

# Safety Items

## Fire Extinguishers

A campfire is one of the great bush driving pleasures, but a fire in a vehicle is not. Fires usually start because of fuel leaks or electrical short circuits, but some are caused by dry grass build up around exhaust pipes.

A fire extinguisher is obviously essential, but it must be in working order and that means it must carry a current inspection stamp on its date plaque. The alternative is a couple of one-use aerosol can types that haven't reached their use-by date.

The fire extinguisher must be easily accessible within arm's reach by any member of the touring party. Likely mounting places include the transmission tunnel or near the rear door. Extinguishers buried in the back of wagons or utes are useless, because in the event of a flare up rapid response is required.



Regardless of the cause the first step is to put out the flames, or disaster will surely follow. If the fire is under bonnet the safest approach is to aim the extinguisher through the radiator, or the slit between the radiator and a just-tripped bonnet rather than lift the bonnet fully and risk hand burns or a wall of flame in the face.

## Gloves



Hands used to caressing a computer keyboard get sorely tested in the bush. Dust causes dry skin and that can end with painful cracking around fingernails. Packing and unpacking, breaking and dragging firewood, and campfire cooking are all potential injury activities and the best way to avoid cuts, abrasions and burns is to use gloves.

Our preference is for easy-fitting riggers' gloves, for around the fire and for bush repair work. When we're putting up the tent we use tight-fitting Showa rubber/mesh-backed gloves that are almost like a second skin. They're kept in the door pockets, where they're easily found, and we use them at the diesel pump as well.



## First Aid Kit



You don't need a mobile hospital tool-kit in your 4x4 but you do need one of the compact first aid kits that are sanctioned by reputable first aid agencies. After each trip the kit needs to be inspected and topped up.

Our experience suggests there aren't enough Band Aids in any of the pre-packed first aid kits, so we always pack additional ones.

We have current first aid certificates and so should you. It's all very well having a first aid kit, but its value is reduced if nobody in the crew knows how to use it properly.

## Cargo Barrier

4x4 wagon makers should be compelled by law to have cargo barriers as standard, because there's no point everyone being strapped in as sitting ducks for freight that flies forward in the event of an accident.

In the absence of compulsory cargo restraint you should fit an ADR-approved cargo barrier to your 4x4 wagon.



Utes aren't spared the need for cargo barriers, because the glass windows in ute back walls and the front ends of canopies won't stop heavy items from rushing forward. Strong mesh headboards are necessary.

When you have one fitted to your wagon get the fitters to put in forward and rearward anchor points, so that you can vary the protected area to suit two-people or five-people modes.

## Tie Downs



Tie downs are as important as a cargo barrier for keeping freight in place, because correctly fitted and tensioned tie downs stop heavy items from moving against the barrier - even the best cargo barrier has an impact limit. Tie downs ensure that roof rack loads don't shift and upset vehicle balance, or fall on pedestrians.

Ratchet tie downs are easy to operate and are much more secure than carelessly knotted ropes. Those who can't tie truckies hitches and bowlines should opt for ratchet tie downs.

Many wagon floor tie down hooks are weak and should be replaced by screw-in ring bolts that fold flat when not in use.

## Emergency Rations

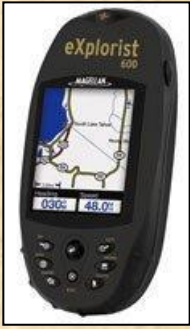
One day you'll score two flat tyres, or you'll get bogged or lost just on dark, or you'll discover that your reserve jerry can is empty. It's comforting in such circumstances to know that you have water and food on board.

Our emergency ration pack consists of a two-litre water bottle and dehydrated and packaged food with a long shelf life. Other always-present items are warm, waterproof clothing and a small spirit stove with fuel and matches.



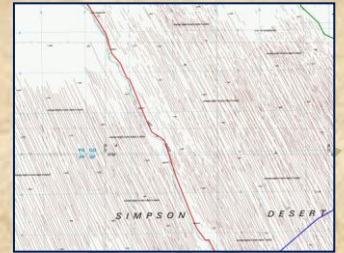
If you're warm, can keep dry and have some emergency food and water things aren't at immediate crisis point. In the morning the vehicle stranding may not be as bad as you first thought.

## Navigation Equipment



A key component of safe bush travel is knowing your whereabouts and these days there's no excuse for not knowing where you are. A \$300 GPS will give you lat and long and it's a good idea to carry a compass and a paper map of the area.

Never, never, never go anywhere on a track that isn't shown on a map. No matter how simple an excursion may look you're literally in no-man's land if you can't pinpoint your position.



## Communications Equipment



There are five tiers of wireless communications you can choose from: GSM and Next G mobile phones, HF radio, satellite phone and CB radio. Cell phones are unreliable away from major towns and roads, but Next G has much better rural coverage than GSM. GSM and Next G range can be further increased by using an external antenna.

HF radio has been supplanted to some extent by satellite phones, but HF is a free call system and has excellent club networks that provide 4x4-specific information. UHF CB radio is reliable mainly for short-range, vehicle to vehicle communication. The optimum package for safe bush travel is a cell phone, a CB and either HF or a satellite phone.

An EPIRB or PLB is an emergency beacon that's worth carrying if you're heading for extremely remote areas.

Register your travel plans with police or other authority - if you fail to make contact by an agreed time, someone will come looking for you.



If you're relying on a family member back home to help, arrange what actions they should take if they don't hear from you by the pre-agreed deadline and don't forget to make contact with them to avoid an unnecessary search and rescue.

## Distress Sheet



Our emergency ration pack is wrapped in an orange distress V-sheet. We had to wrap it in something and what better than a plastic sheet that when laid out tells any aircraft that we're in distress.