

## 2011 The Mountaineers Safety Recommendations

Based upon review of submitted organization-wide incident reports for 2011, the Safety Committee has grouped mountaineers trip incidents into the following categories upon which safety recommendations are based. The below concepts and recommendations should be communicated to all activity committees and leaders and should be disseminated or made available for review by The Mountaineers community.

- UNUSUAL SNOW CONDITIONS
  - High snow year
  - Low snow year
- LEADING ROCK
  - Lead within ability
  - Placing protection
  - Route Selection

### UNUSUAL SNOW CONDITIONS

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With high or low snow level years, folks will encounter unusual conditions expected for that time of year. Leaders should incorporate this into trip planning by reminding trip participants of unusual conditions and by having alternate routes/destinations in mind, as well as the possibility of canceling the trip.

#### High snow year

- Snow levels might be the equivalent of what you would expect a couple of months earlier
  - May be more moats to cross
  - Creek crossings will have higher water and more snow to navigate
  - Trails may have sketchy and icy sections or be completely covered
  - Cornices may still be present and not readily noticed
- Environment will be colder and wetter than expected
  - Risk of hypothermia or cold hands and feet even on summer days
  - Be prepared for camping conditions that are on snow, cold and wet

#### Low snow year

- Glaciers may be melted out more than expected
  - Crevasses not normally seen will appear
  - Glacier navigation can be a challenge, will be same environment one might expect a couple of months later in the year
  - Movement from snow to rock may not be accessible due to melted out moats
- Snow routes may turn to ice
  - What is normally a hard snow route may be impassible ice

### LEADING ROCK

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Re-emphasize safety principles for leading on rock. This was an emphasis in 2010; those principles are stated below with additional edits.

#### Lead within ability

- Students should practice well within their ability considering the risk of injury

- Some students feel pressured to lead beyond their ability
- While it can be good to work outside one's comfort zone, falling while leading can produce life changing injuries
- Instructors and mentors should not place students in situations that are beyond the student's ability
- Be realistic about your skills, especially in the alpine environment
- Alpine environments are often wild and unpredictable
- Students should do extensive practice where the result of a fall will have low probability of injury
  - Work into leading harder and harder routes
  - Confidence is built by successfully mastering the craft
  - Students and instructors that bull their way through without adequate technique will eventually suffer injury
  - Consider more formal training and practice sessions in our courses

#### Placing protection

- Emphasis should be made to sew up the route, particularly when starting out
  - If unsure of next move or haven't done that section before, place immediate protection, even small falls in alpine environments can have significant consequences
- Folks don't realize the protection they placed will not keep them from decking out
  - Should safely retreat and put in more protection rather than powering through the move that would deck them out if they fall
  - A 10' fall onto even a small ledge can break an ankle or leg.
  - A free fall will often be longer than twice the rope length from your last piece due to use of dynamic ropes

#### Route Selection

- Be aware of additional risk when climbing a new route
  - Unsure of handholds and quality of rock
  - Unsure of where next piece can be placed
- Research route beforehand
  - Don't assume a basic route is straightforward, especially on seldom climbed routes
  - Understand the quality of rock and if the route is known for loose rock