



**The Mountaineers
Critical Incident Response Plan**

Last Reviewed & Approved: January 2025 by the Risk Management Committee

Document Revision Tracking:

Date	Name	Title	Revision Description
May 2013	Brenda Porter		Document Creation
Nov 2018	Bill Ashby	Operations Director	Revisions subsequent to CIRP activations in 2017 & 2018; minor language revisions including title changes; more clarity around when to engage the CIRP
Jan 2025	Alex Pratt	Chair, Risk Management Committee	Comprehensive update and extensive edits

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Purpose

The purpose of The Mountaineers Critical Incident Response Plan (CIRP) is to provide guidelines for the organizational actions to be taken if an incident occurs during a Mountaineers' approved activity and/or at a Mountaineers property with any of the following characteristics:

- a. Involves a major behavioral episode or injury that is life-threatening or requires the activation of emergency medical personnel
- b. Involves the activation of law enforcement
- c. Requires substantial follow-up to care for those involved and the broader community

The CEO and Board President may direct the organization to use specific portions (or all) of the CIRP in support of incidents other than those specified above, for example, during an activity involving Mountaineers members but not officially listed as a Mountaineers activity.

Activity leaders, Mountaineers staff, and volunteers in charge of the activity or the property are expected to supplement this CIRP with additional emergency procedures specific to their trips and educational activities. Information such as evacuation plans, nearest medical assistance, and other specific emergency details may be needed for effective emergency response. When a critical incident occurs, the activity leader or their alternate is expected to activate emergency services and notify the Mountaineers as soon as practicable. If they are unable to do so, Mountaineers staff or volunteers should activate the CIRP as soon as practicable.

The CIRP facilitates The Mountaineers' response so that the incident is addressed in an efficient, compassionate, and professional manner. The following procedures are provided as a guide rather than a strict protocol, and are to remain flexible. Note that The Mountaineers does not provide rescue services; individuals must contact others, such as the 911 system or the National Park Service, for these services. The Incident Leader will determine the level of support that should be provided by the Mountaineers as detailed below.

A Critical Incident Response Plan is not to be a substitute for the common sense, judgment, training and knowledge of The Mountaineers leadership or those responsible for its implementation.

Definitions

Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT): The purpose of the critical incident response team is to effectively manage information gathering, communications, and response through a clearly defined channel to mitigate crisis or serious negative repercussions for The Mountaineers, and maintain a reputation of leadership and transparency on vital issues and breaking news. The Incident Leader will assemble CIRT members, ensuring that the team has the skills needed to respond to the particular critical incident. The team may consist of staff, individuals from the Board of Directors, or other key leaders in The Mountaineers.

Contact Team: The individuals listed on The Mountaineers' Emergency Contact Roster to receive emergency notifications and help manage responses. This team must coordinate schedules to ensure that a Contact Team member is always available to receive emergency notifications.

Emergency Coordinator and Incident Leader: One to two of the CIRT members take on the roles of the Emergency Coordinator and Incident Leader.

- **Emergency Coordinator (EC):** Person on the CIRT who initially triages the situation, collects relevant information, and activates the rest of the CIRT. This person is generally the Mountaineers representative who is first notified about the critical incident.
- **Incident Leader:** Person who manages the incident through the entire process and across all involved parties. They are the central authority who oversees the activities of the CIRT, from the initial response through to investigation and post-mortem review. This person may be the same as the Emergency Coordinator, and must have sufficient authority to assign resources and engage 3rd parties (e.g. legal). In most cases the Incident Leader will be the CEO or their delegate.

Incident Review Team: The Mountaineers team assembled by the Incident Leader to review the incident and complete the retrospective Critical Incident Review Process. Members of this team are selected for a specific incident because of their expertise in the activity and/or their experience in incident investigation.

Support Team: Individuals identified to support the participants and families involved in the incident.

Communication Liaison: Individual responsible for coordinating official communication beyond parties involved in the incident response. This may be the incident leader or someone delegated by the incident leader.

CEO: Chief Executive Officer of The Mountaineers

BOD: Board of Directors

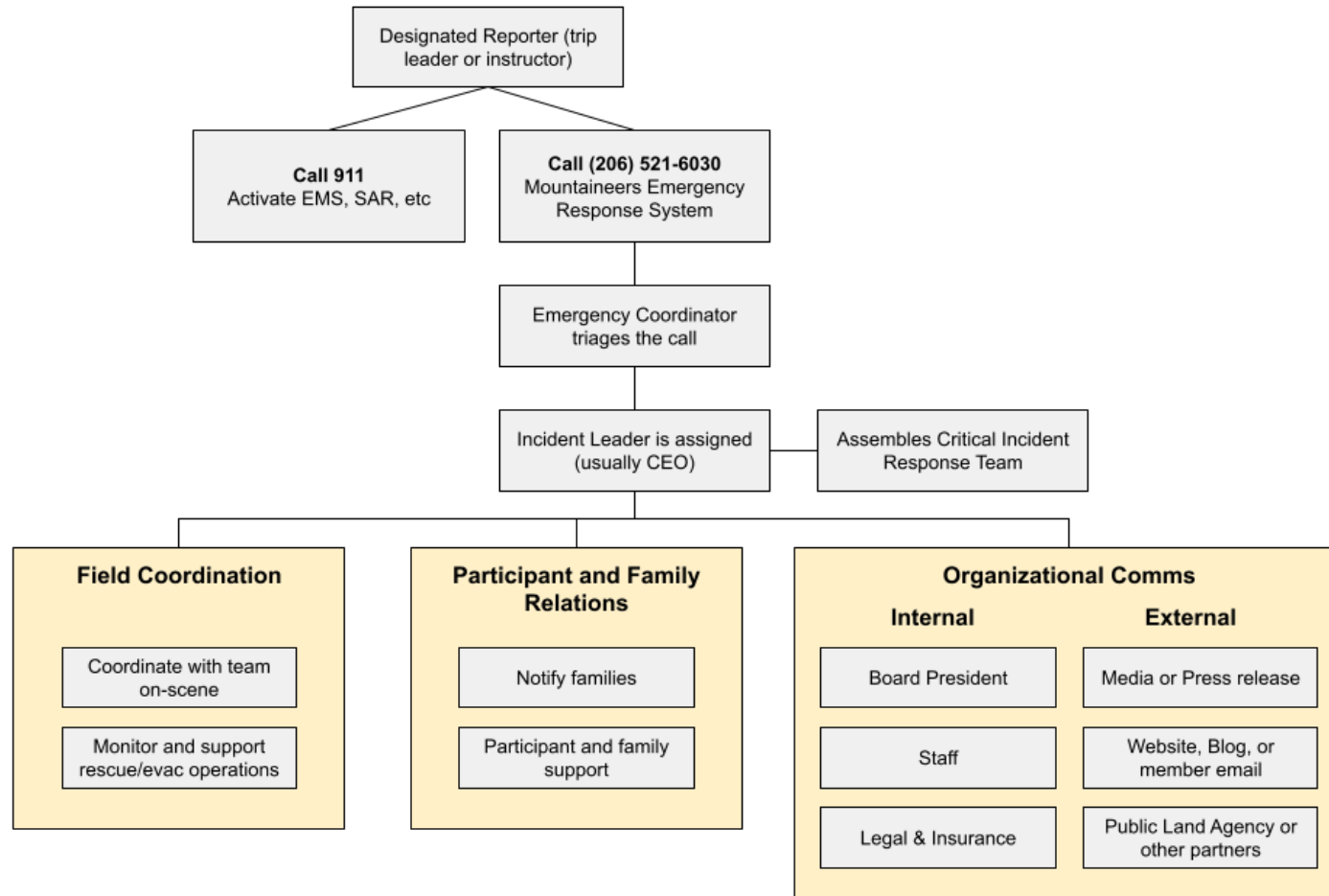
Critical Incident: an incident---during a Mountaineer's approved activity and/or at a Mountaineers property---that involves a major behavioral episode, injury that is life-threatening or requires the activation of emergency medical personnel, involves the activation of law enforcement, or requires substantial follow-up to care for those involved and the broader community.

EMS: Emergency Medical Services.

Activity Leader: The trip leader(s) or instructor(s) of a Mountaineers trip, class, or activity. This includes a group trip leader, a youth program instructor or volunteer, or a Global Adventure trip leader.

SAR: Search and Rescue. County Sheriff departments or other entities such as the National Park Service authorize search and rescue operations.

The Mountaineers Critical Incident Communication Chart



Critical Incident Response Plan (CIRP) - Process Overview

1. Incident occurs and The Mountaineers Emergency Response System is activated by a member of the party
2. The Emergency Coordinator receives the initial notification, takes down vital information about the incident (see attached "Emergency Coordinator Worksheet"), and makes an initial determination of criticality of the incident based on the information gathered.
3. If the Emergency Coordinator determines that the incident is a critical incident that occurred during a Mountaineers activity or on Mountaineers property, then the Emergency Coordinator activates the Critical Incident Response Plan and designates an Incident Leader. In most cases the Incident Leader will be the CEO, however if the CEO is unavailable then responsibilities would flow to the Director of Program, then the Director of Finance. The Emergency Coordinator may be the Incident Leader.
4. Emergency Coordinator transitions accountability for communication and events log to Incident Leader to maintain through the duration of the incident response.
5. The Incident Leader assembles the Incident Response Team based on the characteristics of the incident and the anticipated expertise required for response.
6. Restrict communication external to the Mountaineers about the emergency only to those parties vital to the emergency response, and refer any outside inquiries (e.g. media) to the CEO (or alternate designee assigned by the Incident Leader).
7. Under direction from Incident Leader, the Incident Response Team will:
 - a. Establish and maintain communications with the party in the field
 - b. Collect and document all information related to the event, its causes, and the response
 - c. Ensure arrangements for evacuation and/or field support as appropriate
 - d. Notify and support participant's families
 - e. Manage external and internal communications
 - f. Arrange for follow-up ongoing support and services for participants
8. Incident Leader will assemble an Incident Review Team for investigation and retrospective assessment of the incident and response. This team will be identified soon after the incident but will be sensitive to any family and friends in determining an appropriate time to begin the review.

Emergency Coordinator's (EC) Tasks:

- 1) Receives the initial notification and relays communications.
- 2) Uses the Emergency Coordinator Worksheet (attached) to collect details about the incident and individuals involved
- 3) Makes an initial decision on whether the incident requires activation of the CIRP.
- 4) Follows the Critical Incident Communications Chart (page 4). The individuals involved in a serious injury incident should have already contacted the relevant Emergency Services. If not, advise them to do so and assist if needed.
- 5) Contacts CEO and designates an Incident Leader. The Incident Leader should be an individual with significant leadership authority in the organization (e.g. CEO, Director, President, Vice President).
- 6) Logs onto the website to gather information on type of activity and participants, including number of people in attendance, goal(s) of the activity, original plans, activity leaders names and qualifications, outfitter contacts, roster, emergency contact or other pertinent information.
- 7) Maintains contact with SAR and with activity leader; refers all other communications to the Incident Leader
- 8) Monitors telephone and maintains a log of communications and events, until handoff to Incident leader.

- 9) Transitions logs, forms, and information to the incident leader and assists incident leader as needed (in some cases the Emergency Coordinator may also be the incident leader).

Incident Leader Tasks:

A. Incident Response:

1. Serves as point person for incident communication with the various stakeholders.
2. Identifies and assembles the Critical Incident Response Team. Mountaineers staff will maintain a list of key individuals, their expertise, and contact information, for easy access by the Incident Leader (eg legal, insurance, PR, etc).
 - a. NOTE: Incident Leader will make the determination as to the legal risk involved and appropriate level and timing of legal involvement during incident response and subsequent investigations.
3. Coordinates with the Emergency Coordinator and CIRT to confirm basic incident facts:
 - a. Uses the Mountaineers website to identify the registered participants for the trip, including the roles of all participants (leader, instructors, etc)
 - b. Identifies the location of the incident and any relevant resources
 - c. Uses Emergency Coordinator Worksheet and Incident Leader Worksheet to determine needed additional information and who should obtain it.
4. Determines if a CIRT representative needs to go to the scene and what will be communicated to people at the scene.
5. Ensures appropriate evacuation and/or field support services are in motion. Monitor rescue operations and augment/support as necessary.
6. Determines when legal and insurance representatives should be notified.
7. Assesses needs of staff and participants for physical and emotional support.
8. Takes the lead in forming a support team for participants, as necessary

B. Documentation Management

1. Maintain a log of all communications and interactions related to the incident response. An online document that allows live collaboration and editing by multiple individuals can be effective for this running log (eg a Google Doc).
2. Collect and compile all relevant field information and documents, including rosters, maps, route tracks, photographs, etc

C. Family / Emergency Point of Contact Interaction:

1. The Incident Leader determines whether the incident warrants notification of the emergency contacts of the participants (e.g. if the party will be excessively delayed in their return)
2. In the event of a fatality or critical injury, the family or next of kin should be notified by civil authorities (generally police or rangers).
3. Leads follow-up with the patient's family in event of an extreme incident. Without admitting any fault, extends possible support services such as lodging, meals, transportation, or counseling.
 - a. Approves expenditures that exceed program budget such as airfare.
4. Determines appropriate follow-up with participant's family or next of kin. Assesses need for critical incident debriefing or professional therapeutic intervention. This intervention is highly recommended in cases of fatalities or serious injuries.

D. Other Communications:

External Communications

1. Supervises public relations and assigns Member Communications representative to closely monitor external media, including but not limited to social networks, blogs, and press.
2. Appoints an appropriate spokesperson to communicate with the media and ensures the spokesperson has current and accurate information about the incident.
3. Develops written external response guidelines/statements for employees, board members, and membership services.
4. Writes press releases and media responses.
5. May decide to post a press release or announcement on The Mountaineers web site, or send an email to Mountaineers members.
6. Determines whether professional 3rd party public relations assistance is needed.
7. Maintains communications with the appropriate Public Land Agency representative and other partner organizations, as needed.

Internal Communications

1. Keeps the Board President and CEO informed of the situation.
2. Identifies parties that require specific notifications, including staff, Safety Committee, Board of Directors, and Executive Committee, and defines communication plan and cadence.
3. Provides leadership and guidance for all communications, including directions to refer press inquiries to CEO or designated CIRT member.
4. Contacts insurance representative and provides requested information as directed by CEO.
 - a. If staff are injured, follow up with the appropriate worker's compensation procedures.
5. Contacts The Mountaineers' legal counsel as directed by CEO.

E. Investigation and Review Process:

1. Identifies and assembles review team following the Critical Incident Review Process (see below section). If it is a large incident or an international incident, a larger team may be needed.
2. Serves as escalation point for the review team and ensures unrestricted access to incident details and resources
3. Facilitates retrospective process with Critical Incident Response Team members to reflect on CIRP implementation for lessons learned and opportunities for improvement. Prepares summary recommendations for CIRP improvements and reviews with team and CEO.
4. Informs the Risk Management Committee to make adjustments, as needed, in the CIRP and supporting documents.

Critical Incident Review Process

When to Consider an Internal or External Review of an Incident

1. When a fatality occurs to a participant or staff member while involved in a Mountaineers activity
2. When a permanently disabling injury occurs to a participant or staff member while on a Mountaineers activity
3. When a life threatening injury occurs to a participant or on duty staff member on a Mountaineers activity

Determination of the Need for a Review Team

1. The CEO will determine the necessity of a review and initiate such a review. This should occur as soon as possible after an incident.
2. The CEO will consult with the president of The Mountaineers board, chair of the Safety Committee, and the management of the program in which the incident occurred in making a decision regarding conducting a review.
3. The Mountaineers will look to accepted industry standards in determining whether an internal or external review is appropriate.
4. The CEO must approve external reviews. Requisite funds will be set aside if an external review is found to be appropriate.

Role of the Review Team

1. The overall mission of the Review Team is to help The Mountaineers as well as the outdoor education/recreation industry prevent fatalities and permanently disabling injuries.
2. The Review Team will collect information, establish facts, and assess the incident chain, ultimately to provide recommendations to improve organizational processes and prevent further incidents.
3. The Review Team will also assess the emergency response procedures utilized in an incident and provide recommendations for improvements (or highlight areas of effective procedure for continuation).

Composition of the Review Team

- To be determined by the CEO,
- There should be a designated Team Leader and one to five other members depending on the magnitude and kind of incident. Team members may include Branch Chair, Branch Safety Chair, Committee Chair, and a board member.
- Review team members should have expertise in the type of activity associated with the incident. If it is a large incident or an international incident, a larger team may be needed.

Ground Rules

1. The Review Team will work with the CIRT and keep the CIRT updated on all progress.
2. All findings, discussions, and written materials of the review team will be confidential.
3. The extent of distribution of any findings within The Mountaineers will be determined in advance of the preparation of the Review Team's report. The CEO will make this determination.
4. The Review Team will operate independently and its findings will be based on the facts discovered.
5. No review team member will speak with the media. All media inquiries will be handled by the CEO or her/his designee

Guidelines for Conducting the Review

1. The CEO should begin appointing the review team immediately following the incident response.
2. Kickoff the team via virtual or in-person meeting. Determine tasks to be done.
3. For an external review team, a written agreement as to the scope of work, process, costs, and distribution of the Final Report will be drawn up.
4. Review Team activities:
 - a. Team leader determines the timeline for activities, manages all actions of the Review Team, and ensures the final report is completed and submitted to CEO, Board, and legal committee. The Team Leader also delegates and tracks other team task assignments including:
 - Interviewers – a minimum of two people must conduct all interviews. Use personal phone calls to set up interviews.
 - Communication manager – notifies trip leader and instructors of any potential status suspension during Review Process. Notifies all interested parties in the process and timeline of the review.

- Report writer – leads the writing of the final report.
 - Document manager – labels and organizes all notes, documents, photos, and communications.
 - CIRP feedback – makes note of any CIRP changes that need to be made.
- b. Visit the site of the incident, particularly when environmental factors are part of the cause. Review Team member(s) should visit the site as soon as possible (before conditions change) to collect photographs and videos. Consider visiting other relevant locations as appropriate.
 - c. Review all pertinent written materials, logs, and documentation.
 - d. Gather and review photographs and videos from trip participants
 - e. Gather all reports from external sources (park service, coroner, SAR)
 - f. Conducts interviews with appropriate leaders, participants, and staff, as well as external individuals and agencies involved. All interviews must be conducted by a minimum of two people and set up by a personal phone call.
5. The Review Team will write a final report (within a reasonable scheduled time) that should include the primary and secondary causes of the incident, recommendations and suggestions on prevention of further incidents, and recommendations and suggestions on improvements in emergency response

Development and Delivery of a Final Report

1. The report writer will write a DRAFT report for the Executive Committee of the BOD, with input from all members of the Review Team.
2. The Team Leader meets with the Executive Committee to discuss the draft report and possible revisions.
3. The Team Leader submits the Final Report to the CEO, President of the Board of Directors, Activity Summit groups or Committee Chair, or Department Director of the program involved in the incident, and others as identified prior to the writing of the report.
4. Informs the Risk Management Committee to make adjustments as needed in this CIRP and supporting documents
5. The report is reviewed by legal counsel before being released publicly.

Attachment 1: Emergency Coordinator Worksheet

1. Emergency Coordinator's name: _____
2. Date of call: _____ Time of call: _____
3. Date of incident: _____ Time of incident: _____
4. Who is calling (name, title, organization/company)? _____
5. Location they are calling from: _____ Phone Number(s): _____
6. What is the situation? (collect info on SOAP note): _____
7. Location of the incident? _____
8. Is the scene now safe? _____
9. Weather and terrain on the scene? _____
10. What specific assistance is needed? _____
11. Do they have a plan? Record details: _____

12. Have emergency services been activated (SAR, 911, etc)? _____
13. What kind of trip is it? (activity, objective, etc) _____
14. Who is the Trip Leader? _____
15. List patients and the nature of their injury

<u>Name</u>	<u>Nature of injury (record info in SOAP note)</u>

16. List the status of other trip participants (location, injuries, relevant expertise, needs, feelings, need to contact emergency contact info about late return, etc)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status information</u>

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17. How many total people are on the trip? This number should agree with the above lists. _____
18. Which day is it in the group's itinerary, and how many days out were planned? _____
19. What is the group's current location? _____
20. What is their current elevation? _____ Feet Exactly (or) Approximate (circle one)
21. Do they have an intended alternate gathering location planned, and where is that? _____
22. Can they self evacuate or is SAR assistance required (for SAR support call 911) _____
23. If utilizing SAR team, who is SAR point of contact (if known) _____
24. When will you communicate with this person again and how? _____
 - a. Exchange direct phone numbers. Ask that leader establish contact again in 2-3 hours for an update, or when there is new information (e.g. returning to trail head/meet with rangers, etc.).

NEXT STEPS

25. Clear The Mountaineers phone lines to keep the lines open and clear for incoming calls.
26. Record notes on any related communications, updated information, etc.
27. Contact the following individuals in this order, inform them of the situation, and determine whether to activate Critical Incident Response Plan

	Cell	Home	Office
CEO			
Operations Director			
Board President or designee			
Member Services & Communications Director			

Attachment 2: Critical Incident Notification Responsibilities

✓	Notifications	Responsible Individual - Who makes contact? (suggested)
External Communications		
	Family relations of person injured	Incident Lead <i>Note: For fatalities and critical injuries, civil authorities should notify emergency contact(s), with follow-up / on-going support offered by Incident Lead</i>
	Emergency contacts of others on trip	Incident Lead <i>Get list of participants and emergency contact info</i>
	Media - external	CEO or designated Media contact
	Law enforcement	Incident Lead
	Coroner (if applicable)	Incident Lead <i>Request coroner's report</i>
	SAR	Incident Response Team <i>Monitor and support rescue/evac operations</i> <i>Provide press release</i>
	Land Manager	Incident Lead and/or Response Team <i>Request SAR or NPS report</i>
	Social Media	Membership & Communications staff <i>Monitor social media, press and electronic media to keep core response team updated</i>
	Counseling resources	CEO or Incident Lead <i>Counseling resources relevant to the type of trip. Gather info to make list that will be available for trip leader and others on trip</i>
	Requests for information - External	Membership Services Staff Monitor phones, general email
Internal Communications		
	Internal summary report	CEO or Incident Lead <i>CEO to write summary of situation to communicate with key parties- Based on known facts at time of writing and updated as information is gathered</i>
	Trip Leader	CEO and Safety Chair
	Emergency Coordinator	CEO and Safety Chair
	Other participants on trip	Director of Programs and Operations
	Board president	CEO
	Board of Directors	President inform/update Board
	Committee Chair or Department Director	CEO Committee Chair or Department Director, depending on the type of incident

	Requests for information - Internal	Membership Services Staff Monitor phones, general email
	Safety Committee	Assigned or delegated by Incident Lead or CEO
	Activity Committee	Assigned or delegated by Incident Lead or CEO <i>Communicate with the applicable activity committees</i>
	Staff	HR
	Other Groups, committees, as relevant	CEO
	Donors/Foundations, Partners, Schools	CEO
	Insurance	CEO
	Legal	CEO
	Member communications	CEO /staff Update web site, blog, social media, member emails as applicable
Follow up		
	Participant cards	CEO <i>Send cards to all participants involved in incident</i>
	Lessons Learned	Board President, Safety Chair and CEO <i>Ensure lessons learned from the accident are used as educational tools for leaders</i>
	Counseling	CEO, Safety Chair, Committee Chair <i>Ensure those who desire or need counseling have been offered</i>
	Check-ins	Incident Lead <i>Check-in and follow-up with all who have been contacted</i>
	Documentation	All <i>Turn over documentation to The Mountaineers' central files</i> Maintained by Finance and Operations Dept <i>Keep paper / electronic file with all relevant documentation</i>
	Review of incident	Critical Incident Response Team; Incident Review Team; CEO; Risk Management Committee. At conclusion of incident. <i>Review of incident, response team process, review team process, communication process, and this document, with an intent to identify opportunities for improvement.</i>
	Other actions as needed	At discretion of CEO
	Mountaineers media	The Mountaineer Editor <i>Article, as appropriate</i> <i>Media rights.</i>