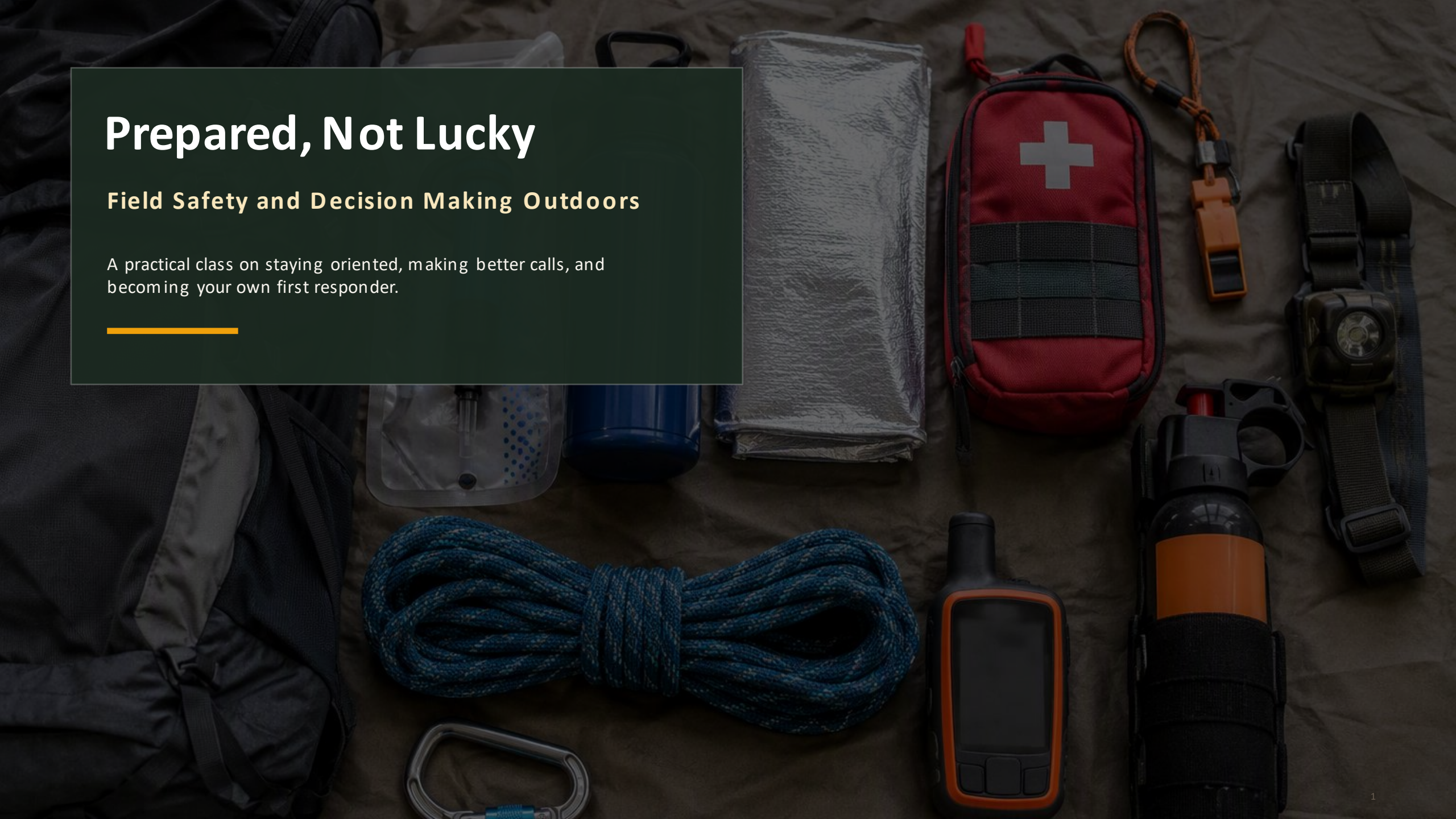


Prepared, Not Lucky

Field Safety and Decision Making Outdoors

A practical class on staying oriented, making better calls, and becoming your own first responder.



Class Roadmap

No clock-watching ; the blocks can flex to the group and terrain.

01 Mindset

- Respect vs. fear
- Why preparedness beats experience

02 Reality check

- Why people get rescued
- Preventable decision patterns

03 Navigation

- Know where you are
- Know where you are going

04 Gear

- What to carry
- How to use it under stress

05 Hazards

- Wildlife, water, weather
- First aid and escalation

06 Decision-making

- Stop, Think, Observe, Plan, Act
- Prepared mindset

Reality Check: Why People Get Rescued

Most outdoor emergencies start as ordinary choices that compound.

Common patterns

- Short hikes get treated casually
- Route and return-time plans are vague
- Poor navigation
- Navigation backup is weak
- Weather, terrain, or daylight is misjudged
- Dehydration
- Slip and falls
- Losing the trail
- Weather changes
- Inadequate clothing, food, water

Stories to discuss

- Short hike turns into multi-day survival
- Lost very close to a road in poor visibility
- Urban proximity creates false security
- close is not always safe

Key takeaway

**Distance from safety
is not the risk.**

Decision errors are.

Prepared people slow down early, before
uncertainty becomes an emergency.

Know Where You Are — and Where You're Going

A plan is not paperwork. It is how you notice when reality changes.



Before you start

Tell someone your route and expected return. Identify escape routes before moving.



Route math

Use pace, elevation, daylight, and terrain to estimate effort honestly.



Decision rule

If you are unsure, you are already behind. Stop and reassess early.

Navigation tools: paper map, compass, GPS app, backup power, and battery discipline.



Navigation + Lost Protocol

The first move when lost is not movement. It is control.

Stop

Pause, breathe, and prevent the problem from getting bigger.

Assess

Check map, last known point, weather, injuries, and daylight.

Conserve

Protect warmth, water, food, and phone battery.

Decide

Stay put unless you have a clear reason and safe route.

Terrain logic

Use roads, rivers, ridgelines as anchors
Follow water downhill cautiously
Avoid terrain traps and cliffs

Group behavior

Panic spreads quickly
Children may hide or keep moving
Assign roles and keep people together

Signaling

Whistle: three blasts means distress
Mirror, fire, ground markings
Satellite beacon if available

Essential Gear Overview

Gear is only useful when it is reachable, familiar, and practiced.



Backpack

Match size to trip and load.

Water

Bottle, bladder, filter, tablets.

Navigation

Map, compass, GPS app.

Shelter

Emergency blanket and layers.

First aid

Bleeding control and splint.

Tools

Rope, knots, carabiners.

Safety tech

Garmin, Zoleo, or ACR beacon.

Bear safety

Spray, vault, odor control.

Key message: Gear does not save you — correct use under stress does.

Wildlife Safety: Bear

Respect wildlife, manage distance, and avoid triggering chase behavior.

Bear encounter

- Do not run
- Make yourself known calmly
- Read distance, posture, and intent
- Pick up small children
- Keep pets on a leash
- Use bear spray with wind and range in mind

Other wildlife

- Wasps
- Ants
- Mini bears – squirrels, chipmunks, etc.
- Marmots
- Gators
- Snakes
- Mosquitoes

Food and odor

- Separate sleep, food, and kitchen areas
- Control odors, not just noise
- Use vaults or approved storage where required
- Keep a clean camp

Mountain lion note: rare but serious — face it, do not turn away, and do not run.



Water, Food, and Energy Management

Small deficits become big decisions when you are tired, cold, or late.



Hydration habits

Pre-hydrate, monitor urine color, and replace electrolytes on long efforts.



Water source risk

Seasonal creeks may be dry. Have a backup plan before the route depends on water.



Purification

Use filters, tablets, or boiling. Redundancy matters when one method fails.

Fuel rule of thumb

Eat steady, not late.

Use carbohydrates for sustained output.

Watch for “bonking”: sudden performance collapse.

The goal is not comfort. It is decision quality.

Environmental Hazards

Terrain and weather do not negotiate. The plan must adapt first.

Lightning

Avoid ridges, isolated trees, water edges, and exposed high points.

Swift water

Never cross above hazards. Use stability and group formation techniques.

Cold weather

Stay warm, do not wait until you need to get warm. Layer early.

Avalanche terrain

Relevant only in the right terrain, but consequences are high. Know before you go.

Hazard rule: changing conditions are new information — not an inconvenience.

First Aid and Emergency Response

Frontcountry first aid assumes help is near. Backcountry first aid assumes you are the bridge.

Priorities

- Stop bleeding
- Stabilize the injury
- Protect the person from cold or heat
- Decide how to evacuate

Key tools

- SAM splint
- Tourniquet awareness
- Duct tape and wrap
- Gloves, gauze, and pressure dressing

Rule of escalation

Treat.
Stabilize.
Then move.

Never reverse order.



First Aid and Emergency Response

Frontcountry first aid assumes help is near. Backcountry first aid assumes you are the bridge.

mnemonics

Face
Arms
Speech
Telephone

Signs
Allergies
Medication
Past history
Last in and Out
Events/ Evacuate

Massive Bleed
Airway
Respiration
Circulation
Head

Rule of escalation

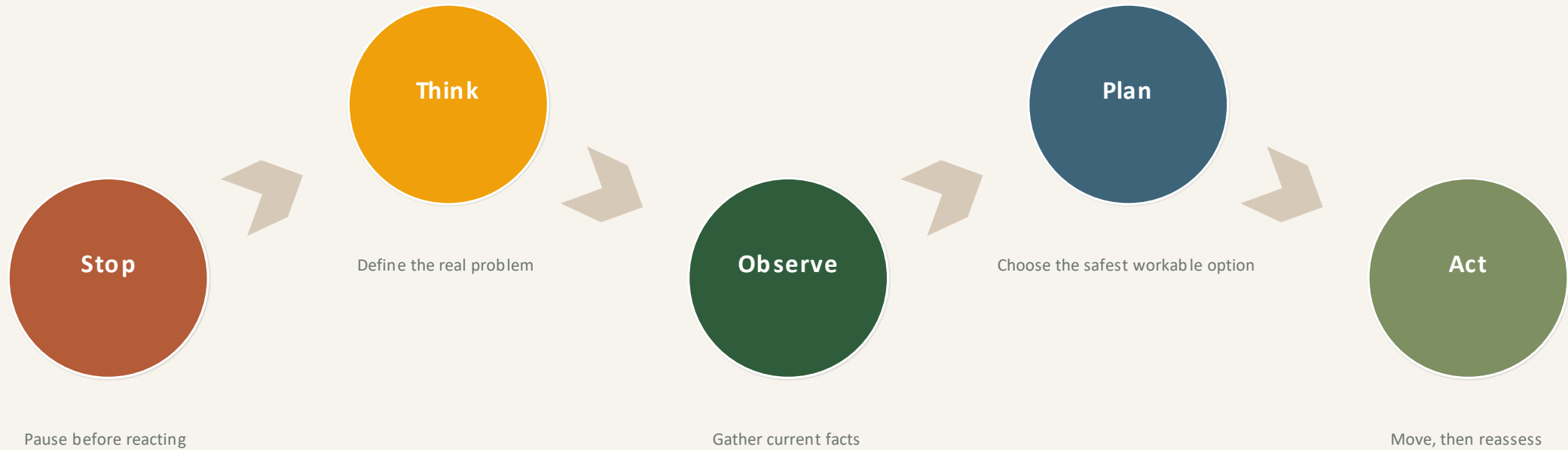
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Decision-Making Framework

Most failures are judgment errors under fatigue, pressure, or uncertainty.



Slow down to speed up: a simple process creates better decisions in bad conditions.

Closing : The Prepared Mindset

Preparation creates freedom, not restriction.

Final takeaways

Outdoor safety is behavior-based, not gear-based
Respect over fear keeps you alert without panic
Prepared people make decisions earlier
You are your first responder

Commitment prompt

Before my next outing, I will improve one of these:

- Route planning
- Navigation backup
- Gear access and practice
- Weather turnaround plan
- Emergency communication

Respect the outdoors. Make better decisions. Get home.