

# **THE MOUNTAINEERS**

## **HIKING LEADERS GUIDE**



### **HIKING LEADER'S GUIDE**

“Mountaineers outings are organized by and for the membership, for group enjoyment, exploration and education in the outdoors. The leaders are volunteers, and trip participants cooperate in sharing responsibility and meeting the needs of the group as a whole.”

The Mountaineers

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Hiking Leader's Guide is designed to provide suggestions for leaders of The Mountaineers Hiking trips. It reflects The Mountaineers policies and procedures for hikers and hiking leaders. In addition to some mandatory rules, the handbook provides general guidelines for the variety of hiking trips The Mountaineers offers. But no reference or book can substitute for an experienced and sensitive leader exercising careful and thoughtful judgment throughout the trip.

The various Hiking Committees appreciate your willingness to lead hiking trips for the fast growing hiking programs, and welcome you to our pool of over 100 volunteer leaders. This guide will acquaint you with the policies, procedures and expectations set forth by the various Hiking Committees for a safe and successful Hiking program. If you have questions concerning any of the information presented here, please don't hesitate to contact the appropriate committee person for additional clarification.

Happy Mountaineering!

5th Edition, 2013  
The Mountaineers Hiking Committee

## **ROLE OF THE LEADER**

The leader is a volunteer whose experience and judgment have qualified him or her for a leadership position. The leader has the authority and responsibility for the safety of the group, making sure that the participants of the trip are adequately equipped based on Mountaineers policy. The leader may wish to consult with the trip participants, but the leader makes the final decision regarding the group's safety in difficult situations.

Ultimately, the point of any Mountaineers trip should be the fun and full experience of arriving at and returning from the destination - not merely the destination itself. Even the most strenuous expedition is enriched by memories of good conversation, shared perceptions, and new friends. Reaching the destination is important, if reasonably possible, but having an enjoyable experience and returning safely rank higher. The leader is in a unique position to shape the quality and promote the safety of the trip. We hope that this guide will assist leaders in strengthening their innate leadership skills.

## **LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS**

The Mountaineers always welcomes new leaders. In general, an aspiring leader must be at least 18 years old, be a member of The Mountaineers, have demonstrated leadership within The Mountaineers, and be approved by the appropriate Committee for inclusion on that Committee's leaders list. The Seattle Hiking, Backpacking, & Singles Committees require attendance at a Hiking Leadership Workshop and the completion of at least one mentored trip with an experienced hike leader (two are recommended). Branches and other activities that offer hikes may have different requirements for new leaders. Check with the committee for which you wish to lead hikes. The Mountaineers minimum clubwide hiking standards (approved January 25, 2007) state that all hiking leaders must have knowledge of group leadership; use of topographical maps & compass; mountain safety (including identification of hazards and actions to avoid injury); basic first aid; and emergency preparedness (how to summon help should it be needed). MOFA (Mountaineering Oriented First Aid) and wilderness navigation courses are offered by The Mountaineers several times a year.

**ONGOING LEADERSHIP TRAINING:** It is recommended, but not required, that current leaders participate in a Hiking Leadership Workshop every three years. The Committees would appreciate experienced leaders serving as resources and providing case studies to the program.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD LEADERS**

1. Enthusiasm for hiking and sharing the experience with others
2. Personal preparation and good judgment
3. Group awareness
4. Knowledge of and adherence to Mountaineers principles
5. Ability to make decisions
6. Willingness to accept responsibility for decisions
7. Concern for safety appropriate to the nature of the activity
8. Knowledge of hiking and wilderness skills

## **BENEFITS OF LEADERSHIP**

Leading hikes is a way to become involved, get to know more club members who love to hike, and choose your own destinations and hike dates. Learning to lead hikes is learning how to manage people and situations--skills that carry over into other aspects of life. Leading makes it possible for less experienced people to learn from you and experience the wilderness safely. The Mountaineers is a volunteer organization. Without volunteer leaders, there would be no hikes and no Mountaineers organization.

## TRIP STANDARDS AND POLICIES

The Mountaineers has always been interested in minimizing formal requirements for trip participation in order to foster initiative and the spirit of adventure. Thus, most of this manual suggests guidelines for leader action that should always be tempered with judgment about the circumstances of an outing. There are, nevertheless, a few rules that are necessary to enhance the safety and appropriate conduct of all hiking trips. It is these rules, derived from The Mountaineers Board of Trustees Policy, that set the standard for a leader's performance.

**LEADER:** Every trip must have a leader who is at least 18 years old, a Mountaineers member, and formally approved by the appropriate Mountaineers Committee. A co-leader may be assigned at the discretion of the leader. In this case, the co-leader must also be at least 18 years old, and a Mountaineers member. The function of a co-leader is to share responsibility with the leader.

**WAIVER:** All participants, including guests, must sign The Mountaineers Release and Indemnity Agreement (The Waiver). The Waiver must be on file at the Seattle program center building before a hiking trip commences. Signing at the trailhead is not acceptable as it can be construed as duress and roster signup via the website cannot be processed until a waiver has been received/recorded. An electronic waiver form can be downloaded from the club website and faxed in to the program center.

The Waiver is part of an overall risk management strategy. If you lead a trip or instruct at a field trip for the club and an accident occurs, you are protected by the club's liability insurance program, provided all participants have signed The Waiver.

**SIZE:** The group must be no fewer than 3 and no more than 12 persons. Be sure to observe any lower limits instituted by government agencies, specially managed wilderness areas, or property owners.

**MINORS:** All leaders who wish to lead hikes with minors must have a qualified youth leader (QYL) on activities for anyone under the age of 18 regardless of a guardian being present. No person under age 14 is allowed on a hiking trip unless accompanied by a parent/guardian. No one between ages 14 and 18 is allowed on a trip without written parental consent. Leaders may decide whether to allow any person under 18 on a trip. For more information on becoming a QYL see: [http://www.mountaineers.org/forms/working\\_with\\_youth\\_faq.pdf](http://www.mountaineers.org/forms/working_with_youth_faq.pdf) (staff contact: Director of Education)

**GUEST POLICY:** Guests are allowed on Mountaineers hikes provided the guest has a signed liability waiver at the Seattle Program Center and meets the same requirements of club participants. These include being fit enough for the trip, being 18 years or older, and carrying all necessary equipment. Guests are limited to two trips per year. A waiver can be downloaded from the club website, signed, and then faxed to the administrative office.

**TRIP LIST:** In order to maintain good records of trips and assure that all participants are accounted for, leaders must have a printed Trip List with them on the hike. When signup is handled through the Seattle branch, the final Trip List will be available online in "Your Account" after the signup is closed (usually the FRIDAY preceding your weekend trip). You can download from the club website after you log in or it can be faxed or e-mailed upon request. The Trip List provides the names, phone numbers, carpool assignments of those who have signed up for the trip, and confirms that hikers have a current insurance waiver. Those who don't have a current waiver (including guests) are not able to sign-up via the website, so you should not have waiver issues for a hike. Signing a waiver at the trailhead is not acceptable (it can be construed as duress in court).

When trip listing and signup is handled through a different Branch, the trip leader is responsible for preparing the Trip List. The Trip List can be developed on a trip planner form which can serve as telephone signup sheet, trip list and post Trip Report form.

**POST-TRIP REPORTS:** Trip Reports are used to determine trail conditions and to notify the appropriate Committee of any participant problems, accidents, etc., that may have been encountered on the trip. The appropriate Committee will follow up on any concerns or problems so it is very important to be specific when filling out the online post-trip report. Problems or not, you will need to submit the online trip report found with the listing of your hike in your profile when logged in to The Mountaineers website, within a week after the trip.

**The common method to submit trip reports is to use the online trip report form found in the list of your trips within your account on The Mountaineers website.** The web trip report will become available the day after the date of your hike. Branch reporting procedures vary from Branch to Branch. The appropriate Committee will notify trip leaders of the proper channel for submitting post-hike trip reports or whether there is a manual form still in use. Any safety incidents, accidents or injuries are also reported on the online form.

**ACCIDENT REPORTS:** The leader must report all accidents or injuries to the appropriate Committee sponsoring the trip and the Safety Committee. Any Minor injuries and accidents are reported in writing via the trip report form as soon as possible after completing the hike trip. Major accidents or injuries need to be reported to the program center following the Emergency Contact Procedures and within 24 hours. After rescue has been initiated, contact the club by dialing **The Mountaineers Emergency Line at (206) 521-6030**. Getting your group of hikers out safely takes priority over calling the Mountaineers Emergency Line.

**HIKER CANCELLATIONS:** Hikers who cancel late and no-shows should be clearly indicated on the online post Trip Report. This will enable the appropriate Committee to contact any chronic no-shows and late-canceling participants and clarify the cancellation policy. If your trip has a waiting list, please make an effort to fill the post sign-up/late cancellation by calling and e-mailing wait list names as soon as possible.

**CHANGING THE DESTINATION OF A TRIP:** It is possible to make a change in the destination when weather or trail conditions do not permit you to do the planned trip. If the trip is listed through the Seattle program center, you will need to call or e-mail hikers on the signup list and notify them of the change. The new destination should be of the same level of difficulty. As leader, you will be responsible for notifying each participant of the change, as well as the new meeting place and time. (**See appendix on website tips & time-savers**).

**CANCELLING A SCHEDULED TRIP:** While it is sometimes necessary to cancel a trip, it should be done only as a last resort. Even though our leaders are volunteers, once a trip is scheduled it becomes an obligation. Canceling trips after they appear in the website or Go Guide creates an extremely awkward situation for everyone involved.

**For trips listed through the Seattle branch, trip cancellation will be handled as follows:**

Trips that are canceled *before sign-up* opens:

- Try to find a substitute Leader. If no leader can be found, then cancel the trip by logging into The Mountaineers club website, going to “Your Account” and cancel the hike.

Trips that are canceled *after sign-up* opens:

- Try to find a substitute Leader; check the Trip List for people you know are hike leaders. If no hike leaders have signed up for the trip, and no substitute hike leader from the club can be found, cancel the trip. E-mail and call each participant who has signed up and tell him or her that the trip is canceled.
- For trips that are listed through a Branch not using the club website, the leader should try to find a substitute leader before canceling the trip. When a trip must be canceled, the leader should e-mail and call each participant and notify him/her of the cancellation.

Any cancellation of a scheduled trip is inherently confusing, but we hope that by following these steps and clear communications, we can reduce, if not eliminate, most of that confusion.

**WILDERNESS POLICY:** In consideration of the wilderness and other wilderness users, no pets, firearms, radios (Walkman/iPod types) or other entertainment devices are allowed on trips. Cellular phones are allowed, but should be turned off. Hiking groups in wilderness areas are strictly limited to no more than 12 participants. Fines for larger size groups can exceed \$100 in some wilderness and national park areas. Do not allow more than 12 hikers, including leaders, on your trips.

## **PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR TRIP LEADERS**

Leading safe and fun outings cannot be proscribed through rules. It requires participants and leaders who are prepared for the activity, as well as the experience, judgment, and sensitivity to adapt to unforeseen or changing circumstances. The following guidelines offer examples of problems that you should consider in advance, how to address these problems, and suggestions for planning and conducting safe trips.

**SIGNING UP TO LEAD TRIPS:** Each Hiking Committee will have its own set of procedures and deadlines for listing trips and maintaining a leaders list. As these may change from year to year, leaders should maintain regular contact with the appropriate Committee.

**SCREENING TRIP PARTICIPANTS:** The leader may screen trip participants or hold a pre-trip meeting, if necessary. Some club Branches have participants sign up through the leader, which allows the leader to talk with potential trip participants about equipment, trail conditions, and readiness for the particular trip. Many a trip has been made or broken by how well the leader has evaluated the skill of a potential hike participant prior to the trip.

Questions may include:

- Are you a member of The Mountaineers? What Branch? How long?
- Have you gone on Mountaineers trips before?
- How long and/or difficult were previous trips?
- Are you aware of the distance, elevation gain, and difficulty rating of this trip?
- Do you have and plan to bring the 10 essential systems on this trip?
- Are you properly equipped for bad weather?
- Do you have physical conditions or disabilities that may cause you or the group any problems? Are you willing to drive and how many passengers can you take?
- Do you have a scheduled time you need to be back by?

By asking these questions and (politely) insisting on complete answers, the leader can make an initial assessment about the appropriateness of the trip for each participant. If in doubt, recommend something more suited to the person's skill level, or refer them to the Seattle program center where sign-up personnel will gladly suggest a suitable trip.

**SCOUTING:** It is very helpful to scout the route in advance, especially if you have not done the trip in awhile. You should be aware of current trail conditions and road conditions to the trailhead. It is also important to check road and weather conditions just before the trip. Recent weather conditions may affect the route, especially in spring and winter. Talk with the appropriate Ranger Station, Forest Service, or Park Service personnel, or previous leaders of the trip (check old Go Guide issues) PRIOR to scouting the trip. Make note of amount of trailhead parking available, toilet facilities, cell/emergency telephone access, trail intersections, and water crossings.

**CARPOOLING:** Carpooling is recommended for all Mountaineers trips. See the [FAQ](#) on the club website for current reimbursement policy. Please remember that for official (insurance and liability) purposes, Mountaineers trips begin and end at the trailhead. Carpooling is a voluntary service offered by and accepted by trip participants as private individuals. Trip leaders are not responsible for carpool arrangements.

**EQUIPMENT:** The Ten Essential Systems are required on all trips, plus a pack, lunch, drinking water, adequate clothing and hiking boots. Leaders should also carry a first aid kit adequate for the type of trip you are leading, the Trip List, an accident report form (which provides a useful checklist of steps to follow in an emergency and can be downloaded from the Seattle Hiking website) and coins for an emergency phone call. The leader should stress that participants must carry their own equipment. *It is Mountaineers policy that leaders leave inadequately clothed or shod hikers, or unprepared hikers at the trailhead or meeting place.*

\*The ten essential systems consist of: **Navigation** (map & compass), **Sun Protection** (clothing, sunglasses), **Illumination** (flashlight/headlamp), **Insulation** (extra clothing), **Nutrition** (extra food), **Hydration** (extra water), **First-Aid Supplies**, **Repair kit** (pocket knife), **Fire** (waterproof matches/candle, fire starter, **Emergency Shelter** (space blanket/tarp).

**CELLULAR TELEPHONES:** As more people are taking cell phones into the mountains, they are playing an increasingly prominent role in search and rescue. The Mountaineers neither encourages nor discourages their presence on a trip, but they should be switched off unless and until there is an urgent need. Leaders may wish to find out at the trailhead who is carrying a cell phone. Since they are not guaranteed to work when you need them, they should not mislead you into taking risks that otherwise would be unacceptable.

**YOUR OWN READINESS AND MOUNTAINEERING SKILLS:** Schedule trips that are within your ability. Be physically and mentally ready for the trip with strength to spare to help others or to meet an emergency. Be sure that your own equipment is in good repair. Keep up your mountaineering and safety skills by taking advantage of classes offered by the Red Cross or The Mountaineers such as the Mountaineering Oriented First Aid (MOFA) and navigation courses.

**OBTAIN PERMITS:** Obtain necessary hiking, parking, and/or trailhead permits from the appropriate agency (check the appropriate forest/resource offices for current policies). File your trip plan as required by any Forest Service/ National Park Service agencies, and leave an emergency phone number back home with someone who will know if the group is overdue.

**TRAIL COURTESY:** If your group is traveling on a narrow trail, please remember not to make it difficult for other hikers, climbers, or horseback riders to pass. Step aside quickly if your group is being overtaken. It is customary for the downhill hikers to step aside for the uphill hikers. Stay on the downhill side of horses/riders when it is safe to do so.

**ASSERTIVENESS:** Don't let any member of the party go too far ahead of the group or behind the rear guard (a.k.a. sweep) without permission. Call the shots--that's what it means to be a leader. Be prepared to modify the outing plan as necessary to avoid exceeding the group's capability and external conditions. Be comfortable with the possibility of aborting the trip objective if circumstances prevent its safe achievement.

**SENSITIVITY AND TACT:** The stronger, more skilled and more fearless you are as a leader, the more sensitivity you need to develop toward those who are weaker, less experienced, and scared. Be aware of the condition, skill, and confidence of all participants throughout the trip--they may change due to fatigue, weather, and the mix of personalities. Ask people how they are doing throughout the trip.

**PACE:** Once on the trail, your constant challenge is to keep the party moving and yet keep it together. It is the leader's option to keep the group close together or allow the group to spread out. At rest stops, allow slower hikers to rest after catching up with the faster ones.

**UNQUALIFIED TRIP PARTICIPANTS:** If a participant turns out to be demonstrably unqualified for the type or level of your trip, a gentle but frank conversation after the trip may avert future mismatches. If the person appears not to hear the message or is hostile, refer the matter to the appropriate Committee. The Committee will review the circumstances of any participant about whom there are complaints. If the Committee determines that the person is unqualified to participate in certain trips, it will advise the person and the program center that he or she is on probation until specific training is completed, experience is acquired or behavior modified.

**SPLITTING THE GROUP:** Turning a participant back once the trip has begun endangers the safety of that person, and the rest of the group. If a person requests to leave the group against your advice, have him or her sign out in the presence of witnesses (i.e., by initializing their name on the trip report with date & time). Explain to any person leaving the group that he or she is now on their own and has assumed that risk. If splitting the group becomes absolutely necessary, designate a leader for the new sub-group, and carefully brief them on what to do.

### **TIPS FOR A SAFE TRIP**

1. Obtain accurate and timely weather forecasts.
2. Consider the avalanche or rock fall hazard along the route and select the route accordingly, taking into account the time of day and time of year for the trip.
3. Take into consideration the time needed for the trip, the time of year, weather, hours of daylight, and physical condition and experience of party members.
4. In cold conditions, be vigilant for hypothermia; know, and urge all participants to look for, signs and symptoms of hypothermia in their colleagues, as the condition may be life-threatening.
5. In hot weather, monitor for signs of heat-related illnesses (heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke; the latter of these can be life-threatening).

### **MEMBER SERVICES:**

The Member Services office of The Mountaineers can provide leaders with any number of resources such as:

- Changing destination, description, meeting time, or date of a trip on the website if you have trouble
- Canceling a trip (leaders must call and e-mail any signed up members)
- Clarification of waiver or liability
- Trip and Carpool Lists (also available on the web)

\*\* Most leaders can now get this information via self-service from their user profiles on The Mountaineers website. **See appendix for details.**

## AT THE TRAILHEAD

It is good policy to arrive at least 15 minutes early at the trailhead or carpool site. Identify yourself as the leader and check the names of hikers on the trip list as they arrive. Wait at the meeting place at least 15 minutes beyond the scheduled start/departure time for late arrivals. Identify no-shows and report them on your post Trip Report.

### BEFORE THE TRIP:

- Introduce yourself at the meeting place and have all participants introduce themselves to the group. Also identify any guests and new members.
- Check the Trip List to see if everyone is present/has signed the waiver. Those who do not have a waiver on file are NOT allowed on the trip (uncommon).
- Do a quick visual/verbal equipment check. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure all hikers are prepared for the trip. If a person has forgotten important gear or looks unprepared, this is the time to turn them away, before it becomes a safety issue for the entire group. This may require essential gear questions, lunch, and/or water check of a hiker before the trip begins (in private if possible).
- Describe the trip and trail conditions, potential problems, pace, side trails, special scenery, etc.
- Establish the trip rules - be explicit about how you intend to keep the group together. Remind everyone to wait at trail intersections or water crossings.
- Designate a First Aid person. Ask to be informed of any special health concerns in private.
- Designate a Rear Guard (a.k.a. sweep) and if applicable, a front guard, explain to the group the general responsibilities of these roles for the hiking group.

### DURING THE TRIP:

- Plan to stop 15-20 minutes after the start for a clothing adjustment; this is also a good time for you to check the hikers' abilities with the current pace. Is the group too spread out? Is someone out of breath or not well equipped for conditions?
- Remind hikers to always wait at signed and unsigned trail junctions, to undo pack hip belts for water crossings, and of any other safety concerns of which you want them to be aware on the route.
- Share your hiking experiences on other trips, identify strong hikers and talk about whether they would consider becoming a trip leader, and encourage/mentor new hikers.

### AFTER THE TRIP:

- Make sure every hiker has returned to the cars. (No one is to leave until every hiker has returned to the trailhead.)
- Explain the official carpool policy.
- If a dinner/food stop is being planned, identify the restaurant and directions, etc.
- Make sure all cars start before leaving.
- Complete the online Trip Report under "Your Account"/Activity History.
- Add a recreational trip report at [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org) to inform other hikers of the current conditions on the trail.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

While we hope that accidents or injuries will be minimized by skillful leaders, experienced and prepared participants, and good trip planning, they may occur. Leaders are required to report all incidents/injury and accidents - minor and serious - to the Committee via the post Trip Report online form and the Accident Report Form (hard copy). The hiking committee and safety committee and possibly other representatives of The Mountaineers will investigate all serious accidents. See page 17 for more details about the club Emergency contact procedures. A safety committee member will follow up with a trip leader after the report is posted.

### LOST HIKER:

1. Determine when the hiker was last seen.
2. Plan a search party. Determine the areas to be scouted and call loudly, or use whistles. You can choose to divide the group, but designate a leader in all new groups. Never send anyone out alone, nor should anyone be waiting alone while the group searches. Don't allow anyone to go home; you may need them later.
3. Designate a time and place to reassemble all search groups whether the lost hiker has been found or not.
4. If, after this initial search, the hiker is still lost, contact the local sheriff or park ranger. **Get the emergency contact information in advance of your hike and have it with your map & sign-up list for the trip.** Remember that you have the best chance of finding a lost hiker, as many agencies will not be able to start a search until rescue services are available/in place, which could mean the next day.
5. After the rescue has been initiated, contact The Mountaineers via the Emergency Line (206-521-6030) immediately.

**MINOR ACCIDENTS:** A minor accident is one that in the leader's judgment has been successfully treated on the spot, does not require assistance in evacuation, and will not cause future complications. In such cases, the procedures below for serious accidents need not be followed, but the leader should always inform the Hiking Committee of the incident, no matter how minor, on the online post Trip Report Form.

**SERIOUS ACCIDENTS:** A serious accident is one that: 1) requires assistance back to the trailhead, or 2) requires assistance in evacuation, or 3) requires hospitalization, or 4) is treated by a medical professional, or 5) results in death. In the case of a serious accident, follow the procedures below.

**STAY CALM:** As the leader, you are the most important resource to the group in case of a serious accident. Take charge of the situation and work with the designated first aid person for your hike. If you are the designated first aid person, organize and assign specific individuals to do certain tasks. Elicit individual expertise (medical, climbing, scrambling, search & rescue). Utilize the entire group. Don't let anyone leave; they may be needed later to go for help, search, etc. Remember that your obligation is to the whole group, not just the injured person. Be careful that a second accident does not occur. Use the Accident Report Form (which should be carried in your first aid kit) to help plan your course of action.

## **FIRST AID – Seven steps review:**

1. Take charge of the situation.
2. Approach the patient safely if the terrain is difficult, steep or hazardous. Take precautions to avoid further injury to the patient or to others in the group.
3. Perform any urgently needed rescue and/or first aid. Breathing, pulse, and severe bleeding must be stabilized quickly. (Remember the “ABCDs” – airway, breathing, circulation, deadly bleeding.)
4. Protect the patient. Treat for shock if the injury is serious. Keep the patient lying down and insulated from the ground. Keep him or her warm, using their own belongings first. Do not move the patient until the extent of all injuries is known and movement can be done safely in a controlled manner (i.e., typically as part of Step 7, below).
5. Check for other injuries. Do a careful, thorough, and methodical head-to-toe examination.
6. Plan what to do. The patient’s condition, size and the strength of the party, terrain, time of day, and the group’s location with respect to outside assistance must all be evaluated.
7. Carry out the plan. If possible, make sure everyone has something to do and no one is alone.

**SELF EVACUATION OR RESCUE:** Determine if your group is able to self evacuate or if you will need help from search and rescue operations. This decision will depend upon the party strength and resources, your location and condition of the trail, and the patient’s condition.

**SEND FOR HELP:** If it is necessary to send for help, send the two strongest members of the party, who know the route back to the trailhead to telephone for help (or use a cell phone if there is one in the group). Do not send them out until their help is no longer necessary at the accident site. Be sure they have coins for the phone and appropriate car keys. They should mark the route out on the map if it may be confusing or darkness may fall. They should note terrain, distance, and time from the accident site to the road. Send the written accident report form with them to be sure that they have all the details about the accident, the patient’s condition, and the group’s resources. If your contact with outside help is by cell phone, you may still need to send two people to the trailhead to guide the rescuers in.

**CONTACT THE AUTHORITIES:** Sometimes you can initiate a faster response by having the local county sheriff’s phone number versus calling 9-1-1. If you don’t have the local phone numbers, call 9-1-1 for County Sheriff in Washington or a National Park Ranger. Give them the specific details of the accident, the patient(s), the weather and terrain conditions, and the phone number (and the location of the phone) from which you are calling, so they can meet you. Write down the rescuers’ name and phone number information. Stay at the phone and be prepared to lead the rescue team to the accident site.

**NOTIFY THE MOUNTAINEERS:** After assisting with evacuation and other urgent matters, notify the appropriate Committee Chair, or The Mountaineers Seattle Program Center via The Mountaineers Emergency Line procedures: phone 206-521-6030, also see page 17.

**FILE POST TRIP ONLINE REPORT FORM:** For both minor and serious accidents, complete the online Trip Report form. As a hike leader, there is now an online trip report available in your login profile for the hikes you lead. The trip report can be completed and submitted via The Mountaineers website. Completing a trip report is part of the responsibility of leading a hike, whether there has been an accident or not.

Complete and detailed information about all accidents is important to evaluate the accident in case of a legal challenge. It also provides opportunities to examine the causes of accidents and design safety programs and policies to avoid them in the future.

## NEW MEMBER TRIPS

**DEFINITION:** New Member Trips are just that, trips especially designed for new members of The Mountaineers. These trips are normally easy to moderate in difficulty. New hikers may be completely inexperienced in outdoor activities, previously experienced hikers new to the area (or new to The Mountaineers) or very experienced climbers or scramblers looking for less strenuous activity with the hiking group. The leader should design the trip primarily to be a pleasurable, safe, and sociable experience. In addition, New Member Trips give the leader an opportunity to educate new members on the principles and guidelines for safe outdoor activity.

## TIPS FOR EASY/MODERATE TRIPS

**DEFINITION:** Easy trips generally have a maximum round trip length of 8 miles, and elevation gain up to 1,200 feet. Moderate trips generally have a maximum round trip length of 12 miles, and elevation gain up to 2,500 feet. Hikers could be beginners or experienced. The leader should design the trip primarily to be a pleasurable, safe, and sociable experience. In addition to the general guidelines, the following suggestions apply to easy and moderate trips:

**SCOUTING:** Scout the route close to the time you are leading it if you are not thoroughly familiar with it. Call a recent leader of the trip, or the appropriate park or ranger station and check their websites. Read the trail guidebooks, read current trip reports on the WTA website at [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org). New roads or trails may have invaded the area you plan to visit and can be confusing. Look for attractive locations for rest stops. Note the time it takes for you to complete the trip and add more time for the group you'll be leading. Include time for brief rest stops in your calculation. Plan to be back at the trailhead well before sundown.

**EQUIPMENT:** The group should be encouraged to wear comfortable, non-cotton clothing and sturdy footwear, and to carry adequate wind, sun, and rain gear for the trip. The ten essential systems must be carried by everyone as well as a pack and lunch. If in doubt, an equipment check at the trailhead may be in order.

**TRAILHEAD CHECK:** In addition to the suggestions in the general guidelines, share your plans with the group--the route in general and where rest stops are planned, points of interest along the way, and the location of the lunch stop.

**PACE:** Keeping the group together is advisable, especially on easy hikes, where participants' abilities may vary widely. Slower hikers might benefit from tips on hiking technique such as breathing and the rest step.

**REST STOPS:** Ideally, rest stops should be chosen in advance, strategically spaced about an hour apart, allowing time for a drink and a snack to replenish the body's energy supply. Stopping places should offer a place to sit down plus some added attraction--a sparkling stream or a beautiful view. If it's cold, find a sunny spot. If it's windy, look for a sheltered area. On the ascent, stops should be brief--between 5 and 10 minutes. But the faster members should wait until the slower hikers have caught up and had a chance to rest as well.

**DESTINATION:** If weather permits, plan to spend about an hour at the destination, which is usually a summit or a scenic lake. This is the climax of the trip, and the hikers have earned the right to enjoy the fruits of their labors. Encourage exploration of the vicinity, if it's not dangerous.

**THE DESCENT:** The descent is part of the experience and need not be merely an anti-climax. Demonstrate plunge-stepping or glissading on an easy snow field where the run-out is safe. These adventures broaden the experience of beginners and enhance everyone's enjoyment of the trip.

**NEW LEADER TALENT:** People of considerable experience and maturity often join moderate trips. Consider inviting them to talk with the Committee about opportunities to lead trips. Inform the Committee of possible new leaders. The Club is always seeking to renew its supply of competent, enthusiastic volunteer leaders.

## **TIPS FOR STRENUOUS/VERY STRENUOUS TRIPS**

**DEFINITION:** Strenuous trips generally have a maximum round trip length of 14 miles, and elevation gain from 2,500 to 3,500 feet. Very Strenuous trips are over 14 miles round trip and / or more than 3,500 feet of gain. Most of these trips go far into the backcountry where help is many hours or days away. Leading such a trip requires careful planning to be safe and enjoyable. In addition to the general guidelines, the following suggestions apply to strenuous trips.

**CO-LEADER:** If you decide to appoint a co-leader, choose someone who is strong, with whom you work well, and whose abilities you know. You want someone who can take over if you are incapacitated and who is patient enough to follow behind the stragglers.

**SCOUTING:** Your preparation should begin by doing the route. Then consider how long it will take the group. A rule of thumb is 1-1/2 miles plus 750 vertical feet per hour. For a strong group, perhaps 2 miles plus 1,000 vertical feet per hour. Add more time for special terrain problems such as bushwhacking, stream crossings, loose scree, or snow. And try to schedule some leeway before dark for route problems or emergencies. Better to schedule an earlier departure than to plan a trip that will return to the trailhead at dusk *only* if all goes well.

**YOUR OWN READINESS:** You must be strong enough for the trip yourself, with plenty of reserves to help others in an emergency. You should be familiar with map, compass, and route finding. You may consider taking the MOFA course, or winter travel course if your trips bring you into snow conditions. You should have done several such trips before under similar conditions. And you must be ready to lead, to make hard decisions, constantly be alert for possible problems, and in a pinch to know what to do and be able to do it with a clear head.

**WEATHER CHECK:** Get the most recent forecast by television, telephone, weather radio, or computer. In winter and spring, you may be able to get a recent report on snow conditions from other leaders or the appropriate Ranger Station, Forest Service, or Park Service.

**TRAILHEAD CHECK:** Complete the steps set out in the section on AT THE TRAILHEAD. Size up participants for fitness and equipment. Look over their clothing and gear. If anyone is ill equipped, don't let them go, no matter what sort of scene it causes. (Better a scene now than aborting the trip or bivouacking on the mountain.) Discuss the trip plan with the group. If faced with cold or wet weather, explain the symptoms of hypothermia and advise everyone to watch each other for these signs.

**PACE:** Once on the trail, your constant challenge is to keep the party moving and yet keep it together. It is the leader's option to keep the group close together or allow the group to spread out. Make one stop early to remove excess clothing and adjust equipment. After that, try to keep stops to no more than one per hour. Though rest stops should be brief, encourage everyone to eat and drink. A tired hiker is often more hungry and thirsty than she or he knows or is willing to acknowledge.

**THE DESCENT:** The descent is part of the experience and need not be merely an anti-climax. Demonstrate plunge-stepping or glissading on an easy snow field where the run-out is safe. These adventures can broaden the experience and enhance everyone's enjoyment of the trip. Take extra care on the descent as hikers may be tired and less alert.

**SENSITIVITY AND TACT:** The most important aspect of leadership judgment is knowing when to quit. Remember that Mountaineers hiking trips are recreation, not contests. The primary goal is to come back safely, the second is to have fun, and a distant third is to reach the destination. It's not worth racing a storm, flogging your stragglers, or risking serious rockfall to make the summit. When the leader feels the party must retreat, explain the reasons that led to the decision. **Ask for thoughts and opinions from the group, but be prepared to make the decision yourself--that is your job and should not be delegated.**

**SHARE INFORMATION:** Show people where hazards are and why you do things the way that you do. On changes of route or schedule, ask for other opinions. When you safely can, delegate responsibility: have someone else count heads, ask someone to find the lunch spot, or on safe terrain, let others lead. The more you involve others in the trip responsibility and sharing of opinions, the fewer conflicts you will have and the less likely you will be to overlook a problem.

**NEW LEADER TALENT:** People of considerable experience and maturity often join Mountaineers trips. Consider talking with them about the opportunities to lead trips. Inform the Committee of possible new leaders. The Mountaineers are always seeking to renew its supply of competent, enthusiastic leaders.

## CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

As more people venture into the outdoors, it becomes ever more important to minimize our impact through good environmental practices. The high country is a very fragile ecosystem, which does not have the capacity to re-vegetate quickly. Areas of high use are also under great stress. The wilderness is home to many plant and animal species. We are a visitor in their home--respect this. The following guidelines have been prepared to help us recognize some of the environmental concerns in our use of the outdoors.

**WILDLIFE:** Don't feed the animals or allow them to steal your food. Camp out of sight of water so that animals won't be forced to go elsewhere to drink. Winter is a time of stress. Animals need all their stored calories from the summer to survive. There is no margin for fleeing from humans. Do not disturb wildlife--at any time.

**HIKING:** Stay on trails, thereby minimizing impact. If there is no trail, use the route least damaging to soil and vegetation (e.g., rocks, snow, and dry grass). Shortcutting switchbacks damages vegetation, causes erosion and leads to trail deterioration. Block shortcuts with rocks or logs to deter further use. Use low impact footwear whenever possible.

**CAMPING:** Camp at least 200 feet from water. Reduce contamination of water and impact on animals by locating your camp out of sight of trails, lakes and streams and away from animal feeding or sleeping areas. Use a highly impacted site, do not sprawl your campsite out, and keep the damage in one area. Try not to camp on vegetation; instead choose rocks, snow, sand, gravel, or hardpan. When camping in a pristine area, move your campsite often to minimize impact on any particular plants. Do not camp on tundra at all when you have a choice. Leave no sign of your camp.

**STOVES AND FIRE:** Use a stove unless a life depends on using a fire.

**SANITATION:** Minimize the chance of water pollution and the spread of water-borne diseases such as Giardia (fecal contamination of water is the most common route of transmission). Never urinate in lakes or streams. Dispose of human waste at least 200 feet away from lakes or streams, not in a drainage area affected by storm runoff, and above spring runoff line.

- Pack it all out - especially when no hole can be dug (e.g., winter and glacier travel, rock climbing, etc.). Dispose of waste properly once out.
- Cathole: 6-8" deep; carry out toilet paper and tampons in plastic bags.
- Latrines: least desirable; cover with dirt after each use; cover completely when leaving; carry out toilet paper and tampons in plastic bags.
- Always wash hands before handling food, at least 200 feet away from lakes and streams.

**WATER POLLUTION:** Use biodegradable soap and a solar shower. Dispose of soapy water at least 200 feet from water. Use dirt or sand as scouring powder. Disinfect with boiling water. Disinfect all drinking and cooking water by use of a filter, chemical disinfectant (iodine or chlorine dioxide) or boiling at least one minute. Boiling is the most effective method; combine methods if necessary.

**LITTER:** Pack out all of your trash and other trash that you find. Take trash home and recycle. Do not place in roadside bins.

## **SUSPENDING LEADERS**

The Hiking Committee of jurisdiction may temporarily or permanently suspend any leader who demonstrates dangerous leadership, poor judgment or unsafe conduct. When one of the Mountaineers Committees receives a complaint concerning the action of a leader, the complaint is reviewed by the Committee Chair to determine the seriousness of the complaint. If it is an emergency situation, the Committee Chair will deal with the problem immediately; otherwise the problem will be addressed at the monthly meeting.

The Committee Chair will assemble the facts pertinent to the complaint and will then discuss the situation with the leader. Based on the findings, the leader will be notified in writing of the action taken, which could include a written warning, suspension, or deletion from the leaders list.



**Troubleshooting – Setting up a hike should take less than 10 minutes. If you have questions or concerns, contact a member of the hiking committee.**

**If you have not logged on the Mountaineers website before, please follow the following instructions and then return to step #3 above**

A.) Get your mountaineer ID # (this is the 6 digit number on your Go-Guide above your name - usually it begins with a zero)

B.) Go to [www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org) and click on Instructions for using our new features for the first time which is in the middle toward the bottom.

C.) Follow instructions!!!! Then return to step #3 above

Note - this should take only a few minutes. If it takes more than that, contact the club member services (206-521-6001) and they will fix or walk you thru the process.

## PHONE NUMBERS

**Mountaineers Emergency Line** (206) 521-6030

### National Park Service

Mount Rainier National Park (360) 569-2211  
[www.nps.gov/mora/](http://www.nps.gov/mora/)  
North Cascades National Park (360) 856-5700  
[www.nps.gov/noca/](http://www.nps.gov/noca/)  
Olympic National Park (360) 565-3130  
[www.nps.gov/olymp/](http://www.nps.gov/olymp/) roads (360) 565-3131

### National Forest Service

Gifford Pinchot National Forest (360) 891-5000  
[www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/](http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/)  
Mt Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest (425) 775-9702  
[www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/) (800) 627-0062  
Okanogan National Forest (509) 826-3275  
[www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/)  
Olympic National Forest (360) 956-2402  
[www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/)  
Wenatchee National Forest (509) 664-9200  
[www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/)

### Other Areas

Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area (425) 744-3400  
[www.washington.edu/trails/alpine](http://www.washington.edu/trails/alpine)  
Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge (360) 457-8451  
[www.dungeness.com/refuge/](http://www.dungeness.com/refuge/)  
Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (360) 753-9467  
164.159.11.73/nisqually/  
WSDOT (800) 695-7623  
Web links: Mountain Passes <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes/passinformation.aspx>

## Mountaineers Emergency Contact Procedures and Call Tree

Members of all branches/committees with a trip emergency should:

1) First call **9-1-1** and ask to be transferred to the Sheriff of the county they are in (or National Park Service for Rainier, Olympics, & North Cascades) for a Search and Rescue (SAR).

2) Second notify the club by calling the Mountaineers Emergency Line:

**206-521-6030**

This will bring the services of the Mountaineers organization to bear. The club representative can provide advice on managing through the incident, notify emergency contacts and relevant committee/club leadership, and serve as spokesperson for external organizations such as the media.

They will hear a message that says: *“You have reached the Mountaineers Emergency line. If you are involved in a trip emergency, call 9-1-1.*

*If you’ve already done this,*

*please press ‘1’. You will be connected to the club representative on-call who can provide further assistance. If you have tried that person and they are not available, press ‘2’”, if they are not available press “3”.*

Pressing “1” will connect directly with Mike Maude

Pressing “2” will connect with the Executive Director (Martinique Grigg)

Pressing “3” will connect with Leann Arend, Director of Finance & Operations

Pressing “4” will connect with Mary Hsue, Director of Development & Communications

Pressing “5” will connect with Becca Polglase, Education Manager

Pressing “6” will connect with Gavin Woody, Mountaineers President

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Cut out the following and carry in your 10 essential package:

### Mountaineers Emergency Line

First call **9-1-1** and ask to be transferred to the Sheriff of the county you are in (or National Park Service for Rainier, Olympics, & North Cascades) for a Search and Rescue (SAR).

Then call the club at: **206-521-6030**

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