

NWCG Equipment Technology Committee

Equipment Advisory: 21-01

March 04, 2021



To: Wildland Fire Community

From: Dave Haston, Chair, NWCG Equipment Technology Committee (ETC)

Subject: Fire Shelter PVC Bag Retrofit 2021

Issue: Fire shelter polyvinyl chloride (PVC) bags may be difficult to open when exposed to high temperatures.

Background: During two recent entrapment/fire shelter deployments, firefighters reported that the PVC bag was difficult to open after being exposed to high temperatures during the burnover.

For a more reliable opening, the PVC bag design was reengineered with a small slit placed near the ends of the red tear strip weld. Starting in 2021, new fire shelters produced will have this latest revision to the PVC bag.

Action: The ETC recommends that existing fire shelter PVC bags be retrofitted to provide the same opening reliability as new production units. Until firefighters are able to retrofit the PVC bags, fire shelters are still serviceable.

Firefighters should only retrofit PVC bags containing serviceable fire shelters. Follow the [Fire Shelter Inspection Criteria](#) to determine fire shelter serviceability. Firefighters should remove unserviceable fire shelters from service and use them for practice fire shelter deployments. The slits in the PVC bag are not counted as “holes” in the inspection flowchart because the red tear strip covers the slits.

Tools needed to retrofit the PVC bag:

- X-ACTO® Knife number 1, 2, or 11 fine-point blade (or equivalent)
- Label—Chromalabel (or comparable), permanent ¾-inch dot label. Color—yellow (regular-size shelters) or orange (large-size shelters). Two dots per shelter www.chromalabel.com.



NWCG standards are interagency by design; however, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.

Instructions:

1. Open carrying case flap to access the fire shelter.
2. Locate position for the 1/4-inch long slit: 1/16 inch from the end of the red tear strip weld.
3. Gently insert the fine-point blade to make a 1/4-inch long slit (see pictures below). Flip shelter over and make a slit at the opposite end of the red tear strip.



4. Place yellow (regular-size shelters) or orange (large-size shelters) 3/4-inch adhesive dot over the existing vent hole on each side of the PVC bag (see pictures below).



5. If applicable, place a colored adhesive dot on the labels of the fire shelter box.

Notes:

- If the slit exceeds 1/2-inch, consider the shelter unserviceable and follow the [Rebag Direction](#).
- If the fire shelter is damaged in this process, label it and remove it from service.

Additional Information: See the [NWCG FSPPE Subcommittee](#) website.

Contact: Tony Petrilli, Fire Shelter Project Leader, U.S. Forest Service, National Technology and Development Program, at anthony.petrilli@usda.gov, or phone (406)531-6974 or (406)329-3900.