

A
HANDBOOK
FOR
NEW TRIP LEADERS
(REVISED)

Mountain Club of Maryland
REVISED November, 2022

[NOTE TO READERS: This version of the Handbook does not include any temporary special procedures or precautions adopted to reduce exposure to the COVID virus. (The coronavirus-related policies are posted on the MCM web site.) If any of those special procedures become a permanent part of the Mountain Club of Maryland's hiking policies, they will be incorporated in future editions of the Handbook.]

FORWARD

We hope that this handbook will be an incentive for people who have not previously led outdoor activities for the Mountain Club of Maryland (MCM). It provides guidance on how to go about being a leader.

Because the activities of MCM are so varied, as are the interests and abilities of our members, this handbook is for guidance only; it is not a set of rules. In addition, practices may change over time. The judgment of the leader must prevail over these written words.

RELEVANT POINTS OF CONTACT

As of November, 2022, key individuals to be contacted for additional information and/or support include:

Tirzah Rom is the New Hike Leaders' Coordinator, tirzahrom55@gmail.com.

The Mentors and their areas of familiarity are:

Carolyn Bauer carbauer@verizon.net: Gunpowder, Oregon Ridge, & Rocks State Park

Caryn Joachim cjoachim@verizon.net: Prettyboy Reservoir

Jim Koury hikerj@verizon.net: Patapsco Valley State Park, Sugarloaf, Catoctin, Gambrill, & the Appalachian Trail

Mike O'Connor sharonmike2002@msn.com: MD A.T., Catoctin Mountain Park, Cunningham Falls State Park, and nearby Carroll County parks

Ann Roberts anmikerobersts@comcast.net: Loch Raven Reservoir

Bill Saunders trailsaunders@gmail.com: Frederick Municipal Forest, Gambrill, Greenbriar, and Patapsco Valley State Parks
Kathy Souders kathysouders@comcast.net: Liberty Reservoir

Individuals responsible for developing the hike schedule:

Excursions Chair: **Steve Kempler**, sjkempler@gmail.com

The Hike Coordinators are:

Leisure Wed. Hikes - **Marsha McLaughlin**, marshasmclaughlin@gmail.com

Moderate Wed. Hikes - **Carolyn Bauer**, carbauer@veizon.net

Hard Wed. Hikes - **John Barrett**, jhbarrettiii@gmail.com

Weekend Hikes - **Steve Kempler**, sjkempler@gmail.com

Schedule Changes – **Norm Revis**, ScheduleChanges@mcomd.org

After-the-hike trip report: mcmstatistics@mcom.org

KEY TAKE-A-WAYS

This Handbook provides information about the key activities associated with becoming a new hike leader:

1. **Determine it.** Decide to be a hike leader.
2. **Learn the Responsibilities.** You can observe how other hike leaders perform; ask for mentoring from experienced hike leaders, and sign up for MCM-sponsored hike leader training.
3. **Plan it.** Select/determine and scout out a hike of your choosing, constructed on location, distance, pace, and trail difficulty. Don't be afraid to use previous hiker's notes and/or trails.
4. **Schedule it.** Schedule your hike with the weekend or Wednesday coordinator. Important considerations include typical trail conditions for different times of the year (mud, ice, overgrowth, insects, wildlife), and location and time for pre-hike trail head rendezvous.
5. **Scout it.** Scout out the hike prior to the scheduled day with an eye toward driving directions, parking availabilities, hiking hazards such as stream crossings, trail obstructions, and potential wind, rain, or ice related weather hazards. Look for possible spots for lunch breaks and separations.

6. **Lead it.** Assemble the day's hikers, give introductions, explain the route and assign a sweep. Lead at a pace that keeps the group nominally together, slow or stop at critical intersections, stream crossings, rocky portions, or road crossings, and continually be cognizant of weather conditions such as heat (more water stops), thunderstorms (cover), and mud/ice (footing).

WHY BE A TRIP LEADER

You have undoubtedly enjoyed many MCM hikes or other activities. You probably realize that, if it were not for leaders, there wouldn't be any trips for others to enjoy. Maybe this is something that you have thought about doing, but didn't know how to go about it. It may seem overwhelming or daunting at first, but it all falls into place. Observe your trip leader on your next activity and you will note how naturally things are done. This handbook is intended to lay it all out for you in the hopes that you will provide continuity of leadership in the MCM. MCM's success as an outdoor club since 1934 is a direct result of the many members who have volunteered to lead hikes and other outdoor trips. The club will continue to thrive as it has for more than 80 years with new trip leaders and hikes.

Should you, for whatever reason, not care to be a trip leader, that's OK. You will still be a member in good standing. But continue to read this booklet anyway to get a better understanding of what your trip leaders have done, and will continue to do, for you.

WHO SHOULD BE A TRIP LEADER

Any member who has the desire to lead trips is invited and encouraged to be a trip leader. MCM often struggles to find hike leaders to fill every Wednesday slot, as well as weekends. Ideally, we would like to offer trips on every Saturday and Sunday as well as Wednesdays, and this is not always possible. For MCM, a trip usually is a day hike, overnight backpacking trip, or canoe / kayak trip. However, our leaders occasionally offer other trips involving combinations of camping, biking, hiking, etc.

Reasons to become a trip leader include:

- You help MCM by making more trips available for our members and contributing to the club's success.
- You can select the locations, distances and terrain of your trips.
- You have an opportunity to be creative in choosing trips and sharing sites that you find interesting or enjoyable.
- You get the satisfaction of leading a successful trip.

It may be a good idea to act as co-leader on a few trips before leading your own, just to get the feel of it. If you would like to gain experience by co-leading, contact

someone who was the leader of a hike you enjoyed to offer your services, or get in touch with the MCM Excursions Chairman.

An important quality for a good leader is one's attitude toward hiking, canoeing, camping, etc. and toward the participants. Remember that these outdoor activities are for fulfillment and enjoyment. The leader's job is to assist participants in having a pleasurable time. In order to do this, the leader is expected to meet certain obligations and has certain authorities.

- The leader plans, organizes, and leads the trip while looking out for the well-being of the participants. MCM expects that the leader will uphold the club's more-than-80-year reputation for conducting safe outdoor adventures for thousands of people. Therefore, the leader is expected to conduct the trip in accordance with the basic objectives, standards, and procedures of MCM, which are discussed later in this handbook.
- The leader may appoint one or more co-leaders to assist; but remember, the "buck stops" with the leader.
- To balance these obligations the leader has certain authorities. He has the authority to deny participation to anyone who appears to be physically or emotionally unfit for the hike, or is not properly equipped. Such a person could jeopardize himself as well as the group, or could otherwise cause inconvenient or unpleasant situations. It is best to do this screening at the time of registration.
- The leader has the authority to limit the number of people on the hike; the limit should be stated in the schedule. The leader has the authority to deviate from what was printed in the schedule. He or she may cancel, delay, or reroute the hike in accordance with his/her judgment for any reason including weather, accessibility, safety, etc.

HOW TO GET STARTED

First, you should have an understanding of the responsibilities of a hike leader. You can gain that understanding by observing experienced hike leaders and by asking them for guidance and / or mentoring. As of February 2021, several hike leaders have volunteered to serve as Mentors for new hike leaders, and their names are listed in the Relevant Points of Contact at the front of the Handbook. In addition, MCM also occasionally offers training for new hike leaders; these sessions are a good opportunity to meet with and learn from our most experienced leaders.

You should contact the Hike Leaders' Coordinator, who will guide you through the preparations to be a MCM hike leader. The Hike Leaders' Coordinator will match potential new hike leaders with Mentors. Once the Hike Leaders' Coordinator feels the new hike leader is ready to go at it, the Hike Leaders' Coordinator will notify the Excursion Chair and Hike Coordinators informing them of the new hike leader.

Select a place and date for the trip. This may be some place where you have gone before with another leader. (There are no proprietary trips!) Or you may wish to go to a new place that you have visited or heard about. For the first few times leading, you may be more comfortable in familiar surroundings. MCM's hike schedules can provide many examples and ideas about where you could lead a trip.

For suggestions on where to go hiking, consult with experienced hike leaders, look for books, pamphlets, and agencies which promote outdoor activities. See the list of references at the end of this handbook for ideas. A trail map is useful and may be essential in planning a hike. In addition to official trail maps offered by parks, web sites such as trails.com and alltrails.com provide maps of trails at a wide variety of locations. **Finally, recently MCM hike leaders have begun sharing trail maps and hike routes on MCM's web site. (<https://www.mcmd.org/hike/trail-maps/>)**

Decide what type of trip it should be. Most are simply for enjoyment of the outdoors, exercise, and companionship. Occasionally a hike may have a theme such as Historic, Wildlife, Scenic, Seasonal, Wildflowers, Tree Identification, Bird Watching, etc. The theme, if any, should be noted in the trip description (discussed below).

For a hike, decide the distance and speed that you wish to go. These should be determined by your personal preferences, the capabilities of the folks you hope will come to the hike and the severity of the terrain you will be covering. Be aware that a slow hike is less than 2 mph; a moderate hike 2 to 3 mph; and a fast hike more than 3 mph. The distance of the hike should be included in the trip description. You might also want to include your expected speed and total elevation ascent (not all hike leaders include this in their description, but some do).

Learn whether or not hunting is allowed in the area where you will be hiking, and if it is allowed, determine if any hunting season will be open at the time you are planning to do your hike. This is most often an issue in the various deer hunting seasons in late fall and early winter, but other seasons also bring hunters into the woods. The excursions chairman can provide links to sites that list the hunting seasons in Maryland and surrounding states. If you are not comfortable leading a trip in an area where /when hunting is going on you can choose to schedule your trip at a time when hunting is not allowed. Or you can pick a different location where hunting does not occur. Hunting is prohibited in most national parks and many state parks, Finally, some hike leaders are willing to lead trips where bow and arrow hunting is permitted, but not during rifle season.

Unless you are intimately familiar with the territory, it is a good idea to scout it out before submitting information for the Trip Schedule, which is done approximately two months before the schedule start date. And then scout it again just before the date of the hike, to make sure that there are no surprises. Consider asking an experienced hike leader to join you in a scouting trip if you have any questions.

SCHEDULING THE TRIP

Once you have decided the details of your trip, you are ready to submit information for the Trip Schedule. The schedule is published three times a year, each for a four-month period: March-June, July-October, and November- February. The process of preparing a Trip Schedule begins about two months before the schedule start date, so you need to let the schedule coordinators know of your plans well before the date of your trip.

When it is time to begin the next schedule coordination, the Weekend and/or a Wednesday Coordinators (depending on the type of hike you plan to submit) will contact you to submit your trip description. Once you submit your hike information, the Coordinator will work with you to discuss potential hike date conflicts and final scheduling, if necessary.

Tips on developing a hike description:

- Look at a current schedule to get an idea of the wording and of the information required. The trip title should include identification of the area to which you are going, length, and difficulty.
- If you are uncertain of the difficulty level of your hike category (easy, moderate, hard, or strenuous), you can consult with an experienced leader, or a Weekend/Wednesday Coordinator
- The description should include more detail about the hike; a description of the terrain, the pace, elevation change if significant, and the theme, if any.
- If there is to be a carpool to the trailhead, note the time and place of departure for meeting the group--which should be closer to the center of population than to where the trip will occur—and the carpool fee.

To submit your hike to the coordinator:

- Log into <https://www.mcomd.org>; hover over “Hike”, then click on “Create a New Hike”. Fill in the following fields.
- Enter the title of your hike. For example: PRETTYBOY RESERVOIR TOWER TRAIL – 5.5M (**Note: All caps – distancedifficulty**)
- Enter hike Description. For example: An approximately 4.5-mile hike on what I call “The Tower Trail” at the Prettyboy Reservoir. We will have two views of the reservoir from just above the dam, no stream crossings; but there will a few moderate hills and some rocky sections.
Note: If carpooling is offered, it is becoming standard practice to remind hikers, at the end of your hike description:
'Please add 'carpool' or 'trailhead' next to your name, on the RSVP webpage that contains the hikers name and email address. You can just type it in. (e.g., 'Joe Smith trailhead'). This way the hike leader knows who is going to which site.
- Enter date and time of hike (end time is not used, 5:00 PM is safe)
- In the “Hike Categories” box select “Hike” in the pull down.

- In the “Coordinators for Approval”, select the day and hike difficulty for your hike.
- Under “Hike Leader Details” find yourself and select.
- Select miles, hike difficulty, provide directions to trailhead and carpool location (if offered), carpool cost (if appropriate), Dogs allowed?, **Permit Required?**.
- Example of Directions: Take Exit 31 off of I-83 North; turn left onto Middletown road, go .5 miles and turn left onto Molesworth road, go .6 miles and turn right onto Armacost road, at .6 miles turn right onto Spooks Hill road. The grassy parking area (for about 8 cars) is on the left at .2 miles.
- Check the box if you are flexible with the date and then write a note in “Comments to the Hike Coordinator” with any constraints (e.g. “I’m OK with any dates except those in August”; or “any date works”, etc.). This only goes to the coordinator.
- If you wish to know how many people will be attending your hike, under “Optional: Hike Registration”, click “New RSVP”; then in “Type”, type in “Registration Required”, and any hiker number limits. **Don’t forget to click “Save RSVP”**
- “Submit Hike for Review”.

After you submit your hike, each coordinator will create a schedule from all the hikes submitted for their category. If there is a conflict of two hikes being on the same day, the coordinator will reconcile the conflict with the hike leaders.

Some hike leaders like to provide a hike that they wish to reoccur several times. To do so:

- Submit the hike as you would any hike, entering the date and time of the hike’s first occurrence in the date and time box.
- In the ‘Comments to Hike Coordinator’, indicate that this hike will be repeated and include the dates that the hike is to reoccur.

Sometimes a leader will want to ‘Submit a Past Hike’:

- Before submitting a past hike, hover over ‘HIKE’, and click on ‘SCHEDULE’ to find the hike you wish to resubmit.
- To view hikes in the past, under the yellow banner, to the right, click on ‘LIST’, then click on ‘Month’
- You will see a calendar. Under the yellow banner, way to the left side, click the left pointing arrow, to view past hikes. Click the arrow as many times as you wish to see more (and more) past hikes.
- Find the hike you wish to resubmit.
- When you find the right hike, click on the hike title.
- At the top of the next screen, click on the page address bar, and copy the link (as you would copy any text). If the link is not highlighted, select the link, as you would in selecting any text, and then copy it.
- Now, go back to the MCM home webpage, hover over ‘HIKE’ (again), and click on ‘SUBMIT A PAST HIKE’.
- On the next screen, click on the box that says: ‘https://’, and paste in the link that you just copied, associated with the hike to be resubmitted.

- Enter new date, day of week, new hike time, hike difficulty, and your email address.
- Hit 'SUBMIT'.
- If any other particulars about the hike needs to be changed, please contact the appropriate hike coordinator with the change. Changes may include a different hike leader, or maybe, a different start time. Note, that if there are more than just basic changes, the hike will become different enough from the original, and need to be submitted as a new hike.

Here are some additional considerations when you are preparing your hike description:

- The Public Schedule shown on the web site for non-members intentionally has only a partial hike description, which requires a guest to contact the hike leader for the meeting place and time—this contact also gives the hike leader an opportunity to determine if the hike is suitable for the guest.
- Transportation costs (i.e., carpool costs) are estimated from the meeting place to the trailhead. Refer to COMPUTING TRANSPORTATION COSTS below.

Once the coordinators have completed the four-month trip schedule, the trip schedule is posted on the MCM web site. The detailed hike descriptions are available for viewing by club members. The version with less detail is publicly accessible.

ADDITIONS TO THE INTERNET SCHEDULE

It has become common for hike leaders to add new hikes after the four-month trip schedule has been published—sometimes the decision is made a few days before the date of the new hike. These hikes also are added to the hike schedule posted on the MCM web site. If you decide to add a new hike in these circumstances, submit a hike as described above. But at this time, between schedule coordination, the hike will be posted by our schedule changes coordinator.

FINAL SCOUTING FOR THE TRIP

Within a few weeks of when the trip will occur, depending on your familiarity with the trip, it may be a good idea to scout the trail to re-familiarize yourself with the area. The club Treasurer will reimburse you for reasonable expenses associated with scouting. (Many hike leaders opt not to be reimbursed.) Things to look for on the scouting trip are:

- Verify driving route and distance, including any car plants
- Locate parking spaces near the trailhead and for any car plant.
- Locate places for breakfast and dinner stops, if appropriate. Check on the times they are open. Be aware of Daylight Savings Time changes.
- Develop driving instructions for car pool drivers.
- Check on the trail; conditions, etc., and confirm time and distance.
- Look for alternate trails and escape routes in the event of an emergency.

- Look for stream crossings, railroad trestles, marshy ground, poison ivy, signs for hunting season, other hazards, and points of interest.
- Obtain permission of landowners, if appropriate.
- If your hike is in one of the City of Baltimore reservoir watershed properties (Loch Raven, Prettyboy, Liberty), the hike will be submitted to the City for approval during the Trip Schedule process. You will have received a right-of-entry letter from MCM's watershed liaison. You must have that letter on your person during the hike. **When submitting a hike at these locations, don't forget to check the 'Permit Required' box.**

JUST BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Before your trip, you will receive an email packet of information and instructions from the MCM Corresponding Secretary. Included in the packet are: a worksheet for listing participants; a trip cost summary to be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary after the trip; and a liability release statement for guests.

If you indicated that advance registration is needed, potential participants will normally register the week of the trip, sometimes right up until the trip. (However, if your trip requires prior arrangements to be made, such as for a backpack or canoe trip, you may include a cut-off date for registration.) When on the MCM website, if you hover over 'HIKE', and move your arrow down and click on "MY HIKES", you will see the list of hikes you had submitted. Clicking on "Attendees" will give you the list of people who registered for the hike. At anytime, you may wish to contact some of these hikers to ask questions about their hiking experience (if you do not know them) whether they are willing to drive a car pool; and how many passengers can they handle.

Despite the ability to register on the web site, some members may choose to contact you by phone or email to sign up or to ask questions. In addition, nonmembers who can only see partial information on the public web site will contact you to inquire about your hike. You should be prepared to tell them all about the hike, place, distance, terrain, pace, hazards, etc.; meeting place and time of departure; what to bring: water, lunch, rain suit, tent, other food, etc.; breakfast/ dinner stops; approximate cost. If you do not already know the person, ascertain their ability to do this hike; if there is any doubt about his/her ability to keep up, you can ask them to start with an easier hike.

Be prepared to answer questions, such as: What time will I be back home? Can I bring my dog? Can I bring my 5-year-old? What if I get tired? What if I get lost? What if it rains, snows, or sleets? Can I bring beer? (No) How much water should I bring? Are there hills, streams? Suppose I have to go to the bathroom? Be prepared to give directions directly to a trailhead, when it makes sense for the participant to go directly there rather than to carpool (e.g., someone who lives in Frederick or Washington, D.C., who is going on an Appalachian Trail hike).

LAST MINUTE CHANGES OR CANCELLATIONS

Sometimes a trip leader may need to cancel or change a planned trip after it has been

posted on the schedule. For example, you may get sick or have another health issue; the trails you planned to use might be closed; or you may have concerns about safety due to weather conditions. In some cases, rather than cancelling, you may be willing to offer a substitute trip that avoids the problems you identified.

It is always the hike leader's discretion to cancel or change a hike if he/she has safety concerns, because of the weather, or for any other reasons. You don't need to get approval from anyone else in the club, although if you want a second opinion you can ask your hike scheduling coordinator or another experienced hike leader. If you decide to cancel or modify a hike, you can take these steps to communicate the decision:

1. Send an email to ScheduleChanges@mcomd.org stating that you are cancelling the trip (or if you are making changes or substituting an alternative trip, send the revised trip description). The Schedule Changes Manager will post the cancellation, or the changed wording, on the public and member MCM web site schedules.
2. Send an email to the listserv, especially for last minute changes, mountainclub@googlegroups.com, which will inform club members about the changes.

For the convenience of hikers, when possible, hike leaders are urged to issue changes or cancellations notices (e.g., email notices on the listserv) no later than 9:00 p.m. on the evening before the hike.

ON THE DAY OF THE TRIP

The leader should arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes ahead of the announced departure time so that he/she can greet and check on people who have registered.

- While at the meeting place, the leader should screen new and non-members to be sure that they are adequately clothed, shod, and equipped for the trip.
- If not, the leader should firmly and courteously discourage their participation on this hike, at the risk of offending that individual vs. inconveniencing or imperiling the whole group.
- The leader should have guests sign the "Guest Register & Liability Waiver" form.
- The leader should assign hikers to cars for the drive to the trailhead. MCM members, rather than guests, should be chosen to be drivers.
- The leader should provide the drivers with directions to the trailhead, stops for meals, where to park, etc. If your hike involves a car shuttle, cars may have to be placed after at points other than the trailhead if a car shuttle or intermediate pick-up is planned. (As a general rule, new hike leaders should avoid leading hikes involving car shuttles at first, as they are more complicated.) These items should be included in the driving instructions. Prepare to leave at the announced time. It is a good idea to exchange cell phone numbers, especially if the directions are complicated.

At the trailhead, assemble the hikers in a circle. Introduce yourself and the co-leader, if

there is one. Introduce guests to make them feel welcome. Have people call out their names and count off to verify the number of hikers. The hike leader should briefly review trail etiquette, describe the hike, and any appropriate safety precautions. Ask for questions, comments, and announcements.

Use your judgment about the need for a sweep. A sweep is a person designated to be the last person in the group. (If you have a large group, being able to look back and see the sweep can help you verify that no one has been left behind.) All hikers should be reminded that they should remain between the leader and the sweep. When you are leading, you'll only need to identify the sweep to know that everyone is still behind you. Hikers should also be advised to leave their pack along the trail if they step off the trail for any reason.

While on the trail, the principal concern is safety, but everyone is out for exercise and enjoyment.

- Hike at the advertised pace, although naturally the pace will be slower for more difficult terrain. The pace should be fast enough so that the hardy souls do not become bored, but slow enough so that the tail-enders can see someone ahead of them from time to time.
- At forks or crossings of the trail, wait for all to catch up before proceeding. Remember that if hikers in the rear are out of sight, they may not know that you have turned onto another trail. It is a good idea to have a designated sweep for larger groups, so when you can see the sweep you will know if the entire group is within sight. It can be helpful if the sweeps have some familiarity with the trail.
- Exercise caution when crossing a vehicle road.
- Five-minute rest stops are a good idea every hour or so to permit hikers to drink fluids, add or remove layers of clothing, etc. The frequency of stops should take into account the difficulty of the hike, the weather conditions, and the ability of the hikers.
- Bathroom breaks ("separations") should be made at least every couple of hours, or whenever requested by the hikers. Allow enough time for everyone to address bodily needs without being rushed (5 minutes is a good guide). As a safety precaution, keep note of the number of males and females on the hike and verify that everyone has returned after a separation.
- Allow for a lunch time during the hike, or a snack break for shorter hikes. If possible, it's nice to pick a spot with a nice view, and allow people at least 20 minutes to eat lunch and rest.
- It may happen that the whole group misses a turn in the trail and becomes "lost". Keep the group together and explain the situation. A more experienced hiker may be able to lead you out of trouble. If not, turn around and go back down the trail to the last familiar landmark and start over again.

At the end of the hike all hikers should have returned either by foot or car shuttle to the trailhead. The leader should take a head count to assure that all have returned.

It is the responsibility of the drivers to bring their passengers back to the meeting place. Therefore, passengers should be encouraged to return in the same car that brought them.

COMPUTING TRANSPORTATION COSTS

The worksheets provided by the Corresponding Secretary contain formulas for computing transportation costs. These guidelines are complicated, and in practice, few hike leaders (if any) choose to use the worksheet calculations. They usually set carpool fees based on what has been charged to drive to that location, or a similar distance, in the past. Contact an experienced hike leader, excursion coordinator, or Wednesday coordinator if you have questions.

LEGALITIES

It is the intent of MCM that each participant be legally responsible for his own safety, and for damage to his person or property. That is why we have each member sign a liability release as part of his/her membership application and renewal. You should ask any guests (non-members) to sign the Guest Register and Liability Waiver, which contains a similar statement, prior to each trip.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the hike leader does have a moral obligation to conduct a safe trip and to offer assistance and comfort in case of an unfortunate event. This handbook is intended to assist the leader in carrying out this moral obligation.

The Mountain Club of Maryland will be supportive of the leader who encourages his participants to comply with the "Suggestions to Hikers" and "Trail Policies and Etiquette", which are on the front page of the Trip Schedule. The trip leader is expected, of course, to set the example for others to follow, and should expect the hikers to be responsive and cooperative in this regard.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Sometimes during the course of a trip, as in other human endeavors, the unexpected and undesired can occur. In case of an accident, injury, or illness, the participants will look to the leader for direction, guidance, and to take the initiative in mitigating unpleasant effects.

- While trip leaders are not obligated to provide any kind of medical treatment, they are responsible for getting medical help for an ill or injured hiker, if necessary. We encourage all hike leaders to take a first aid course. You may wish to have a small first aid kit with you as a matter of "being prepared." NOTE MCM periodically purchases first aid kits and makes them available to hike leaders. **Check with the Hike Leader Coordinator for availability** Suggested items for a first aid kit include salt tablets, electrolytes, bandages, moleskins, tweezers, antiseptic, antihistamine, and maybe a little quick energy like a candy bar etc. In addition, other hikers on your trip

may be carrying some first aid items in their own packs.

- Depending on the severity of the situation, and unless you are an expert in such matters, it will be better not to move the victim, but to send for help. Maybe someone in your group is qualified to render assistance; if so, you should encourage him to do so.
- In order to send for help, you need to know where you are at all times while on the trail. What is the shortest, quickest way back to civilization? Try to send two or three others to seek help. Don't go yourself because you must remain in charge of the situation.
- Keep the group together until the situation gets resolved, because if worst comes to worst, you may need extra hands to transport the victim.
- Carry a cell phone if you own one. It may allow you to summon help more quickly. If you don't have one, ask someone who does to bring it on the hike.
- On any trip, there are likely to be other trip leaders and experienced hikers. The leaders should not be afraid to take advantage of the expertise of others on the hike.

It is beyond the scope of this handbook to teach First Aid, search and rescue techniques, or how to deal with natural hazards. Courses in these subjects are available through the Red Cross and other groups. [And MCM periodically offers a first aid training class for interested hike leaders; this is voluntary, but all hike leaders are encouraged to attend.] There are books in the library.

LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

Some hike leaders may have concerns about the risk of liability in the event that an accident occurs on their hike. At this time all club volunteers, including hike leaders, are insured under our liability insurance. Our insurer recommends submitting a report of any injury that occurs on a hike, even if the injured person does not intend to file a claim. (Note that our policy does not cover liability for carpool drivers.) In addition, while leading a hike on the Appalachian Trail, hike leaders are covered under the Federal Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program. You can contact MCM leadership to obtain a copy of the insurance report form or to request information about the VIP.

AFTER THE HIKE IS OVER

You will be thanked by the participants, and it is deserved. They recognize that this trip wouldn't have happened without your effort.

The job is not done until the paper work is completed. The following information should be sent to the Corresponding Secretary:

- An email report of the number of MCM members and guests on the trip.
- If your hike used the Appalachian Trail (A.T.), you should also report the number of hours you spend driving to/from, and leading the hike, and the number of miles hiked on the A.T. (This information is included in MCM's

- annual report of Appalachian Trail volunteer hours).
- The trip cost summary, if you are asking to be reimbursed for you mileage costs.
- You can report these items by mailing (or emailing) the paper Trip Cost Summary form sent to you in the Hike Leader Packet, or you can simply include the information in the body of an email to the Corresponding Secretary to mcmstatistics@gmail.com.
- If there were non-members (guests) on the hike, also send the liability release statement signed by the guests to the Corresponding Secretary. (If you have a scanner, you can submit a copy of this waiver by email rather than mailing the paper copies).

Please do this within a few days after the trip. Then, feel good about a job well done! And start planning your next trips.

BEST PRACTICES

At a meeting in 2019, a group of MCM hiker leaders developed a list of best practices for hike leaders, based on their own experiences. These best practices are listed here as suggestions for new hike leaders to consider:

- Scout the hike beforehand. Have a scouting partner who could lead if needed
- Recognize potential problems like stream crossings, too small parking area
- Figure out “separation” areas and when backpacking, camping areas
- Publish interesting & unusual aspects of the hike in the hike description
- At the hike, speak directly with guests, thank them for coming, & familiarize them with procedures
- Offer historical/geographical features during the hike
- Stop at all trail junctions or stream crossings to wait for the last person to catch up and rest a bit
- Have a whistle to communicate
- Have a sweep
- Have cell phone connection with drivers, sweep
- Carry first aid (MCM has kits for leaders to carry), extra water
- Be on the lookout for anyone getting into physical trouble. Be ready to get help
- Be aware if there is a shortcut back to the cars, just in case
- Seek co-leaders for hikes. They could turn into new leaders
- If a large group, consider break into two groups to keep more homogenous paces. [NOTE: This practice assumes you have available a co-leader or other hiker who is familiar with the trails and is able to lead part of the group.]
- Send in any changes to the Listserv and Schedule Changes Coordinator.
- Send in paperwork to the Corresponding Secretary after the hike.
- Use the Advanced Registration requirement in your trip description (described earlier) if you need to be sure of hiker’s abilities

- Get any needed approvals for hiking in certain areas such as the Baltimore City watershed

AFTERWORD

This may seem to be somewhat overwhelming, but it really isn't so tough to do. After all, we in the MCM have been doing stuff like this for more than 80 years. Now it is your turn to keep us hiking, paddling, etc. Give it a go! And thank you.

REFERENCES

50 Hikes in Maryland, Leonard M. Adkins

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Circuit Hikes in the Shenandoah National Park Potomac Appalachian Trail

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Hopkins Press Baltimore Trails, ibid

Circuit Hikes in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania Potomac
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Carroll, Howard, Baltimore and Harford Counties), Potomac Appalachian Trail Club

Fast Aid: The Easy First-Aid Guide Appalachian Trail Conference

Mountaineering Medicine: Dr. Fred T. Darvill, Jr., Appalachian Trail

Conference

For additional more recently released publications, see your public library, book store, or outdoor sports store.