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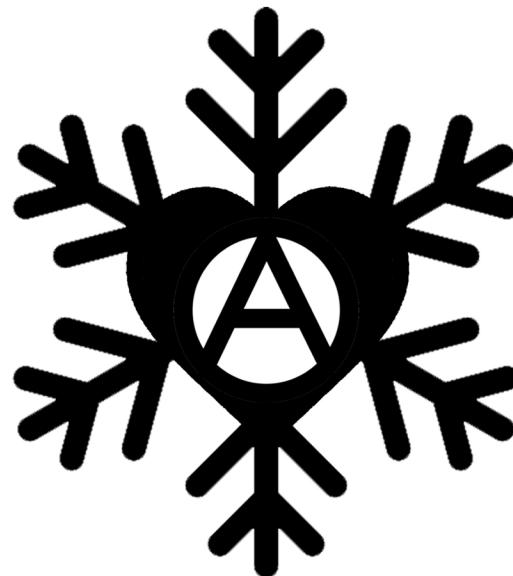


INDIGENOUS ACTION
AND KINLANI MUTUAL AID
V. 1.0 - WINTER 2022
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AUTONOMOUS WINTER SUPPORT MOBILIZATION



A.W.S.M. STREET PATROL BASIC GUIDE



TIPS FOR

- * ORGANIZING WINTER SUPPORT FOR UNSHELTERED RELATIVES
- * DEALING WITH HYPOTHERMIA
- * AND SLEEPING IN THE COLD

Autonomous Winter Support Mobilization
A.W.S.M. Street Patrol Basic Guide
v. 1.0, Winter 2022

Notes: This mini-zine was created with our experience in a mid-sized town being at close to 7,000 feet in elevation with intense winter storms and a relatively smaller unsheltered community than other larger occupied areas. It's notoriously hard to squat and camp in (though we've done it). We use the term "patrol" cause it's what we started with and it stuck, use whatever terms your crew is cool with like "outreach" or whatever. Please amend and edit for your area.

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, approximately seven hundred people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are killed from hypothermia annually in the so-called United States.

Absolutely no one should be left to sleep outside during cold weather yet a range of factors may force people to sleep in the cold; from discriminatory shelters kicking people out, being kicked out of a house during a storm, being forced to flee an abuser, simply being unprepared, etc. Raids/sweeps and anti-homeless laws, such as anti-camping ordinances push people to camp in hidden and dispersed areas which puts them more at risk.

What is street patrol?

Street Patrol (SP) consists of an autonomous (decentralized) volunteer crew or multiple crews of people who mobilize to support unsheltered relatives when weather is extremely cold. SP's primary objective is to ensure people don't freeze. This is done by providing cold weather gear, warm supplies, food, transportation, and possibly shelter if needed.

In some situations SP's also act as copwatch and may intervene or de-escalate situations of police aggression and violence. SPs can also mobilize to defend encampments against "sweeps" and help to open up squats (get people sheltered in empty buildings!). Variations of crews supporting unsheltered relatives have also struck out against anti-homeless businesses with creative re-decoration or smashed windows, organized mass mobilizations and attacked cops for attacking relatives on the streets, and torn up anti-homeless barriers/benches etc. Some established street patrols have incorporated defense and attack into their practices and mobilize to address fascist threats at events.

* **Backup:** We do not recommend doing any street outreach/patrols without the buddy system. Our crew has a community defense Signal thread to mobilize if people face physical threats.

* **Defend:** We encourage volunteers to defend themselves against threats. Consider personal defense weapons such as pepper spray, knives and firearms. We recommend volunteers do training and orientation on personal and collective defense.

* **Practice security culture.** Recommended reading: What is Security Culture? A Guide to Staying Safe available at: www.sproutdistro.com/catalog/zines/security/what-is-security-culture-a-guide-to-staying-safe.

We recommend that everyone be familiar with security culture and not to discuss other volunteer's whereabouts or schedules with anyone. In the past we have had police and abusers attempt to contact volunteers and we want to ensure that we keep each other safe.

* Transformative and restorative justice processes are used to address conflicts.

Practice intersectionality.

* We ask that everyone be actively aware of and accountable to gender, race, and class dynamics. Specifically the ways in which these matters pervade our everyday lives and inform and impact all of our relationships. Please read this on anti-colonialism and orient yourself: www.unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um_-sourcebook_jan10_revision.pdf and *Accomplices Not Allies* (by us).

NOTES:

Mutual Defense & Addressing Threats:

SP volunteers may face cops/fascists, aggressively intoxicated and potentially threatening individuals. As outlined in our response recommendations below, we find it helpful to de-escalate, practice harm reduction, and communicate clearly that your crew is providing support and assistance. If people are hostile to you then you're not part of their community, so don't push it. We have realized over the years that our best defense and de-escalation tactic is building meaningful relationships and treating those with substance use or mental health issues with dignity and respect.

* **No cops or any law enforcement agents.** Do not call the cops on unsheltered relatives. We highly recommend that all volunteers patrolling familiarize themselves with their "rights." If law enforcement agents ask what you're doing you do not have to answer unless you are being detained. Simply ask, "Am I free to go?" If they answer "No" you have the right to know why you are being detained. Do not consent to any searches. You have the right to document law enforcement activities at a distance that is not interfering with their "work." More info: <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights>. Local laws vary on providing identification, so do your research.

* **If there is a threat to your's or other's personal safety we recommend the following responses: Deescalate. Evade. Backup. Defend.**

* **Deescalate:** We prefer any situation to be deescalated as a first response, check this resource for tips: www.neighborhoodanarchists.org/deescalation/. In our experience documenting a threatening situation with a phone camera can also help de-escalate a situation (though it could also aggravate a situation so be aware).

* **Evade:** If a heightened threat exists it may be more effective to evade or leave the area. Some tactics have been to return to your vehicle, lock the doors, leave if possible and call or text your crew for support.

Through building solid relationships of support we can go beyond paternalistic charity and provide meaningful solidarity that goes beyond one season. Mutual aid isn't about being a "savior" it's about solidarity. Make it a point with your crew that your effort organizes with unsheltered relatives.

Street Patrol should be part of a larger effort to attack the root causes of homelessness such as capitalism and colonialism such as; Land Back, abolishing private property, fighting against the commodification of housing by supporting free camps and squats, food not bombs/meal distros, supporting rent strikes and attacking "slumlords" etc.

To the streets.

Street patrol can take anywhere from 1-4 hours (depending on when the crew starts). We recommend at least two people (3 being optimal) per crew/vehicle for street patrol. Always practice the buddy system! It's up to you & your crew to organize internal communication (we recommend a Signal group), transportation, and supply pick up. It is important that anyone mobilizing for SP upholds any agreements and COVID safety protocols. Be aware that due to the unpredictable nature of some situations, SP crews place themselves at greater risk of COVID exposure as they may be in closer contact with unsheltered relatives who may be COVID positive.

Equipment:

- * Flashlights/headlamp (each person on the SP crew).
- * Fully charged cell phone.
- * Warm packs (about a dozen per crew).
- * Emergency & wool blankets (about 4-6).
- * Basic first aid kit.
- * Trauma kit (if trained in its use).



For squats and camps:

- * Crow bar & large bolt cutters.
 - * Tents, sleeping bags, tarps.
 - * Cars can be squats too, check for abandoned cars and bring appropriate tools.
- Check out the zine It's Vacant, Take It! available here: www.sproutdistro.com/catalog/zines/direct-action/its-vacant-take-it

Basic warm pack contents:

Notes: our crew plans months ahead for warm pack making: organizing donation drives, doing off-season bulk purchases, and stock-piling etc. Some crews also are adept at liberating items. ;) We hold warm pack making parties as winter comes close so we're prepared. We also distro warm packs to other crews in the region.

- * Hand warmers
- * Emergen-C
- * Cough lozenges
- * Beanie
- * Gloves
- * Socks
- * Facemask
- * "Know Your Rights: info



Additional items for outreach:

- * Sleeping bags (keep in mind wool blankets are better as they insulate even if they are wet).
- * Tents
- * Jackets
- * Underwear
- * Snacks (granola bars etc)

Some patrol/outreach recommendations:

- * Ask unsheltered relatives where to check for other folks who may be in need of support.
- * Respect people's privacy. Some don't want to be bothered at their camps or in their cars.
- * Bring extra warm packs and offer them to unsheltered relatives to give to others.
- * SP can be conducted well before sundown when people are still moving around (before people hunker down and camp). In severe weather and surprise storms SP can be done anytime (early morning or late at night). In our experience the shelters are known to kick people out early in the morning while it's still freezing. A few years ago a relative passed from freezing at local park after he was kicked from a nearby shelter in the early morning.

Precautions to Reduce the Risks of Hypothermia:

- Wear hats, mittens, gloves and clothing that create a static layer of warm air, provides a barrier against the wind, and keeps the body dry.
- Wear loose fitting layers and outerwear that will keep you dry.
- Avoid cotton: It dries slowly, and saps body heat when wet. Instead, pick synthetics or wool.
- Avoid alcohol and other mood- and cognition-altering drugs.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of hypothermia (e.g., shivering, slurred speech, and drowsiness) that indicate the need to seek shelter and call for help.
- Keep and carry emergency supplies containing blankets, non-caffeinated fluids, high-energy food, and an extra supply of medications for chronic conditions readily available.

Some SP specific questions/scenarios and responses/actions based upon our local experiences are (discuss or review these scenarios with your crew esp. if there are any new folks to SP):

What to do if an unsheltered person requests transportation to a local shelter or another place?

- * Discuss with your crew before going on patrol whether or not you will be able to provide transportation or shelter. In some cases a crew doing SP communicated needs back to the larger group and other transportation was arranged (buddies who were ok with sharing space in their ride with possible COVID positive individuals etc).

- * Our group keeps emergency funds for hotel rooms. While there are many challenges and gets expensive quickly. We do not recommend checking anyone into a hotel with your credit card or information. Note that some unsheltered relatives will not have ID on them so that might be a barrier for room check-ins.

What to do with a safety/security threat?

- * Always use the buddy system. Read the section below "Mutual Defense & Addressing Threats." Adapt these practices and make a plan with what works for your crew.

Keep in mind that mylar does not provide any insulation. It will reflect some of your body heat, but not if you are hypothermic.

Tips for using a Mylar blanket

- * NEVER put a Mylar blanket right next to your skin. You need an insulating layer between you and the Mylar.
- * Dry the Mylar blanket if it gets wet. Since it stops evaporation, sweat easily builds up on Mylar. This will make you wet and colder. Make sure you thoroughly dry the Mylar blanket.
- * Beware of rips. Mylar is very durable. However, once it punctures, it will rip easily along the puncture line. Use duct tape to repair tears.
- * Add a source of heat. If you are hypothermic, your body won't have heat for the Mylar blanket to reflect back to you. You'll need another source of heat.
- * Note: Hand warmers are not effective in warming someone's core body temperature if they are suffering from hypothermia.

Other important tips:

The cold ground can suck a huge amount of heat away from your body. Use anything to create a barrier or padding between you and the ground (dry debris, dry leaves, cardboard, etc). Stay off the ground.

All your clothing should be dry. Change your clothes or dry them before attempting to sleep, if your clothes are wet, your risk of hypothermia is greatly increased.

Cover your head and neck, and block drafts, but don't cover your head in your sleeping bag. If you breathe into your sleeping bag you may wake up warm and wet. Over time, all the added moisture will make your bag cold and clammy.

If possible, go to bed with a full stomach and stay hydrated. It'll help you stay warm through the night.

Pour heated water into a bottle and tuck it against you while you sleep. Try to wrap it in a sock or something similar.

In most instances SP will mainly be locating unsheltered relatives who are caught out in the cold unprepared. Just a check-in and distribution of any cold weather gear, warm packs, etc usually is sufficient. But in other situations, the needs could be more serious.

What to do if an unsheltered person is unresponsive or in need of emergency medical attention (hypothermic):

- * Ensure that the relative is warm and covered.
 - * Do not attempt to move them.
 - * Contact local street medics or emergency services (state that no cops should be involved) immediately if you suspect someone is hypothermic, explain the situation, & wait for EMTs or street medics to arrive. Assess their condition and treat them only if you have the skills. Carry a med kit if you have basic first aid knowledge, carry a trauma kit if you are able.
- Life-threatening hypothermia can set in between 32 degrees F - 50 degrees F. It may be difficult to distinguish whether a person is profoundly hypothermic or deceased. The profoundly hypothermic person may have a pulse and respirations that are barely detectable.

Warning signs of hypothermia:

- * Uncontrollable shivering.
- * Drop in body temperature below 95F.
- * Slurred speech.
- * Clumsiness.
- * Fatigue.
- * Confusion.



Until medical help is available, follow these first-aid guidelines for hypothermia:

* **Be gentle.** When you're helping a person with hypothermia, handle them gently. Limit movements to only those that are necessary. Don't massage or rub the person. Excessive, vigorous or jarring movements may trigger cardiac arrest.

* **Move the person out of the cold.** Move the person to a warm, dry location if possible. If you're unable to move the person out of the cold, shield them from the cold and wind as much as possible. Keep them in a horizontal position if possible.

* **Remove wet clothing.** If the person is wearing wet clothing, remove it. Cut away clothing if necessary to avoid excessive movement.

* Cover the person with blankets. Use layers of dry blankets or coats to warm the person. Cover their head, leaving only the face exposed.

* **Insulate the person's body from the cold ground.** If you're outside, lay the person on their back on a blanket or other warm surface.

* **Monitor breathing.** A person with severe hypothermia may appear unconscious, with no apparent signs of a pulse or breathing. If the person's breathing has stopped or appears dangerously low or shallow, begin CPR immediately if you're trained.

* **Provide warm beverages.** If the affected person is alert and able to swallow, provide a warm, sweet, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverage to help warm the body.

* **Use warm, dry compresses.** Use a first-aid warm compress (a plastic fluid-filled bag that warms up when squeezed), hand warmers, or a makeshift compress of warm water in a plastic bottle or a dryer-warmed towel. Apply a compress only to the neck, chest wall or groin. Don't apply a warm compress to the arms or legs. Heat applied to the arms and legs forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs and brain, causing the core body temperature to drop. This can be fatal.

* **Don't apply direct heat.** Don't use hot water, a heating pad or a heating lamp to warm the person. The extreme heat can damage the skin or, even worse, cause irregular heartbeats so severe that they can cause the heart to stop.

Tips for surviving hypothermia:

- **Prevent any further heat loss** by getting out of the wind, water, and removing wet clothing.

- **Be delicate.** Organs are in a more fragile state.

- **Focus on warming the core** (chest, neck, head, and groin) with fire, warm water, warm stones, blankets, layers, other people's body heat —anything to turn the tide.

- **Be still.** This may seem counterintuitive, but at this point pumping more blood will just lose heat through the limbs, and cold blood from the limbs can shock the core (aka "after drop").

Treating frostbite:

Beyond the basics, it's important to exercise extreme caution if you are forced to deal with frostbite. You can cause even worse damage if you warm a frozen area and then let it freeze again.

A range of sources recommend these steps to thaw frostbitten tissue:

- Remove wet clothing.
- Elevate slightly the injured area.
- Start warming by soaking the area in warm water, and stop when the skin becomes soft.
- Cover area with sterile medical cloth if possible. If frostbite has affected fingers and/or toes, wrap each digit individually. Keep them separated.
- Try not to move or use the damaged area at all.
- Do not rub frostbitten areas because rubbing could cause tissue damage.

Basic tips for sleeping in extreme cold:

If shelter cannot be accessed the following tips may help anyone survive in the cold. Create or locate any kind of shelter that protects you from moisture and wind.

Sleeping bags may give a false sense of protection from exposure. Most sleeping bags lose all insulating properties once they are wet.

We recommend using a combination of wool (or wool blend, some synthetics work like polyester fleece) blankets & a mylar (space) blanket or sleeping bag. If you combine a Mylar blanket with an insulating blanket, you will prevent all forms of heat loss.

To do this, wrap yourself in a wool or fleece blanket. Put the Mylar blanket outside of these blankets. You can use duct tape to sandwich a Mylar blanket between two wool blankets for even more protection.

Although wool can be heavy and bulky, it loses little insulating properties when wet and is fairly water resistant. Mylar emergency sleeping bags retain body heat and are water & windproof. Combined with a wool emergency blanket (on the inside of the mylar bag), cold weather clothing, and other forms of insulation, this emergency sleep system can be the difference between life or death when faced with extreme cold conditions.