



COP Trip Leaders Manual

Chapter Three: Safety Guidelines



- This chapter contains suggested guidelines for activity leaders.
- The first section contains guidelines that are general to all activities.
 - Following this are guidelines specific to certain activities.
 - Please familiarize yourself with both the common guidelines and the guidelines for the activities you intend to lead.



- Most of these are suggested guidelines, not requirements. However, it is important to consider the risks that these guidelines are designed to manage.
- You should realize that, while you may not manage these risks in the way recommended here, it is your duty to manage them effectively, for the well being of your participants and COP.
- Requirements are in ***italicized, bold font***.
- Additions to these guidelines are welcome at any time.

Section 1: Guidelines Common to All Activities



- Every COP activity has its own specific risks and rewards. However, in a sense they are more alike than different.
- Many common elements should be considered no matter what activities the trip includes.



The common concerns include:

- Setting up the trip
- State a difficulty level for the trip that accurately describes the terrain, speed, rapid classification, etc. Give as much information as possible, i.e. “3,500ft of climbing in one mile”, rather than “hilly”.
- **Screen likely participants** for experience and ability.
 - Do they have a realistic knowledge of their own ability, and the ability of others on the trip?
 - Are their skills commensurate with the difficulty of the trip.
 - Ask about participant’s special needs or medical conditions before beginning the trip.
 - As part of this process, you should try to ensure that all participants have appropriate safety equipment, have it with them, know how to use it, and use it when appropriate.



- Refuse to take people that are beyond their apparent ability.
- If you take participants on a trip beyond their ability, the whole group might not be able to do what was originally planned.
- Consider the limits of ability (leader's and groups) and do not attempt activities that exceed this ability.



- Instruct all participants to bring appropriate clothing and equipment for the activity, season, and nature of the trip. This is particularly important with beginners. If sending out information in advance, include a checklist of suggested items to wear and carry with them.
- If headed to the backcountry, leaders should inform someone of:
 - where you are going,
 - your route, estimated return time,
 - plus when and who to call to report you missing.
- Know how to deal with the most common injuries in your activity.
- Have a plan for emergencies! (will discuss more later)

Before, or at the start depending on the circumstances



- Be familiar with the necessary equipment; its capabilities and limitations. **Conduct a group orientation** about equipment and emergency procedures (in case of an incident).
- Remind your participants to check their own equipment.
- You may wish to instruct them about what to check for, and help them determine that they have the required gear.
- Group equipment should be suited to the activity and in good repair

At the start



- ***Tell all participants to read and sign the release.***
Be certain everyone signs them. Carry the release with you. You may need it before you return to your car.
- Be sure someone on the trip has a charged cell phone with them. Exchange cell numbers.
- Distribute maps.

At the Start continued



- If the finish spot is different from the start spot, accurately describe it so all participants will meet at the same location.
- Warn riders of known hazards such as railroad tracks, metal bridges, wood bridges, construction sites, etc.—either verbally or on the map.
- Emphasize to everyone the importance of self-sufficiency.

At the Start continued



- Inform participants where lunch, rest, and water stops will be. Make sure all participants are carrying food and water. The amount of food, water, and extra clothing should be proportional to how far into the backcountry the trip is going and the weather.
- Check the weather forecast prior to leaving for the activity. Be aware of changing weather and terrain. Remind participants of the warning signs of weather related health problems they might encounter, such as frostbite, hypothermia and heat stroke.
- Remind participants of general hazards common to the activity. For example, when hiking, avoid putting hands or feet where they cannot see, and use a light when moving in the dark.



At the Start: Establish Group Dynamics

- ***Know about pertinent laws and regulations*** and inform/remind participants of our expectation that they be obeyed.
- Inform the group about how you intend to lead; from the front, the back, or otherwise.
- If leading from the front, select a competent person to be the sweep (unless a co-leader is sweep). The sweep needs to be carrying a first aid kit.
- Give details of leadership style, such as how close together you will travel, how often you will stop, etc.
- Inform participants about how the group will treat decision points on the route, such as intersections.

At the Start:

Establish Group Dynamics continued



- Know in advance what your turn-around time will be if the event takes longer than expected and you will not be able to complete it as planned.
- Inform participants about how to leave the route for comfort stops or other personal reasons while remaining part of the group, such as: leaving a pack on the trail, or leaving a bicycle by the side of the road.
- If choosing to take beginners, make sure to teach basic skills to avoid injury.
- ***Never start if dangerous weather is imminent.*** Be prepared to modify plans if bad weather comes up during the trip.

On the trip: Reminders



- Take appropriate precautions for the terrain, weather and animals.
- Try to avoid getting caught in the dark. Plan a turnaround time and keep to it, even if it means you will not complete the loop.
- Remind participants to pay attention to body signs such as thirst, hunger, fatigue, pain, etc. Watch for signs of deteriorating physical and mental condition, i.e. the “umbles”. (grumble, stumble, mumble)

On the trip: Reminders continued



- Remind participants to pay attention to body signs such as thirst, hunger, fatigue, pain, etc. Watch for signs of deteriorating physical and mental condition, i.e. the “umbles”. (grumble, stumble, mumble)
- Carry a first aid kit.

Emergency?



- In emergencies, ***save people first.***
- Rescue equipment only if it can be done safely.
- Know how to obtain local emergency help.

At the scene of an accident



- Take charge unless someone more qualified has already done so.
- Secure the scene to minimize risk to everyone present.
- Appoint individuals to direct traffic, administer First Aid, and seek medical help if necessary.
- Do not move the injured person unless you are trained to do so, or he/she is in imminent danger.

At the scene of an accident continued



- Gather as much information as possible for your incident report. You will need to fill one out.
- Keep an eye on the rest of your group.

Getting Help



- Make sure the rescue plan is in writing. Include:
 - patient info
 - where
 - what is being done
 - what people there plan to do
 - What you need
 - Where the runners are going and what they're supposed to do after contacting appropriate authorities.
- Send a copy with the runners, keep one yourself.
- If splitting your group: Enough people go with the injured person to carry him if he passes out/can't walk, and to send info back to rest of the group.

After the trip



- Make certain that everyone is accounted for at the finish.
- ***Follow-up on any incidents***, using the Incident Follow-up form.
- Review the trip; make notes of suggested improvements for next time.
- ***Turn in releases, make deposits, submit pay orders***, and send article/photos to newsletter.



- End of Guidelines common to all activities