

THE MOUNTAINEERS

HIKE LEADER'S GUIDE



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“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 Hike Leader's Guide is designed to provide important information and suggestions for leaders of The Mountaineers Hiking trips. It reflects The Mountaineers minimum standards 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 minimum club standards, 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!

7th Edition, 2016-2017

The Mountaineers Hiking Committee

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Section 1 – LEADING HIKES FOR THE MOUNTAINEERS

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 and ensuring that the participants of the trip are adequately equipped based on Mountaineers policy. Leading a hike begins with trip planning and participant screening, and includes decisions about such things as route selection, required equipment, turn-around times, and more. 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 and developing 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 participated in at least 3 Mountaineers' hikes, have demonstrated leadership within The Mountaineers, and be approved by the appropriate Committee for inclusion on that Committee's leaders list. The "Minimum Standards" for Hiking and Backpacking (revised in 2016) provide more detailed examples of the competencies expected of leaders. These standards also outline the process by which leaders are certified. This document does not duplicate that information; rather this document provides supplemental and practical information that enables a leader to carry out his/her responsibilities. *Although not required to become a leader, Wilderness First Aid responder (WEA or equiv. to WOFA-Wilderness Oriented First Aid) and wilderness navigation courses are offered by The Mountaineers several times a year and highly recommended.*

ONGOING LEADERSHIP TRAINING: It is recommended that current leaders participate in a Hiking Leadership Workshop every three years. The Committee welcomes experienced leaders to serve as resources and provide case studies for scenario discussions during the seminars/workshops.

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 and to accept responsibility for decisions
6. Concern for safety appropriate to the nature of the activity
7. 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.

SUSPENDING LEADERS

The Hiking Committee of jurisdiction may temporarily or permanently suspend any leader "for cause" 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 and whether to address the problem immediately or wait to address it at the next committee 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.

Suspending a leader's privileges by removing him/her from the leader list can be warranted if the leader has not led any trips in 2 years or who allows their membership to lapse. There is no prejudice associated with these actions but they are necessary to keep the Leader List current.

Section 2 - 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 before a hiking trip commences. Signing a paper waiver at the trailhead is not acceptable as it can be construed as duress. On the Mountaineers website, roster signup cannot be processed until a waiver has been recorded. An electronic waiver form can be downloaded from the club website and faxed/emailed in to the program center if online access is unavailable.

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.

PARTY 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: [Youth activities](#) (staff contact: Director of Education).

GUEST POLICY: Guests are allowed on Mountaineers hikes provided the guest has a signed liability waiver and meets the same requirements of club member participants. These include being fit enough for the trip, being 18 years or older, and carrying all necessary equipment. Guests register [online](#), and are limited to two trips per year. A waiver can be accessed online or downloaded from the club website, printed/signed, and then faxed/mailed to the Seattle program center but it's a manual process and should not be necessary in most situations (vs. signing the waiver online).

TRIP ROSTER: In order to maintain good records during your hike and assure that all participants are accounted for, leaders must have a printed Trip roster with them on the hike. The roster can be downloaded as an excel file from the website, manipulated as desired, and printed. The reason for the paper copy is that you cannot count on a smartphone to have access to the web site or to an email in an emergency. The roster facilitates confirming the hikers on your trip at the meeting place, at the trail head and on the hike to check if all are present; provides phone numbers if needed, and an easy to access list of who to contact in the event of a problem. Trip leaders should also leave the roster with a responsible person "at home" along with their intended route and return time.

The trip leader will signup/remove hikers to the online Trip roster when the trip roster signup is handled through leader permission only, The online trip roster establishes the hike as a Mountaineers activity and verifies waiver requirements.

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.

Trip Reports are entered online and should be completed within a few days of your return. *The main part of the report is viewable to all, including the public.* Be sure to include any information about route access, trail conditions or other issues that another leader might want to know. The confidential part of the report which asks "were there any safety incidents on this trip" will automatically go to the Hiking Committee and the Branch Safety Chair so you should include any participant problems, accidents, etc. that may have been encountered on the trip.

ACCIDENT REPORTS: The leader must report all accidents or injuries to the appropriate Committee sponsoring the trip and the Safety Committee. Any incidents including 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. See also "[Handling an Incident on Your Trip](#)"

HIKER CANCELLATIONS: Hikers who cancel late (meaning after registration has closed) or no-shows for the hike should be clearly indicated on the roster/Trip Report. When you close out your trip and set each person's status, you can indicate if the person was a "no show". A reminder message will be automatically issued if participants repeat this behavior. When needed this tracking enables the Committee to contact any chronic no-shows and late-canceling participants and clarify the cancellation policy.. If your trip has a waiting list after sign-up closes and someone cancels late, please make an effort to fill the hike by calling and e-mailing wait list names as soon as possible.

CHANGING THE DESTINATION OF A TRIP: You can make a change in the destination when weather or trail conditions do not permit you to do the planned trip. Last minute changes may be difficult as you must notify hikers of the new trip details and they must re-arrange transportation. If you change the destination prior to the trip starting, then change the route/place online and edit meeting place/time details, call/text & e-mail hikers on the roster and notify them of the change before the day of the trip. The new destination should be of the same level of difficulty. It is not recommended to change the destination the day of the hike or at the meeting place (example: an unknown road blockage/weather conditions occur or similar issue) as it will affect all safety margins for your group. If needed, Search and Rescue (SAR) will need to know where you are supposed to be.

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 members have signed up creates an awkward and disappointing situation for everyone involved. If you cancel last minute, the hikers will not have the lead time needed to sign up for another trip.

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 Profile /activities" 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. You may also want to contact the Hiking Committee so a request may be sent out to the leaders' roster for substitute 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. An automated message will go to the participants. Also send a personal email and / or call explaining the reason.

You **MUST** cancel the trip if fewer than 3 participants (including yourself) have registered. If you choose to do the hike with two people, be aware that it is now a private trip and none of the Mountaineers liability coverage for you as a leader will be in force.

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.

PET POLICY: Please read and be familiar with the Mountaineers "Club Standards" which includes a Policy on pets, firearms, alcohol, and other items. Here is an excerpt: "Pets are not allowed on Mountaineers premises or club activities with the exceptions of service animals and activities specifically planned to include pets, such as 'Hikes with Dogs'."

FIREARMS are not permitted on Mountaineers premises or trips unless carried by law enforcement officers.

ALCOHOL is prohibited if using it would affect the safety of the party or the enjoyment of all participants.

WILDERNESS POLICY: In consideration of the wilderness and other wilderness users, radios/iPod or other entertainment devices are not allowed to be used during trips. Cellular phones are allowed, but should be turned off unless being used for navigation or photos. Have participants turn off the audible ring or alert. Hiking groups in wilderness areas are strictly limited to no more than 12 participants. If your hike is a "Hike with Dogs" be aware that each animal counts as a participant. 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 unless you have a special permit to do so.

Section 3 - PLANNING FOR AND LEADING A TRIP

Leading safe and fun outings cannot be proscribed through rules. Successful trips require 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.

BEFORE THE TRIP

POSTING A TRIP: Hiking Committees have various procedures and deadlines for listing trips and maintaining a leaders list. In general, be aware that Hike Committees are responsible for overseeing the hikes and routes that are listed, and to certify that leaders are qualified. If you have questions, get in touch with the committee chair.

SCREENING TRIP PARTICIPANTS: The leader may screen trip participants or hold a pre-trip meeting, if necessary. The web site has an option for “leader permission required”, and for “sign up through leader” either of which allows the leader to talk with potential trip participants about equipment, trail conditions, and readiness for the particular trip. The success of a trip is often dependent upon whether the participants are well-matched for the route and pace of the hike. Even though participants are responsible to choose appropriate trips, and to be prepared, it’s ultimately up to the leader to ensure the party is well matched for the route. Leaders can obtain information on participants who are Mountaineers members through their profile, including how long they’ve been a member and the types of trips on which they have participated. Leaders can contact new members and guests to assess the ability of the participant. This may include asking questions about recent hikes, clarifying pace, inquiring about essential gear, and sharing other expectations about the trip.

By asking these questions in a friendly way 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.

SCOUTING: It is very helpful to scout the route in advance, especially if you have not done the hike in a while. You should be aware of any route/map changes, 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. Check on line resources such as Mountaineers trip reports, WTA trip reports, or make phone calls to the appropriate Ranger Station, Forest Service, or Park Service personnel, or previous leaders of the trip PRIOR to scouting the trip. Make note of the amount of trailhead parking available, toilet facilities, cell/emergency telephone access, trail intersections, and water crossings. Note any exposed areas of the route, make sure you know what county the trail is located in (for SAR resources).

CARPOOLING: Carpooling is recommended for all Mountaineers trips. See the [FAQ](#) on the club website for current club policy. Please remember that for official purposes (insurance and liability), Mountaineers trips begin and end at the trailhead. Carpooling is a voluntary activity offered by and accepted by trip participants as private individuals. Trip leaders are not responsible for carpool arrangements. We recommend planning trips with meeting places at park-and-ride (P&R) lots to simplify carpooling to the trailheads and minimize parking/reduce our impact at trailheads.

EQUIPMENT: The Essential Systems gear are required on all trips, plus a pack, food, drinking water, adequate clothing and hiking boots (or trail shoes as determined by the trip leader). Other equipment such as traction devices can be specified by the leader if required. Leaders must have the trip roster and the Mountaineers emergency contact information. A First Aid / Accident form is also recommended (which provides a useful checklist of steps to follow in an emergency and can be downloaded [here](#)) and cell phone for emergency calls. The leader should stress that participants must carry their own Essential Systems gear and supplies. *Leaders can make the decision to not allow inadequately clothed or shod hikers, or unprepared hikers to participate in the hike.*

The Essential Systems gear 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 signals are often not available and other technical problems can occur when you need them, they should not mislead you into taking risks

that otherwise would be unacceptable. Many participants will use their phones to take photos but you should discourage participants from making phone calls on your hike unless there is an urgent need. Have people turn off the ring / text notification function. Using smartphones for navigation is an option but you should always have a map and compass and be able to “stay found” without your phone.

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 Wilderness First Aid (WFA) 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 your roster and emergency phone number back home with someone who will know if the group is overdue.

TIPS FOR A SAFE TRIP

1. Obtain accurate and timely weather forecasts.
2. Consider any objective hazards such as stream crossings, potential 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).
6. Don't allow your good judgement to be overruled by excitement or ambition.

AT THE TRAILHEAD / MEETING PLACE:

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 10- 15 minutes beyond the scheduled start/departure time for late arrivals if you have not heard from the late hiker. Identify no-shows and report them when you close out the trip online.

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 a 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).
- Remind participants of the official carpool policy and mention the reimbursement rate for drivers.
- 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.
- Ask for a volunteer to be a First Aid leader. Ask that trip participants inform the first aid leader 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 HIKE:

- Plan to stop 10-15 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 and 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.

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. If an unleashed dog approaches your party and you are not sure of its temperament, stop and call out for the owner. Don't approach the dog or make eye contact if it exhibits aggressive behavior (i.e. growling with ears laid back or bared teeth). Stay on the downhill side of horses/riders when it is safe to do so. When horses are passing, avoid sudden movements or noises that could "spook" the horse and endanger the rider or wrangler.

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. Trust your intuition if you think someone is trying to "save face" by not admitting he or she is tired, in pain or frightened--and never publicly "blame" a participant for a change in plans. 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.

SPLITTING THE GROUP: **Splitting the party is rarely a good idea, and in many cases it can contribute to serious problems.** (Sending a sub-group out for SAR is one clear and very infrequent exception.) Turning a participant back once the trip has begun endangers the safety of that person, and the rest of the group. If a participant is unable to continue on the route, you have several options but leaving the person alone to wait is not acceptable. If splitting the group becomes absolutely necessary, designate a leader for the new sub-group, and carefully brief them on what to do.

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 roster with date & time). Explain to any person leaving the group that he or she is now on their own and has assumed that risk.

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.

AFTER THE HIKE:

- Make sure every hiker has returned to the cars. (No one is to leave until every hiker has returned to the trailhead.)
- If a dinner/food stop is being planned, identify the restaurant and directions, etc.
- Make sure all cars start before leaving.
- Close out the trip and complete the online Trip Report.
- Optional: Add a recreational trip report at www.wta.org to inform other hikers of the current conditions on the trail.

NEW LEADER TALENT: People of considerable experience and endurance often join moderate and strenuous trips. Well prepared and experienced backcountry hikers are the best candidates to become great trip leaders. We encourage our leaders to talk about opportunities to lead trips or attend a hike leader seminar. Inform the Committee of possible new leaders via the trip report. The Club is always seeking to renew its supply of competent, enthusiastic volunteer leaders.

Section 4 - TIPS FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF TRIPS

NEW MEMBER / "GETTING STARTED" 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. Contact a recent leader of the trip, or the appropriate park or ranger station and check their websites. Read the trail guidebooks and/or current trip reports on the WTA website at www.wta.org. Be aware that roads and trails may have changed over time. 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.

WEATHER CHECK: Get the most recent forecast, using reliable websites such as the National Weather Service. Remember the weather in the mountains is often very different from the local weather where you may live, so do not rely on the evening news "weatherman". In winter and spring, you may be also able to get a recent report on snow conditions from other leaders or the appropriate Ranger Station, Forest Service, or Park Service.

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: Rest stops should be 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 30-45 minutes 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. Often one will observe things that were not obvious on the way up—when everyone is looking at their feet. Interesting plants, evidence of animal activity, or just chatting with other hikers can make the return more interesting. Be sure to take at least a couple short breaks on the descent as well. People will be tired and the tendency to “head to the barn” quickly can lead to a trip and fall.

TIPS FOR STRENUOUS/VERY STRENUOUS TRIPS

DEFINITION: Strenuous trips generally have a maximum round trip length of **14 miles**, and **2,500 to 3,500 feet of elevation gain**. 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 a wilderness first aid 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, using reliable websites such as the National Weather Service. Remember the weather in the mountains is often very different from the local weather where you may live, so do not rely on the evening news “weatherman”. In winter and spring, you may be also able to get a recent report on snow conditions from other leaders or the appropriate Ranger Station, Forest Service, or Park Service. If weather deteriorates unexpectedly, don’t be afraid to turn around early.

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: It is especially critical for these longer trips that you have indicated your planned pace in the listing. Some routes are simply not feasible to accomplish in one day at a "slow" pace so if a participant is not ready for the intended pace you may find yourself running out of time. 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. Keep track of your progress and if the group is significantly behind what you had intended, call a huddle and discuss a turnaround time.

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. Take extra care on the descent as hikers may be tired and less alert on longer trips back to the trailhead. On these more strenuous descents it is a good practice to stop once an hour and check in with your group. Look for limping, overt weakness (slips, trips and near misses) to indicate the group needs a break or a quick safety awareness and reminder to hydrate going down too.

SENSITIVITY AND TACT: One of 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 rock fall 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 who are strong hikers on your hike may just need an encouraging word to want to become a trip leader. Consider talking with them about the opportunities to lead trips. Inform the Committee of possible new leaders by recommending them in your trip report. The Mountaineers are always seeking to renew its supply of competent, enthusiastic leaders.

Section 5 – PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

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: use the link at the bottom of the Roster listing for your activity. The hiking committee and safety committee and possibly other representatives of The Mountaineers will investigate all serious accidents. A safety committee member will follow up with a trip leader after the report is posted.

LOST HIKER: The best way to prevent this is to not allow the group to get too spread out and emphasize the need to stop and re-group at all trail junctions and stream crossings. You should count the group at each of these stops. If the trail is sketchy or intermittent you may require your group to be in eyesight of each other at all times. Sometimes people miss turns or stop and wander off for other reasons, such as taking photos --or they are embarrassed to say they are taking a “party separation”. If you are not doing counts, it could be miles before you realize a person is not with you. In the event of a lost hiker, take the following steps:

1. Determine when the hiker was last seen.
2. Consider how close you may be to the trail head. Is it possible the person went back to the car? Consider that if you hike to the car and the person is not there, you have used up valuable daylight.
3. 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. 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 by calling 911. **Get the emergency contact information from your roster and have it with your map 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. Do not endanger the rest of your party or cause them to be out after dark searching. Let the “pros” handle it.

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, using the link at the bottom of the roster page.

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 First Aid / Accident Report Form (which should be carried in your first aid kit) to help plan your course of action. The form is available at:

<https://www.mountaineers.org/about/safety/first-aid-report-form/view> .

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 with reception). Do not send them out until their help is no longer necessary at the accident site. Be sure they have emergency numbers to call 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: Generally you should call 911 and tell the operator which county you are in, your location, and the nature of the emergency. If you are in a National Park during business hours, and you have the numbers, call the National Park Visitor Center or Wilderness Information Center. But do not waste time or battery obtaining the numbers. 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.

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 design policies to avoid them in the future.

Section 6 - WILDERNESS ETHICS and MINIMUM IMPACT (Leave No Trace)

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, some of which may exist nowhere else—or which may be threatened or endangered. We are a visitor in their home--respect this. The following guidelines are from Leave No Trace principles and have been prepared to help us recognize some of the environmental concerns in our use of the outdoors. As a leader, you should learn more about these principles and how to make sound decisions to minimize the impact of your trips. There are more things to consider when backpacking, so these are the basics for day hikes. Always recognize that your hike participants may not be familiar with these ideas so try to set a good example and coach people, don't preach or cite "rules". A good reference is "Soft Paths" published by the National Outdoor Leadership School. Also check out LNT.org.

PLANNING: Minimizing your impact starts at the planning stage. One of the most important decisions is where you plan to hike, when, and how many people will be in your party. We all love the "five star" hikes but they draw many people and can be over used, especially in peak season. Consider the less traveled routes or travel in "shoulder season" when the impact might be lessened. Large parties have larger impacts. If you plan to travel to a particularly sensitive area, consider keeping your party small. The wilderness limit of 12 – although legal in most places-- is often inappropriate from a conservation standpoint.

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. If you are hiking with dogs, never allow them to chase wildlife.

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) and spread out the group if possible so as not to create a new trail. Avoid tundra-like soils. Shortcutting switchbacks damages vegetation, causes erosion and leads to trail deterioration. Block shortcuts with rocks or logs to deter further use. Use low impact footgear 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: In the backcountry, use a stove for cooking. You should not need a fire on a day hike. The exception is when someone's safety or life depends on having 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. If you are hiking on snow, step well away from the trail to minimize the visual impact—but do not cover up where you have urinated on the off-chance that someone may use that snow for water.

Human solid waste:

The best option is to pack it out. This is easy on a day trip if you carry a double zip lock bag system or "blue bag". You may choose to address this at the TH. This may be a shock to participants who are not educated.

- 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. In addition to keeping germs out of the water sources, you should not pollute water with food waste, soaps, sunblock or insect repellent. This means that if your trip includes a refreshing dip in an alpine lake, you should suggest to participants that if they are wearing sunblock or insect repellent, they should consider abstaining.

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

CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS: We have already noted that music, phone conversations etc are not appropriate in the wilderness. You should also consider the impact of having a group and of loud voices. In some popular locations, there is little peace and quiet—but as Mountaineers, we should respect the desire of others to enjoy the wilderness without being disturbed. This also includes not crowding other parties at lunch breaks, and allowing them space on the trail.

APPENDIX

CONTACT INFORMATION and PHONE NUMBERS

Mountaineers Emergency Line (206) 521-6030

National Park Service

These are the main park numbers; for each ranger station or Wilderness Information Center check the web site

Mount Rainier National Park (360) 569-2211

www.nps.gov/mora/

North Cascades National Park (360) 856-5700

www.nps.gov/noca/

Olympic National Park (360) 565-3130

www.nps.gov/olym/ roads (360) 565-3131

U.S. Forest Service

These are the main numbers; for each district office check the web site

Gifford Pinchot National Forest (360) 891-5000

www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/

Mt Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest (425) 775-9702

www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/ (800) 627-0062

Okanogan National Forest (509) 826-3275

www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/

Olympic National Forest (360) 956-2402

www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/

Wenatchee National Forest (509) 664-9200

www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/

Other Areas

Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area (425) 744-3400

www.washington.edu/trails/alpine

Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge (360) 457-8451

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

You 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” and follow the prompts.

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.

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**

Useful web sites:

There are many out there. Here are a few”

WTA.org. Washington’s leading organization for trail maintenance. Also has hike descriptions on line for many hikes, and user trip reports, often with photos.

NWhikers.net. Has a trip report section.

Forecast.weather.gov -- this is the official web page for the National Weather Service forecasts. You can use the search function or map to select the area for which you want a

forecast. You can also designate a “custom area”. Especially useful because you can get forecasts for the exact location and elevation you plan to be in.

NWAC.us—this is the website of the Northwest Avalanche Center and it has forecasts and snow / temperature data for our region. Forecasting begins in the winter and ends in the spring.

Caltopo.com—all the USGS maps have been uploaded so you can select the area you want and print a map to your desired scale. There are many other features.