

Newsletter – June, 2018

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Sent: 6/11/2018 12:56 PM

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Hello Newsletter Subscribers,

Thank you for signing up to receive my training-centric newsletters. I hope you've found the previous editions informative and helpful for your vehicle-supported adventures. I trust you will enjoy this months newsletter.

There's MORE to it Than Brewing A

Cup of Tea...



I've attended several one and two-day off-road courses and more than my share of recovery clinics at overland and off-road events. During a few of these training sessions the trainer talked about *brewing a cup of tea* once a vehicle gets stuck in the backcountry. This catchphrase refers to the concept of taking a PAUSE to think about a specific stuck or mishap situation, rather than haphazardly reacting wrongly to a bad occurrence. Incredibly, *brewing a cup of tea* is often the ONLY procedural advice given to attendees at these

recovery courses and clinics – if any advice is given at all.

I totally agree with the notion of taking a breather after getting stuck off-road. It is good advice. If brewing a cup of tea – or just stopping and having lunch – gets a stuck off-roader to slow down and carefully consider their situation and options prior to reacting to a difficult recovery situation, I'm all for it.

However, in my opinion there's more to it than simply *brewing a cup of tea* – A LOT MORE. This is especially true when the stuck situation is intense, like a vehicle tip over on a narrow and challenging trail. Even a less intense stuck situation can cause an inexperienced off-roader high anxiety when traveling alone in the remote backcountry. In both situations, adrenaline and anxiousness kicks in requiring MORE than a simple pause initiated by *brewing a cup of tea*. With adrenaline flowing and knees knocking, these off-roaders need a written step-by-step procedure to help them maturely assess their stuck situation and

develop a logical and safe recovery plan.

It is my opinion that a written step-by-step recovery procedure needs to be in the glove box of every off-roader and overlander. Someone that's stuck in the remote backcountry shouldn't have to remember all the important recovery steps and considerations they need to make, in logical order, when the crap hits the fan. In an extreme recovery situation, even a seasoned off-roader may need a checklist to help guide their recovery efforts. Certainly, they need to do more to assess their situation than simply brewing a cup of tea. Enter Off-Road Safety Academy's STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist™.

Since I've never been given, either orally or printed form, or found in literature a well-formulated methodology to follow when the crap hits the fan in the remote backcountry, I decided that off-roaders really need one. This is why I developed the STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist™.

If you want a FREE Checklist to place it in your glove compartment – email me and I'll send you a PDF to print. One day, I assure you, you will need it.

The STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist™ is one of the backbones of my third book: *The Total Approach to Getting Unstuck Off Road – 4WD Self-Recovery and Vehicle-Assisted Recovery*.__ Look for it in August on Amazon and my website.

Important Side Notes Regarding the STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist™

1. **Developed Specifically for the Inexperienced.** The checklist is developed for off-roaders that don't have much, if any, actual winching or general recovery experience. As the developer of the checklist, I acknowledge that seasoned recovery veterans will work through the STOPA Checklist steps in their minds. We don't need no stinkin'



checklist! In fact, inexperienced off-roaders won't need a checklist either once they gain some recovery experience. It is for this reason I continually encourage readers to gain actual experience by taking a 4WD course from a professional trainer. (That said, be sure to choose your "trainer" carefully.)

Experienced off-roaders rarely do any math to estimate the loads put on recovery equipment and vehicles when attempting to get a vehicle unstuck. Experience allows them to mentally estimate the loads involved. When stuck, experienced off-roaders will simply: A) Audit the situation, B) Carefully rig a recovery setup, and C) Give it a try. In most cases, their experience will serve them well and they will get a vehicle unstuck in only one attempt. However, even the most experienced recovery professional will tell you that it took a few missteps and/or failures to arrive at their experience level. The STOPA Checklist can help off-roaders without much recovery experience avoid dangerous mistakes while gaining valuable recovery experience.

- 2. Primary Purpose of the STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist.** The primary purpose of the checklist is to get those that haven't performed many recoveries to simply think clearly about stuck situations in the remote backcountry. This is in sharp contrast to simply hooking up a winch or kinetic energy recovery rope or strap and start pulling on a stuck vehicle (like so many do). There are great forces at work with these types of recovery efforts. If these forces exceed the working load limit of recovery equipment and accessories, bad things can happen. Winches can begin to smoke or quit, shackles can deform or break, rope can fail, and straps can tear. How large are these forces? They are huge. For beginners, the word huge is ambiguous. As an educator, I feel compelled to provide beginners with real numbers – even though it's an approximation. An actual load resistance number can exemplify and highlight the power of these forces to the uninitiated. To find an approximate resistance value, one only needs to do a very small amount of math on their smartphone.

3. **Approximate Resistance Values.** There are many variables related to the nature of an actual stuck situation. As a specific example, mud in one geographical location will be different than mud somewhere else. Adding to this variability, are many types of mud one can get stuck in. These different characteristics and types of mud will provide different resistance values. Point is, in the natural world it's all but impossible to accurately calculate resistance values for any one stuck situation. The only way to arrive at a precise resistance value for any singular recovery effort is to measure the pull with a dynamometer (a device using for such measurements, particularly in the hoisting industry). Short of using this device, any resistance value calculated is purely approximate. In my humble opinion, the calculation of approximate resistance values in the STOPA Checklist serve four important purposes. They: A. Are of teaching value for those beginning to learn the dynamics of recovery and stuck extraction. B. Can help the inexperienced understand the forces involved in practically all recovery efforts. C. Can help the inexperienced avoid recovery missteps and failures. D. Can help those that are nervous and running on adrenaline to focus on the recovery effort at hand so as to avoid exceeding the working load limit of recovery equipment and accessories.
4. **WreckMaster Resistance Numbers – The Best in the Industry.** The resistance values in the Checklist come directly from WreckMaster, the preeminent North American tow truck training company. Their resistance values have been scientifically determined by quantitative methodology and validated by years of in-field experience.
5. **Begin Recovery Efforts with Low-Energy Strategies.** Working through a thoughtful stuck assessment will help you decide on an initial recovery effort that is both safe and involves the lowest energy tactic with the highest probability of success. You can extract yourself from the majority of off-road stuck situations by simply:
 - Airing down your tires down further.
 - Making sure you are in 4WD.
 - Shoveling terrain away from around your tires and vehicle.
 - Building up terrain (such as stacking rocks) under lifted tires.
 - Using low-impact traction aiding devices such as electronic traction control, lockers, a sway-bar release, or traction boards (e.g. MAXTRAX or Crux Offroad Bridging Ladders).

Pardon My Rant

Here's another side note about the development of the STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist™. About a year ago my checklist was shared with a rather well known trainer prior to first unveiling it to the public in OutdoorX4 magazine. I



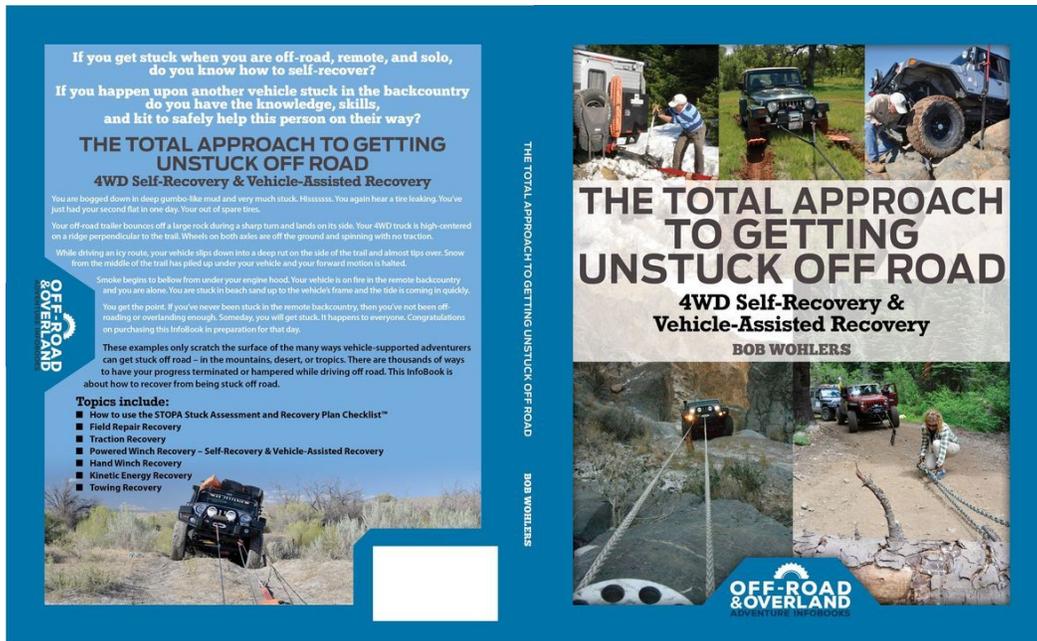
was genuinely looking for constructive input since no work is perfect. He didn't have anything to add regarding the content or flow of the checklist, he simply said: *Well, I would never use the checklist. When I perform a recovery, I consider the alternatives in my head. I don't need a checklist.*

I thought to myself after reading this reply: **My checklist wasn't written for you – you have years of recovery experience.** As I said previously, The STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist™ was written for the general public and those just beginning to learn the various aspects of off-road recovery. Sorry, for the diatribe. I'm just

getting a little tired of the egos in the off-road industry and those that have to criticize anything new (or something they wish they would have thought of first).

ANOTHER NOTE: As I mentioned in the May newsletter, I have partnered with Master Pull to produce an Off-Road Guide: *Kinetic Energy Recovery – Principles, Safety Considerations and Safe Rigging Set-Ups*. July's newsletter will duplicate this booklet in its entirety and explain its contents. Look for this newsletter!

My Third Book Is On Its Way!



My third book in the series is coming in August! There is NO other book like this on the market, anywhere on the planet. *The Total Approach to Getting Unstuck Off Road* will be the MOST complete treatise on the subject ever.

Topics will include:

- * How to use the STOPA Stuck Assessment and Recovery Plan Checklist
- * Field Repair Recovery
- * Traction Recovery
- * Powered Winch Recovery - Self-Recovery & Vehicle-Assisted Recovery
- * Hand Winch Recovery
- * Kinetic Energy Recovery
- * Towing Recovery

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