe or skiing to the specified coordinates (a station) using skills they had learned in the classes. Once they successfully arrived at a station, they were given a situation and instructed to perform a specific task related to the survival skills learned. Once the task was completed

and approved by the station master, teams were given another set of coordinates to travel to the next station. Each team was given a separate set of coordinates so teams were never at the same station together.

Stations and situations included:

- Lodge station—The team needs to prepare for a short day trip.
- Fire station—A team member is dehydrated and the team must build a fire and melt a cup of snow.
- First aid station—One team member is injured and needs to be taken to safety.
- Emergency shelter station—It has gotten dark and the team needs to build a shelter for all the members.



*Compass Course Team
packing injured team member
to safety as part of challenge.*

Program Outcomes

Each year from 2001-2005, approximately 60 youth and adults from the University of Idaho Extension Districts II and III participated at snow camp.

The compass course tested youths knowledge and skills gained through workshops. The challenge scenario was for youth to take a wintertime day hike. Teams needed to prepare by making sure they had the needed equipment and food. Teams learned that the right equipment is vital. Some teams were successful in selecting tarps for shelters, while other teams selected Styrofoam cups to melt snow for drinking. Youth put into practice compass navigation skills to get from station to station. A survey indicated 75% of the youth and adults learned for the first time how to use a compass. Some participants learned that double-checking their bearings was necessary; realizing how easy they

could get lost. Youth tested their fire building skills and their equipment list at the fire station. Some teams learned the hard way about “strike on box” matches (without the box) and that Styrofoam cups melt quickly. While at the first aid station, skills were tested about keeping team members calm and keeping injured limbs from moving. At the emergency shelter station, teams worked on communication and teamwork skills in order to build the shelter. Youth discovered they could build a snow cave and survive the night.

Youth and adults enjoyed the Compass Course Challenge and found that being positive gets your team moving to safety or to the finish. They also discovered that a strong leader is needed for a team to be successful.

Participants indicated that after camp, they would be able to assist in the handling of a person injured during a cross-country hike or ski trip until emergency rescue personnel arrived. They also specified that if they were lost in the woods, they would know enough survival skills to assure that they could survive on their own until a rescue team could locate them.

The Future

Extension faculty and staff are planning more day camps that target safety and survival on natural resources experiences.

For More Information

Cindy Kinder, Extension Educator
District III Area 4-H/Youth Educator
University of Idaho Extension—Camas County
PO Box 429
Fairfield, ID 83327
208-764-2230
Fax: 208-764-2454
Email: ckinder@uidaho.edu

31-05ckinder-compass.doc
9/05