

CONSERVATION NORTHWEST VOLUNTEER SAFETY RESOURCES



Traveling in Washington's great outdoors with Conservation Northwest's field based programs like the Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project or Gold Creek Restoration Parties are a great way to positively impact our environment. However, as with any time you are recreating outside, there are some good precautions and guidelines to follow. Please use this guide as your resource while participating in our programs, as well as when you are recreating outdoors on your own time!

IN EMERGENCIES

We never anticipate having emergencies but any time you head out into the outdoors, you take on some risks. These can include a number of different things including: bad weather, injuries, forest fires, water crossings, wildlife interactions, etc. It's important to be prepared for these, Mother Nature is unpredictable some times.

Above all, please do not hike by yourself when you volunteer for our programs and make sure someone at home knows where you are going and when you will be back.

If you do get into an emergency situation: immediately call for Search & Rescue by dialing 911.

Included below are some tips on how to avoid emergency situations and then also how to work with Search & Rescue in an emergency situation.

Weather: Always check the weather before you go. It can change frequently so be prepared for sunny weather (SUNCREEN!) or rainy weather (RAIN JACKETS!); here are some places to check for weather conditions:

- USDA Forest Service Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center <http://www.nwac.us/>
- Friends of the Northwest Weather & Avalanche Center <http://www.avalanchenw.org/>

Also, be on the lookout for probable signs of trouble. The following are some ways of checking for possible changes in weather or bad conditions ahead:

- Check the clouds and the speed and direction in which they move. They are an indication of the wind speed and possible rapid changes in weather.
- A change in the sky color and cloud accumulation is an indicator of upcoming rains.
- A tingling sensation of your skin or the feeling that your hairs are standing up straight are indicators of an upcoming lightning.
- Check the snowy peaks of mountain tops. If the wind speeds are high on the summits then you will see a trail of snow flowing from the summit.

Forest Fires and Hunting Season: Please check with your local Forest Service Ranger Station for information about any forest fires or open hunting seasons in your area. Please do not go into the field if

forest fires are active in your area. During hunting season, wear orange or consider waiting to go into the field until the season has closed in your area.

Wildlife: In reality, serious injuries or deaths by animal attacks are rare. But since you are out looking for wildlife there are some good precautions to take and keep in mind. Know if you are allergic to bee stings, insect bites, or other things you may find in the outdoors. Always carry an Epi-Pen if you are. Otherwise, carry insect repellent and anti-itch cream to take care of insect bites. Beware of ticks too!

If you run into wildlife, be careful! Please do not approach or feed wild animals, especially bears. Remember, all wildlife can be dangerous. Here are some tips for avoiding bad interactions with wildlife.

- **Let Someone Know:** where you are going and when you plan to return.
- **Make Noise:** Talk, sing or clap your hands to let a bear know of your presence. Don't rely on bells, usually they are too quiet. Shout often, especially when traveling upwind, near streams and waterfalls, or when you cannot see the path ahead. (avoid thick brush).
- **Be Alert:** Watch for bear sign such as tracks, droppings, diggings, rocks rolled over, scratch marks on trees and logs torn apart. Carry binoculars and scan ahead periodically.
- **Don't Hike Alone or at Night:** Bears and cougars are most active at dawn, dusk and night, but can be encountered any time. Groups of three or more people tend to make more noise and appear more formidable. This makes groups safer than solo hikers.
- **Stay on Trails:** for your safety and to protect the habitat.
- **Avoid Carcasses:** Report dead animals to the nearest ranger station. It is very risky to approach a carcass; a bear may be just out of sight, guarding its food.
- **Stay with Your Gear:** Don't leave your packs, food or beverages unattended; even food or beverages stored under water may attract bears.

We do not require our volunteers to carry bear spray unless directed otherwise by Alison Huyett. We do recommend hiking with bear spray. Here are some additional resources for bear safe camping and hiking.

- Safety in bear country; <http://westernwildlife.org/grizzly-bear-outreach-project/bear-safety/>
- How to use bear spray; <http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/BeBearAware/BearSpray/bearspray.html> and a bear spray video; <http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/BeBearAware/BearSpray/bearspray.html#video>
- Hiking and camping; http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/BeBearAware/Hiking_and_Camping/hiking_and_camping.html

Additional resources:

Natural hazards awareness and tips; <http://www.abc-of-hiking.com/natural-hazards/>

First Aid Resources: <http://www.abc-of-hiking.com/first-aid/>

SEARCH AND RESCUE

In emergency situations, you should not hesitate to call for medical assistance. When in doubt, call for help. Most mountainous areas have local rescue services and helicopter crews on standby. Local tourist and guide organizations will be able to give you details such as their phone numbers and emergency radio channels. Make sure to note them down and have your team members know them by heart.

Figure out how you will contact search and rescue. Cell phones will work by dialing 911. In case of a weak signal, dial the emergency number as this works at a higher signal intensity than normal calls. Try sending text messages as well. If you are unable to get any signal or reply, your next move would be to turn your mobile phone on and off in an SOS pattern. If you are lucky, this signal will be picked up. There are other ways to contact search and rescue here: <http://www.abc-of-hiking.com/hiking-safety/contact-rescue-services.asp>

When contacting medical assistance, make sure to have the following details at your disposal:

- The nature and cause of the incident causing the injuries
- The number of patients and the name, age, and medical condition of each patient in order of importance:
 - Vital signs
 - Level of consciousness:
 - A : Alert
 - V : Responds to verbal stimuli (talking/shouting)
 - P : Responds to pain stimuli (pinching, pin pricks)
 - U : Unresponsive
 - Description of injury
 - The treatment already applied
- Group Situation:
 - number of uninjured people
 - medical expertise in the group
 - shelter
 - water/food and medical supplies
- Location: try to give the location as precisely as possible:
 - GPS or map coordinates
 - Distance and direction from landmarks
 - Description of landscape or possible special features
- Weather and terrain conditions/problems
- In case of a helicopter: possible landing zone

When waiting for Search & Rescue to come here are some important things to remember:

Stay Safe

- Stay in the same location where you sounded your alarm.
- Shelter yourself from the elements as best you can.
- Mentally prepare to be outside for a couple of hours, perhaps longer.

Stay Warm

- Put on all of your warm clothes.
- Eat a snack.
- If you're able to do so safely, move your body.
- If you're incapacitated, you can still do isometric muscle contractions to generate heat. If you're on the ground, try tensing and holding your stomach muscles for several seconds at a time.

Stay Visible

- Put on something bright.
- If you hear voices or a helicopter, yell.
- Signal a helicopter by waving items like a shirt or tarp, or set your headlamp to blinking mode. If your headlamp doesn't have a blinking mode, move your hand in front of the light to simulate blinking.