

# HOW TO BUILD A QUINZEE



Here is a description of how to build a snow quinzee or snow mound hut...

- ✓ These are usually used when you plan on spending more than one night in the same spot due to the effort involved in making this. If built properly a quinzee hut will be much warmer to sleep in than any tent.
- ✓ The quinzee hut is possible because temperature differences exist within the layers of snow. By mixing snow of different temperatures you create a sintering process that causes even powdered snow to harden.
- ✓ For a quinzee with an inside diameter of 1.8 m (6 ft), mark off a circular area that is at least 2.4 - 2.7 m (8 - 9 ft) in diameter (allowing for the walls).
- ✓ As you shovel, alternate flipping the snow over so that it gets well mixed (one shovel full right side up, the next gets thrown on upside down...).
- ✓ Poke a couple dozen 30 - 45 cm long sticks through the top and sides of your snow pile. These will be your guides to wall thickness when you start digging it out.
- ✓ Depending on the outside temperature it could take between one and three hours. The colder it is the faster it will harden.
- ✓ Now it's time to dig...you should be in waterproof clothes and someone else should help to move away the debris you shovel out.
- ✓ Start off by making a small opening at ground level. As you progress inwards, start slanting upwards so that the sleeping platform is slightly raised. This will allow the coldest air to flow down and out while you are sleeping.
- ✓ Keep hollowing out until you reach the ends of the sticks you poked through earlier. When finished the walls should be at least 30 - 45 cm thick and you should have a dome shaped ceiling. Smooth the ceiling as much as possible to prevent dripping.
- ✓ Ventilation: You will get a thin crust of ice buildup on the inside, due to condensation, making the snow airtight. You will need to make, and keep clear, a ventilation hole in the ceiling. Also, don't shut the door up too snugly, allow some air to circulate through it.
- ✓ You may also want to make a windbreak out of snow around the entrance. This will keep brisk winds out as well as to help prevent drifting snow from burying your doorway.
- ✓ Just as a precaution you should keep your shovel or other digging utensil inside with you at night in case you have to excavate your way out in the morning.
- ✓ Cooking inside is not recommended (due to CO build up), but if you must make sure you have an extra ventilation hole directly above your stove. Always leave the doorway partially opened while the stove is on. Set the stove outside when you first turn it off; this is when it gives off the most fumes.
- ✓ It is also a good idea to bring along a small tarp or tent fly. In the dead of winter it can still rain, even in northern Canada.
- ✓ A tarp or ground sheet is also required for the floor. Set this down and put your thermal pads and sleeping bags on top.
- ✓ These shelters are perfect for 2 or 3 people. If you have more in your group then you can build two adjoining quinzees with a small opening connecting them. There are many easier and quicker snow shelters that can be made for one individual.

WRITTEN BY: MIKE NOWACKI... PRESENTED HERE WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.