

Crook County Sheriff Search and Rescue Backcountry Clothing and Footwear

Cotton and backcountry survival are inconsistent. **Cotton kills.** It retains moisture and can suck the heat from your body. A frozen sweatshirt isn't a lot of fun in the backcountry. The purpose of backcountry clothing and footwear is to keep you warm and dry.

Clothing:



Headwear

- Winter: Breathable, waterproof, able to keep rain and snow at bay, insulating
- May require two or three different hats or caps for the seasons
- May require two different hats or caps for same mission
- Summer: Waterproof, sun shading
- Fleece works well, cotton isn't a good idea even on your head unless you don't sweat or you won't encounter rain or snow

Upper body

- Breathable, waterproof shell with hood and vents. Needs to allow body heat and perspiration to escape (wicking) but keeps rain and snow out. Gortex is recommended but there are equivalent fabrics. Make certain the waterproofing is the fabric rather than a coating, which will escape when washed. Wash in non-detergent soap. (Outdoor stores sell specially designed soap for breathable shells.)
- Layered clothing is best. Manmade fabric underwear, fleece layers (wool is second best), loose fitting. Traps air between the fabrics. Wash fleece in specially designed soap available in outdoor stores.

Lower body

- Breathable, waterproof shell. Especially waterproof on seat.
 - Layered clothing as described in "Upper body".
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Footwear:

- Waterproof and insulated. Adequate arch and ankle support. Treated leather (waterproofed). Gortex but not neoprene (rubber); your feet need to breathe. Large enough for double layer of socks to trap air. Boots need to be broken in before you conquer the long walk. You may need up to four types of boots depending on the environment. Snowmobile (cross country ski boots can double for snowmobile boots), cold weather hiking, fire evacuation (high top leather), and warm weather hiking.
- Wool or blend socks. No cotton unless you don't care about your feet! Try thin sock under heavy sock for friction barrier.
- Vapor barrier is optional.
- Waterproof, breathable gaiters with under boot strap. Recommend knee height.