

# HUNTER'S ★HORN





GLOBAL **+rescue**

# HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF IN THE FIELD

BY DANIEL RICHARDS, CEO AND FOUNDER, GLOBAL RESCUE







Medical evacuation in action (courtesy Global Rescue)



**A**s you head out on your hunts, take some extra time to prepare yourself for the unexpected. The payoff can be greater than you might think. By making time to study up on geography, vaccinations and medications, communication, first aid and situational awareness, you are putting yourself in a better position to deal with an emergency. Read on for advice based on over a decade of providing the hunting community with emergency evacuation services.

### **GEOGRAPHY**

It goes without saying that you should know the geography of the area in which you will be hunting. Even if you are hunting with a guide, it is still important to have a basic understanding of direction and where you are. Satellite photos of the area where you will be hunting are available through services like Google Maps. If the area is inside the U.S., go to the United States Geological Service website where there are topographical maps that can be downloaded and printed at no cost. Studying your location will also allow you to plan for emergencies. If someone is hurt in an accident, can you find the nearest hospital? Is there a designated meet-up location with the rest of your party? Even if you do not work through these questions beforehand, learning a few major landmarks will help you orient yourself in an emergency. These landmarks should be known and easily identified by the entire group to prevent confusion.

Weather is a major threat to anyone out in the field. In mountainous areas, high winds and changing elevations can cause weather to rapidly shift. Layering clothes for warmth is more efficient than one large coat and provides some redundancy in case one layer becomes wet or lost. Wear long sleeves and pants in warm areas where there are mosquitoes. In tropical areas, diseases such as yellow fever, malaria and chikungunya are spread by mosquitos. Treat your clothes with DEET or other repellants to prevent bites.

Geographic information is equally important in urban environments. Learn where the nearest U.S. Embassy or consulate is and how to get there. When traveling abroad, U.S. citizens can enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP allows the local U.S. Embassy to update you with security and safety alerts, and contact you in case of an emergency. Embassies and consulates also have 24/7 emergency lines for U.S. citizens in trouble. Learn this phone number for the nearest embassy or consulate in the area you will be travelling. Find the nearest suitable healthcare center that could help in the event of an emergency and make sure your health insurance will cover hospital visits while abroad. Avoid any potential hotspots that could attract violence like protests, political rallies, or in some countries soccer matches.

### **VACCINATIONS AND MEDICATIONS**

Many countries require visitors to have certain vaccinations along with an International Certificate of Vaccination, often referred to as a “Yellow Card.” Organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization track these requirements. These groups also have recommended but not required vaccinations for countries and regions where travelers could be at risk of infection. Hunters in some parts of Africa are especially vulnerable to malaria. There is no vaccination but there are preventative medications including Doxycycline, Malarone and Lariam. Talk to your doctor before travelling to obtain the proper medications and vaccinations. If you take prescription medications, bring an extra set in case you lose the first or have to stay away from a pharmacy longer than planned.

*“...where  
travelers risk  
infection.”*

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is a key factor in safety, and not only to be able to call for an emergency extraction. Before heading into the field, hunters should tell at least one person where they are going and when they expect to be back. Leave a note with the same information on the dashboard of your car. When search and rescue teams are deployed, they often try to find the victim's car for any clues as to where the missing person might have gone. Stick to the plan you set out. If you can't, have some way to communicate. Many search and rescue operations have been launched when a hiker or hunter was running late and wasn't able to tell their significant others not to expect them at the pre-determined time.

For situations when an emergency crew cannot get in immediately, two-way communication is extremely useful. The more information a rescue crew has, the smoother and faster it can operate to rescue an injured hunter. Even before the operation happens, rescuers can give advice to those injured. Global Rescue, for example, has its own team of critical care paramedics and physicians supported by Johns Hopkins physicians to provide telemedicine services to our members. Our operations personnel routinely provide advice on how to stabilize injuries and on steps that need to be taken to get to safety.

In many parts of the U.S., a cell phone can cover your communication needs. If a call

does not work, try texting as it requires less bandwidth than making a call. When out of cell service, hunters should have a satellite phone. GPS-enabled beacons are useful for alerting authorities where you are and that something is wrong, but they don't provide more information than that. By only using a beacon, rescuers are essentially going in blind with little to no information on the situation. Undeveloped areas often do not have a functioning 911 system and there will not be an organized rescue operation unless you have arranged for rescue services ahead of time.

## FIRST AID

One of the most important pieces of equipment to have in the field is your first-aid kit. Having a well-developed first-aid kit and knowing how to use it is crucial. Many organizations offer weekend classes that provide training for basic life-saving techniques. A wilderness first-aid or first responder class will train you how to respond to an emergency appropriately and improvise to provide suitable care. A large amount of materials that you normally carry with you while hunting can be easily adapted for first-aid needs. The frame of a backpack can be used for a splint. Shirts can be ripped into strips for bandages or folded for slings.

The following is a list of items recommended by Global Rescue for every trip regardless of where you travel. These materials should be used in a small personal kit. Depending

on the trip it may be useful to add other items to your kit.

- Tweezers, fine point (hard to find a reason NOT to have tweezers)
- Tick remover (yes, a single-use item but very handy if needed and it's nearly paper thin)
- Alcohol pads (eight is a good amount)
- Band-Aids (about a dozen)
- Blister pads (prefer the Band-Aid Advanced Healing, which work great and stay in place; carry a few of the regular and finger/toe variety)
- Gauze pads (a few small 2x3" pads)
- Super Glue (from minor skin tears, not ideal but works in a pinch, to getting a few more miles out of your shoes)
- Cravats (Carry two standard size triangular bandages. There is very little you can't splint or bandage with two well-placed cravats. Too many other uses to list)
- Ibuprofen 400mg (pain reliever, inflammation, minor fever reducer)
- Ondansetron 8mg ODT (anti-emetic; these dissolve on your tongue; great for nausea and vomiting)
- Cipro 500mg (gold standard for traveler's diarrhea, unless you're in Southeast Asia)
- Doxycycline 100mg (malaria prophylaxis, tick-borne disease, skin infections; a good multipurpose antibiotic)
- Pepto Bismol (chewable tablets; many indications)
- Antihistamine (a non-drowsy type like Zyrtec or Claritin; used for hives, itching, watery eyes, rash, runny nose and sneezing due to allergies or the common cold. Secondary uses for motion sickness, anxiety, or as a sleep aid)
- Sewing kit (TSA approved for carry-on if needles and scissors are under four inches)
- Lip balm, with SPF (sunscreen for your lips, nose, ears; also useful on zippers or even hot spots)
- Iodine tabs (clean, treated water is a must)
- Small emergency headlamp
- Duct Tape
- Consider an Epi-Pen if you or a member of your group have potentially life-threatening allergies



*First aid kit (courtesy Global Rescue)*



**SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

Your guides or hotel staff should be able to tell what areas of a city are safe during the day and at night. When walking around in a new area, maintain situational awareness and trust your gut. If an area feels unsafe, it most likely is. Learn the basic customs of the area to which you are traveling. In undeveloped areas, signs of wealth, such as openly carrying large amounts of cash, or cultural insensitivity can make you a target for violence or robbery.

Hunters and travelers alike should take account of the cultural and legal differences in the country they're visiting. The laws of the country may be very different from the U.S. and if an American breaks the law there is often little the embassy can do to help. Hunters should make sure they are not violating any restrictions relating to firearms or hunting. Most guide services/outfitters are knowledgeable regarding what is permissible in their jurisdictions. Also, most reputable outfitters will have an emergency plan. Make sure you are aware of the plan so you can adapt your own emergency plan to incorporate the outfitter's preparations.

While out in the field, maintain situational awareness and stay vigilant for dangerous animals. Those attempting to go after Africa's Big Five need to be especially aware while hunting as all five animals have been known to charge hunters. Venomous snakes and insects also pose a serious danger to hunters. Watch where you step and alert your guides if you encounter any snakes as some, such as the Black Mamba, are known to be aggressive.

Keep your health and safety front and center when you're out in the field. It is good planning to put resources in place to help you if something goes wrong. This includes satellite communications, pre-trip travel intelligence, expert medical advice, and evacuation services such as Global Rescue to extract you from danger in a medical or security emergency. ★



*Stay vigilant for dangerous animals that may charge unexpectedly (courtesy Global Rescue)*

*Hunting the Northwest Territories (courtesy of Sheep Shape TV)*