



Outdoors-Magazine.com

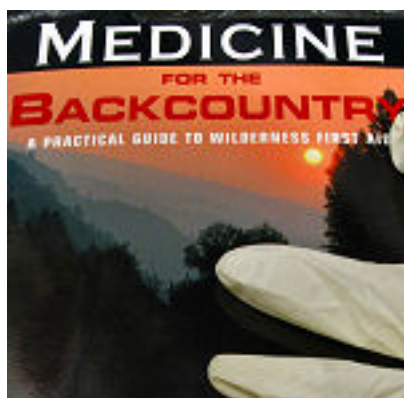
<http://outdoors-magazine.com>

# Medicine for the Backcountry

## by Buck Tilton and Frank Hubbel

**Schwert**

- Skills and guides - Library -



Publication: Thursday 13 March 2008

**Description :**

This text originally published in 1994 and now in its third edition (1999) is an excellent straightforward guide to wilderness medicine. It is written in a very readable and understandable style covering a multitude of likely injuries. I am reviewing this as both a wilderness text and as an emergency medical text for disaster use.

---

Copyright (c) Outdoors-Magazine.com under a Creative Commons

Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike License

---

For the past several years my wife and I have been active in our local RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services) and CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) groups (more about these in the Resource section below). As part of these volunteer efforts we participate in various radio drills and disaster scenarios. As part of our efforts we maintain several "Go-Kits" with various supplies...boots, water purification, gloves, eye protection, triage tape, notebooks, tarps, radios, batteries, antennas, food and water and several other items. In the first Go-Kit I built I tossed in a wilderness medical text that I had used as my main reference when I climbed. *Medicine for Mountaineering* by Dr. James A. Wilkerson, first published in 1967 and currently up to its fifth edition was my hands-down favorite for coverage of many of the likely wilderness mountaineering injuries. After CERT training I thought that many of the likely injuries in a disaster, like an earthquake, would be much like those encountered in a climbing accident...broken bones, burns, bleeding, spinal injuries, head injuries, and respiratory issues. I thought this excellent text would be a perfect addition to my Go-Kit.

Recently, I was browsing a bookstore and noted that Wilkerson's text had been updated a couple of times since my 1978 printing of the second edition. I almost bought the new edition when my eye found *Medicine for the Backcountry* by Tilton and Hubbell. After a quick browse of this I decided it would take the place of Wilkerson...or serve as a compliment to Wilkerson, in my Go-Kit.



### Medicine for the Backcountry

After only a quick review I could see that *Medicine for the Backcountry* had a bit more readable style, and had excellent summaries called **The Barehanded Principles**. These Principles summed up each chapter with quick, clear and readable advice that struck me right away as being the absolutely best way possible to use a text like this in either a wilderness scenario or a disaster scenario. Here is an example of **The Barehanded Principles** from the *High Altitude Illness* chapter:

#### The Barehanded Principles

1. Go Down
2. Descend
3. Get lower

I chose this example for its absolutely unambiguous recommendations even though this one is clearly a mountaineering medical issue only. Here is an example of a scenario more suited to a disaster from the *Abdominal Injury and Illness* chapter:

### The Barehanded Principles

1. Assess for seriousness of injury or illness
2. Keep the patient in the chosen position of comfort, and keep warm
3. Watch for vomiting, protect from aspiration if vomiting occurs, and maintain airway
4. Control obvious bleeding and manage open wounds appropriately
5. Evacuate the seriously ill or injured patient as soon as possible, in a position of comfort, being careful to avoid undue movement
6. Watch for shock

Chapters are easy to find and review quickly. They begin with Primary assessment (protect yourself, survey the scene, and ABC's) then move into Secondary assessment (physical exam, vital signs and SOAP note taking). Subsequent chapters then deal with specific injuries or symptoms found in the primary and secondary assessments....shock, spinal cord injuries, wounds, burns, head, chest, and abdominal injuries. Treatment chapters include: fractures, dislocations, and thermoregulation. Several of the later chapters deal specifically with wilderness only type issues like high altitude, bears, and dangerous marine life, but the majority of the text is very well suited to longer-term medical care of patients in either a wilderness or urban disaster where qualified medical assistance is not just a few minutes away.

While Wilkerson's *Medicine for Mountaineering* is still an excellent resource, and a bit more comprehensive, I think that in a disaster scenario Tilton and Hubbell have produced a near perfect text for the moderately trained secondary responders like CERT. Most of the text would likely be applicable to the various medical conditions encountered in disasters. *Medicine for the Backcountry* has found a permanent home in my Go-Kit.

### Resources

Amazon.com is an excellent source for both books.

[\*\*Medicine for the Backcountry\*\*](#) by Buck Tilton and Frank Hubbell, Globe Pequot, third edition, 1999. Currently about \$6 from Amazon...quite a bargain.

[\*\*Medicine: For Mountaineering & Other Wilderness Activities\*\*](#) 5th Edition by James A. Wilkerson, The Mountaineers, 2001. Currently about \$16.50.

### **CERT Community Emergency Response Teams**

CERT is a local program generally taught and administered by part of the emergency responder groups in the community. My program is coordinated through the fire department. Volunteers are introduced to very basic skills useful for themselves and others in a disaster scenario. Our training consisted of several weeks of classroom and hands on training covering fire, search and rescue, medical triage, medical aid, disaster assessment and reporting, and communications. CERT is part of a federal program from the Dept of Homeland Security. The training is very basic, but serves as an excellent introduction to local issues and local plans for disaster management. The classes taken as a family, are excellent to jump start family plan discussions, stimulate preparations (like multi-day disaster kits, emergency contacts etc), and get people more involved in their communities. I strongly encourage CERT

training, not for the skills introduced as much as for the continued discussions and planning that may occur.

Much more information on [CERT and ways to find local CERT training](#) can be found on the website:

### ***RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service)***

RACES is an FCC (Federal Communications Commission) sanctioned radio communication service. RACES groups are always part of a local or regional emergency communications groups and are again now part of Homeland Security (FEMA). Amateur radio operators (HAMS) volunteer with these groups to provide emergency communications on the amateur radio frequencies. These groups are primarily tasked with fall-back communications in the event of disasters which destroy "normal" communications networks.

We volunteer with a RACES group that serves several small communities. Hams have a couple of different ways to serve their communities with emergency communications. The link at the [Amateur Radio Relay League](#) discusses the various volunteer methods open to licensed radio operators.

*Post-scriptum :*

*Ver 1.0 03/12/2008 Inception*

*Ver 1.5 03/12/2008 Images and Fini*