

Hike Leader Guidelines & Checklist

Location: _____ Date: _____
Co-Leader(s): _____
Sweep(s): _____

Before Hike Day:

- _____ 1. Obtain a map of the hike area.
- _____ 2. If unfamiliar with the trail or if you are concerned about trail conditions, scout it in advance. An alternate trail may be selected if the scheduled trail is impassable, but keep the same meeting place.
- _____ 3. If unable to lead the hike, find a substitute leader and notify the hike planner.
- _____ 4. Interview guest hikers that call for permission to join the hike. Determine if they are capable before you give them permission to join. Ask them to review the Hiking Guidelines for Members/Guests on our web site.
- _____ 5. Determine nearest and/or best emergency access routes along the hike. (Option) Determine if cell phone coverage is available from your carrier for 911 access.
- _____ 6. Determine the communication method needed to manage your hike, i.e. whistle, walkie talkie, runner, cell phone, etc. If you decide to use special devices, insure they are operational (test them) and insure your co-leader/sweep know how to operate them.
- _____ 7. Review Medical Emergency Management Guidelines (see below) to guide you in case someone has a medical emergency.

Hike Day:

- _____ 1. Cancel the hike if extreme weather conditions exist or are forecast. (i.e. excessive snow and/or ice, temperatures predicted to be very cold, or heavy rainfall/lightning predicted throughout the day.) If you cancel, notify at least one of the following: your hike planner, Chairman, Hike Planning, or MHH Club President. (Option) In borderline cases it would be a courtesy to be at the meeting place to provide cancellation information to any that show up.
- _____ 2. Introduce first time hikers & guests to the group and make them feel welcome. Provide a reminder to all that they should have their own first aid supplies and know how to use them, as leaders have no group supplies or

medical expertise. Ask if anyone has any special medical expertise; if so, what. Note the most proficient medical person.

_____3. Excuse individuals who might pose a risk to themselves or others, or do not have the proper clothing, equipment, or water.

_____4. Provide hike description, degree of difficulty, approximate speed of the lead & trail groups, significant points on the trail and color of blazes. If special conditions warrant, describe the difficulty of the road from the meeting place to the trailhead.

_____5. Assess the abilities of the group and ask them to decide which group they want to hike with; the slower trail group or the faster lead group. If someone chooses the faster group and you are unsure of their ability, ask them to start with the slower group and later transition to the faster group. You or your co-leader/sweep will lead each group and you and your co-leader may assign an assistant to help with each group. In "Wilderness Area Hikes" groups may not exceed 12 in GA and 10 in NC, and group starts must be staggered about 10-15 minutes apart. This may necessitate more than two groups. Groups should not come together while in wilderness area. It is also recommended that when not in a wilderness area that groups not exceed 15 persons. This helps minimize trail impact. Do not pick the slowest or weakest hiker to be sweep.

_____6. Have hike participants gather into the hike groups (lead, trail or other). The person in charge of each group will have the participants sign the waiver form for that group. This potential requirement necessitates that you print & bring extra copies of the waiver form. Make a headcount of each group and a total headcount. The forms will be in the possession of each group leader or sweep during the hike in case the information is needed for an emergency.

_____7. Determine the number of vehicles to be driven to the trailhead. If there are more than the trailhead can accommodate ask members to work the situation out so we will not have too many vehicles at the location.

_____8. Describe the location of the trailhead and the route the cars will be traveling. (Option) Provide a sketch map to trailhead. Note that you will be in the lead vehicle, will go slow, and will wait for others to close up after turns or stop signs, before moving on.

_____9. Measure the odometer mileage from the meeting place to the trailhead. Note the odometer mileage for shuttles, if required.

_____10. Keep this checklist with you during the hike.

During the hike:

_____1. Do not permit hikers to go ahead of the leader or lag behind the sweep without permission.

_____ 2. The leader of each group should stop at confusing intersections to let all members of the group catch up if they are dispersed to insure everyone takes the correct trail--or post a guide until the sweep has arrived.

_____ 3. Call attention to all hazards and have the information passed down the line.

_____ 4. Stop periodically to assess the hikers, provide water breaks or to allow slower hikers to "catch up." Survey the group to determine when and if a lunch/snack break is needed.

_____ 5. If someone has a medical emergency while hiking, consider the Medical Emergency Management Guidelines below.

_____ 6. If a person wants to leave the hike for any reason that does not require our assistance, you or your assistant must physically sign them out on the sign out sheet by crossing their name off the roster, and have them initial it, with the time noted. Because of this requirement, you may want to assign this task to the sweep, who would carry the sign-in/sign-out sheet.

_____ 7. Note the start and finish time for each group and the time taken for lunch.

After the Hike:

_____ 1. Each group leader will check off hikers from their sign-in sheet and account for them. Account for all. Collect the waiver forms from the group leaders.

_____ 2. Wait until all vehicles are roadworthy before leaving the parking area.

_____ 3. Complete the waiver forms and return them to the Hike Planner in person or by mail or fax or by email of the scanned version of the form within one week, with any information needed to plan a better hike in the future, and the time & mileage information.

_____ 4. (Option) Write an article for possible newspaper publication and include photos with names. Provide it to The MHH Publicity Chairman.

_____ 5. (Option) Take photos of the hike and provide them to the MHH Publicity chairperson for posting on our web site.

MHH Medical Emergency Management Guidelines for Hike Leaders

The hope is you will not need to use these guidelines, but having reviewed and being ready to implement them will save time and make your response more efficient and effective in an emergency. These guidelines are not a substitute for good judgment or a better alternate plan.

A part of the before hike briefing is to “Ask if anyone has any special medical expertise; if so, what. Note the most proficient medical person.”

If a medical emergency occurs, consider taking the following actions:

Assign (if that person will volunteer) the most proficient medical person (Physician, EMT, Nurse, First Aid Training, CPR training, etc.) to the immediate medical care of the individual. If you are this person, assign your remaining hike leader duties to another person whom you believe is most qualified to handle the situation. The medical person should canvas the group for any medical supplies needed from the individual's first aid kits. If the victim is conscious, ask them if they want your help, if so, proceed. If not, ask them what they want and respect their wishes. If the victim is unconscious, consent to help is implied. Remember to only provide care that is within the scope of your medical expertise and do no harm.

The Hike Leaders job is to keep the group calm, organized and to provide leadership. Try to keep people occupied and away from the emergency site. Give them something to do.

If the medical person judges that outside assistance is required, call 911, if you can get a connection on a cell phone. Try cell phones that represent different carriers as they have different capabilities. Give the 911 operator your location and the medical information.

If no one can get a connection, select a hiker or hikers to volunteer to hike to a location that may provide a connection. They should take several cell phones that represent different carriers and hike toward the nearest trailhead and seek high ground along the way for a connection.

Once the medical response crew arrives, provide assistance, if requested, to speed the evacuation.

Write a report of the facts (stick to the facts and do not make judgments) of the situation and provide it to the President, MHH, not later than the next day.