OFFLINE RESILIENCE GUIDE // UK EDITION

Emergency Shelter and Exposure: Stay Warm, Dry and Safe

A UK-focused guide to getting out of wind and rain, insulating from the ground, recognising cold and heat illness, and choosing shelter without creating a second hazard.

8 MIN | UPDATED 25 SEP 2026 | UK FOCUS

> PDF edition generated 13 October 2026 from the GPN website release v12.21.16. The individual guide editorial review dates appear below. This is a saved reference, not a live safety warning or a fresh independent source verification. When online, check current official advice.

LAYER 1 // ACT

FIRST ACTIONS

Start here. Then read the conditions and exceptions below.

1. Get out of wind, rain, floodwater and other immediate environmental hazards.
2. Use dry layers and ground insulation before trying to solve comfort problems.
3. A vehicle or sound building can be better shelter than an improvised structure.
4. Suspected hypothermia needs urgent medical help; call 999.
5. Heatstroke is also an emergency; move to a cooler place and seek urgent help.

> **IMPORTANT**
> This is preparedness information, not a substitute for emergency services, medical advice or instructions from responsible authorities. In immediate danger call 999 or 112.

Shelter means controlling exposure

The job of shelter is to reduce heat loss, heat gain, wind, rain and contact with unsafe ground. In an emergency, the best shelter is usually the safe option already available: a building, vehicle, staffed location, waterproof clothing or an emergency shelter carried for the purpose.

Improvisation is useful only when it genuinely improves safety. Avoid unstable trees, steep slopes, watercourses, cliffs, roads, flood-prone ground and places exposed to falling debris.

Dry and insulate the person, not the landscape

Wind and wet clothing can accelerate cooling. Move into shelter, replace wet clothing with dry layers when practical, cover exposed skin and reduce contact with cold ground. A dry mat, folded

clothing, rucksack or other insulating layer beneath a person can matter as much as what is above them.

Do not chase maximum warmth by making people sweat. Layers are useful because they can be adjusted as conditions change.

Know when cold has become a medical emergency

NHS guidance lists shivering, cold pale skin, slurred speech, slow breathing, tiredness and confusion among signs of hypothermia and says suspected hypothermia needs emergency medical help. Call 999 and follow the operator’s instructions.

While waiting for help, bring the person indoors or to shelter, replace wet clothing, cover their head and wrap them in dry blankets or a sleeping bag. Stay with them. Only offer a warm non-alcoholic drink and sugary food if fully awake and able to swallow safely. Do not rub their limbs or use a hot bath, hot water bottle or heat lamp. Do not assume that somebody who has stopped shivering is improving. The NHS says suspected hypothermia needs emergency assessment at A&E or via 999; do not drive yourself to A&E.

Heat changes the priority

In hot conditions the problem reverses: shade, airflow, reduced exertion and fluids become priorities. NHS guidance recommends moving a person with heat exhaustion to a cool place, removing unnecessary clothing, giving fluids if they can swallow safely, and cooling their skin with water and a fan. Stay with them: they should start improving within 30 minutes. Call 999 immediately for suspected heatstroke, including confusion, seizure, collapse or symptoms that persist after 30 minutes of active cooling.

Do not use a “keep warm” survival script when the environment is hot. Reassess the actual threat.

Weather information is part of shelter planning

The Met Office issues warnings for hazards including rain, thunderstorms, wind, snow, lightning, ice, extreme heat and fog. Read the impact and “what should I do” information, not only the colour.

If a warning says conditions are likely to worsen, the best shelter decision may be to turn around early, stay indoors or postpone the journey rather than relying on emergency equipment later.

Do not build your plan around a campfire

A fire can be useful in some environments, but UK countryside rules and wildfire risk often make it the wrong choice. Shelter, dry clothing, insulation and an orderly call for help are more dependable priorities. If you use any stove or barbecue, follow local rules and manufacturer instructions and keep combustion equipment out of enclosed spaces.

Useful kit for this plan

Equipment should support the plan, not replace judgement or skill. The commercial catalogue is kept on a separate page.

KIT IS KEPT SEPARATE
Named products and Amazon UK affiliate links are kept on the dedicated KIT page so this guide remains editorial. Use the kit only after the plan identifies a genuine equipment gap.

OPEN KIT →

Sources checked for this guide

We use public sources for the factual backbone and write the guide in our own words. Source pages can change, so the links below are the place to check current official advice.

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **NHS: Hypothermia**
> Medical signs, emergency status and immediate actions.
> https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hypothermia/

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **NHS: Heat exhaustion and heatstroke**
> Cooling, fluids and when to call 999.
> https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **Mountain Rescue England and Wales: How to stay safe**
> Clothing, weather, dehydration, map and compass, torches, whistles and emergency procedure.
> https://www.mountain.rescue.org.uk/fact_file/fact-file-6-stay-safe-information/

> **PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE**
> **Met Office: Weather warnings guide**
> How UK weather warnings communicate likelihood, impact and protective action.
> https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/guides/warnings

Editorial review date: 13 October 2026. If an official source conflicts with this page, follow the official source.

INFORMATION CHECK✓ CURRENT REVIEW

REVIEWED	NEXT REVIEW DUE	OFFICIAL REFERENCES
13 Oct 2026	10 Feb 2027	4 primary sources

If an official source conflicts with this guide, follow the current official source.

GET PREPPED NOW // ORIGINAL GUIDE

Source page: https://getpreppednow.co.uk/guides/emergency-shelter-exposure-uk.html
Editorial update: 13 October 2026 · © 2026 Get Prepped Now
Personal household printing and offline saving are permitted. Keep this attribution and the guide's source/ review information with the copy. Copyright & permitted use