



COLORADO MOUNTAIN CLUB LEADERSHIP MANUAL

Updated 2025

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THANK YOU LETTER TO CMC LEADERS

Dear CMC Trip Leaders and Instructors,

On behalf of the Colorado Mountain Club and our Education Department, we want to express our deepest gratitude for your dedication and service as volunteer leaders. Your commitment to sharing your knowledge, skills, and passion for the mountains makes our mission possible.

As a volunteer-driven organization, we recognize that our programs exist only because of your willingness to give your time and expertise. Every hike you lead, every class you teach, and every skill you share enriches our community and helps preserve Colorado's mountain heritage for future generations.

The updated Leadership Manual represents our commitment to supporting you with the best resources possible. We've worked to make this document more user-friendly, practical, and comprehensive based on your feedback and experiences in the field.

Thank you for embodying the spirit of the CMC through your leadership. Your service creates opportunities for others to discover the joy of mountain recreation, develop lifelong skills, and build lasting connections with Colorado's wild places and with each other.

With sincere appreciation,

Graham Ottley & Ashley Kramer
CMC Adult Education Department

NOTABLE CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION

Format and Structure Updates

1. **Added Quick Reference Guide** with essential information for easy access
2. **Created comprehensive Table of Contents** with hyperlinks to each section
3. **Standardized heading styles** for consistent visual hierarchy
4. **Expanded use of tables and checklists** for improved readability
5. **Added more whitespace** between sections to reduce visual clutter
6. **Converted dense paragraphs** into bulleted and numbered lists
7. **Integrated placeholder icons** for important information and warnings
8. **Created end-of-chapter checklists** for key responsibilities

Content Updates

1. **Updated certification requirements**
 - a. Clarified WFA recertification timeline
 - b. Revised avalanche education requirements
 - c. Added "1 trip per year" requirement to maintain leader status
2. **Expanded emergency response sections**
 - a. Added detailed flowcharts for common emergencies
 - b. Updated protocols for lost participants
 - c. Enhanced lightning and wildfire safety guidelines
 - d. Clarified evacuation decision-making process
3. **Improved group management guidance**
 - a. Added more detailed information on leadership styles
 - b. Enhanced decision-making frameworks with practical examples
 - c. Expanded conflict resolution strategies
 - d. Added section on handling problem behaviors
4. **Updated policies**
 - a. Revised minimum group size requirements with exceptions
 - b. Updated Code of Conduct information
 - c. Enhanced liability protection explanations
 - d. Clarified incident reporting processes
5. **Added practical tools**
 - a. Participant screening question suggestions

- b. Trip planning timeline recommendations
 - c. Marketing and promotion guidelines
 - d. Decision-making matrices
- 6. Updated trip difficulty ratings**
- a. Added new Easy/Moderate/Challenging/Difficult rating system
 - b. Provided detailed charts for each activity type
 - c. Included information about pace classifications

We welcome your feedback on these changes as you use the manual in your leadership role. Please send any suggestions to office@cmc.org.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Emergency Contact Information

- **CMC Emergency Call Service:** (269) 384-1056 (Call anytime, day or night. Collect calls accepted)
- **Emergency Services:** 911
- **Remember:** If you call 911, also contact the CMC emergency call service as soon as possible

Leader's Essential Responsibilities

1. **Plan thoroughly** - Route, weather, permits, emergency plans
2. **Screen participants** - Experience, fitness, equipment
3. **Manage the group** - Set pace, monitor participants, keep group together
4. **Handle emergencies** - First aid, evacuation decisions, documentation
5. **Follow CMC policies** - Safety guidelines, Leave No Trace principles
6. **Complete documentation** - Trip reports, incident reports if necessary

Minimum Trip Requirements

- **Standard minimum:** 4 people total
- **Exceptions:**
 - 3 people with reliable communication (2-way satellite communicator or verified cell service)

- 2 people for 5th class climbs with reliable communication (leader must be approved for multi-pitch climbs)

Required Leader Certifications

- **Wilderness First Aid (WFA)** - Valid for 2 years
- **Avalanche education** - Based on terrain and conditions:
 - **Avalanche Terrain Avoidance (ATA)** - Required for leaders in snow-covered areas (valid for 5 years)
 - **AIARE Level 1** - Required for avalanche-prone terrain (requires refresher course every 5 years)
- **Trip Leader training** - Specific to your CMC group

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Welcome to CMC Leadership

Congratulations on your interest in a leadership role with the Colorado Mountain Club! A "Leader" in this manual is defined as a CMC member who is an active Trip Leader, Instructor, or School Director. This manual serves as both a comprehensive resource for new leaders and a refresher for experienced ones.

Purpose of This Manual

The Colorado Mountain Club Leadership Manual provides:

- Clear guidance on duties and responsibilities
- Proven strategies for leading safe and enjoyable trips
- Essential information to help you adhere to CMC guidelines

What This Manual Covers

- CMC leadership requirements
- Trip planning and execution
- Safety management and emergency response
- CMC policies, guidelines, and insurance information
- CMC history, structure, and programs

Note: This manual does not cover technical information and may not include all information required by your local CMC group.

Continuing Development

The Colorado Mountain Club encourages all leaders to seek further knowledge and refine leadership skills through:

- Training programs
- Practical experience
- Educational resources on outdoor leadership

Many CMC groups offer leadership training, first aid courses, and other specialized training. Contact your local group for more information.

Your Feedback Matters

Future revisions of the Leader Manual rely on feedback from volunteers like you. Please submit suggestions to the CMC office (office@cmc.org).

CHAPTER 2 – ABOUT THE COLORADO MOUNTAIN CLUB

Mission

The Colorado Mountain Club is organized to:

- Unite the energy, interest and knowledge of students and lovers of Colorado's mountains
- Collect and disseminate information about the Rocky Mountains
- Stimulate public interest in mountain areas
- Encourage preservation of forests, flowers, fauna, and natural scenery
- Render mountain attractions more accessible

History

Founded in 1912, the Colorado Mountain Club is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with thousands of members statewide. Early members included Enos Mills ("father of Rocky Mountain National Park"), Roger Toll (former superintendent of Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone National Parks), and pioneering Colorado climbers.

The CMC has been instrumental in:

- Establishing Rocky Mountain National Park
- Protecting the Colorado columbine
- Supporting the Wilderness Act of 1964
- Sponsoring open space conferences
- Providing thousands of volunteer hours for conservation

Organizational Structure

Board of Directors:

- Governs the Club
- Directors elected by the CMC State Council
- Meets 4-5 times per year at various locations

Groups:

- Regional chapters throughout Colorado

- Friends of Colorado Group for non-residents
- Provide local services through education, recreation, and conservation
- Conduct leadership training and approve trip leaders

Staff:

- Chief Executive Officer reports to the board
- Professional staff implement:
 - Operations
 - Membership services
 - CMC Press
 - Conservation Program
 - Youth Programs
 - Fund development
 - Education support

CMC Programs

Adventure Travel:

- Takes members to destinations worldwide
- Organized through Adventure Travel Committee
- Led by skilled volunteer leaders

Conservation Program:

- Advocates for protection of wild places
- Works with agencies and partner organizations
- Focuses on protecting roadless areas, wildlife corridors, and ecological integrity

Youth Programs (YP):

- Provides environmental education for Colorado youth
- Focuses on mountain science topics
- Reaches thousands of youth annually
- Promotes stewardship and exploration

CMC Press:

- Publishes guidebooks, field guides, and educational materials

- Features hiking, climbing, and natural science topics
- Offers member discounts on publications

CMC Development:

- Supplements membership dues through fundraising
- Seeks support from government, corporations, foundations, and individuals
- Provides tax deductions for donors

CHAPTER 3 – LEADER ROLES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Statewide CMC Minimum Standards

The following requirements apply to all Colorado Mountain Club leaders:

- Be a **Colorado Mountain Club member**
- Be at least **18 years of age**
- **Complete Leader Training** and be proficient in the 15 Trip Leader Competencies
- Have **mountain skills** adequate for the trip
- Complete a **Leader in Training (LIT) trip** (co-lead at least one trip with an experienced leader)
- Receive **approval or Trip Leader Certification** by your CMC Group

Required Certifications

First Aid Requirements:

- **Wilderness First Aid (WFA)** certification or higher
 - Valid for 2 years
 - For certification obtained outside CMC, contact the office
- CPR training is encouraged (required for some instructors teaching on public lands)
- All Leaders/Instructors must have current certification on file

Avalanche Education Requirements:

- **Avalanche Terrain Avoidance (ATA)**
 - Required for leaders who travel in snow-covered areas
 - Recommended for all CMC trip leaders
- **AIARE Level 1** (or equivalent)
 - Required for trip leaders who travel in avalanche-prone terrain

Definition: "Non-avalanche prone terrain" means terrain with stable snowpack; slope angles not in the 25-45 degree range; that does not include terrain traps (e.g., stream beds, gullies, steep road cuts) or snow pillows, roll-overs, cornices and subtle micro-terrain features; and that does not have avalanche prone terrain above the selected route.

Staying Current

Leaders must maintain their certifications:

- **WFA** – Recertification every 2 years
- **ATA** – Retake 8-hour class every 5 years or possess higher-level training
- **AIARE Level 1** – AIARE Companion Rescue 1-day course every 5 years
- **Lead at least 1 trip per year** (based on CMC Calendar: October to October)

Types of CMC Leaders

1. CMC Trip Leader

- a. Activities include non-technical and non-specialty hiking/walking/running-based trips

2. CMC Specialty Trip Leader

- a. Activities include specialized activities: Backpacking, Flyfishing, Biking, Skiing, Adventure Travel
- b. May require specific techniques and equipment

3. CMC Technical Trip Leader

- a. Activities include technical activities: Alpine/Multipitch/Top Rope Ice and Rock/Sport/Trad Climbing and Scrambling
- b. Additional requirements needed ([see Appendix C](#))

4. CMC Instructor

- a. Members involved in teaching courses and leading field-based classes
- b. May include Assistant Leaders, Co-Leaders, Primary Leaders
- c. Primary Leaders and Co-Leaders can fully execute curriculum and logistics
- d. Assistant Leaders support the Leader or Co-Leaders
- e. Primary Leader serves as the point of contact for a School

Key Roles of a CMC Leader

1. Decision-maker

- Plan trip goals, route, and logistics
- Make appropriate decisions for changing situations
- Use experience to develop good judgment
- Harness group members' strengths and knowledge
- Make focused decisions under stress

2. Risk Manager

- Know and follow CMC policies
- Maintain competence in technical skills
- Understand the technical difficulty of your activity
- Be prepared for all levels of competency in your group
- Have an emergency plan

3. Group Facilitator

- Communicate effectively before, during, and after the trip
- Find creative solutions to challenges
- Turn challenging situations into opportunities
- Use humor to maintain perspective
- Model and teach outdoor skills

4. Administrative Task Manager

- Post accurate trip/course descriptions
- Request permits when needed
- Complete required forms
- Follow up after emergencies

5. CMC Ambassador

- Represent the CMC mission and programs
- Present the CMC positively
- Promote Leave No Trace principles
- Respond constructively to feedback
- Promote the CMC Code of Conduct

15 Leader Competencies

Item	Training Topics	Leaders must demonstrate:
1	About CMC	Basic CMC organizational structure and programs
2	CMC Policy	Understanding of CMC policies
3	Behavior	Acceptable and unacceptable behaviors of a leader
4	Liability Protections	4 types of liability protection for a CMC Leader
5	Waiver	How to handle CMC Release of Liability forms
6	Planning	What to prepare in advance of a trip
7	Gear and Clothing	What to bring and expect from participants
8	Screening	How to ensure participants are qualified and prepared
9	LNT Principles	Leave No Trace principles for specific areas
10	Meeting place	Leader responsibilities at meeting places
11	Trailhead Orientation	How to conduct effective trailhead briefings
12	On-Trail Responsibility	What to monitor during the trip
13	End of Trip Responsibility	Proper trip conclusion procedures
14	Emergency Management	Emergency procedures and contacts
15	Reports	How to complete required documentation

CHAPTER 4 – BEFORE YOUR TRIP OR FIELD DAY

Planning Checklist

- ☐ Create trip profile (location, type, difficulty, length)
- ☐ Define participant profile
- ☐ Consider route options and alternatives
- ☐ Scout the trip if possible
- ☐ Verify minimum group size requirements will be met
- ☐ Arrange transportation logistics
- ☐ Obtain any required permits
- ☐ Develop emergency plan
- ☐ Prepare equipment list
- ☐ Pack leader's supplies
- ☐ Screen participants
- ☐ Communicate trip details to participants at least 12 hours in advance

Creating Your Trip Profile

1. **Select a location and trip type** (hiking, backpacking, climbing, etc.)
2. **Determine difficulty rating** using CMC criteria ([see Activity Standards](#))
3. **Estimate duration** including travel time, breaks, and unexpected delays
4. **Define participant requirements** (experience, fitness, equipment)
5. **Determine leadership needs** (co-leaders, specialized skills)

Route Considerations

Become thoroughly familiar with your route:

- Study maps, guidebooks, and trip reports
- Scout in advance when possible
- Consider alternate routes and exit points
- Note hazards and environmental conditions
- Check for area closures or restrictions
- Plan for rest stops at scenic or comfortable locations
- Consider impacts of group size on terrain and environment

Route Changes: If you need to change the planned route, consider the impact on difficulty, participant expectations, and your emergency plan. Always inform participants of significant changes.

Group Size Requirements

Standard minimum: 4 people total (leader + 3 participants)

Exceptions:

- Minimum of 3 participants with reliable communication:
 - 2-way satellite communicator, OR
 - Verified cell service coverage
- Minimum of 2 participants for 5th class climbs with reliable communication:
 - Leader must be approved for multi-pitch climbs
 - Second person must have technical training

Important: If cancellations or no-shows reduce your group below minimum requirements, the trip is no longer recognized as a CMC-sponsored trip. You must inform any remaining participants of this change.

Transportation Planning

Important considerations:

- Select an appropriate meeting location with adequate parking
- Provide clear directions to both meeting place and trailhead
- Determine how participants will reach the trailhead
- Arrange carpooling if participants are willing

Liability Note: CMC liability insurance does not cover drivers, vehicle owners, or passengers. Leaders must inform participants that the CMC trip officially starts at the trailhead, not at the carpool meeting location.

Leave No Trace Planning

Prior to the trip, understand and be prepared to communicate the seven Leave No Trace principles:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

See [Appendix B](#) for detailed LNT guidelines and visit www.lnt.org for more information.

Public Lands Requirements

Permit Requirements:

CMC leaders are responsible for knowing specific land agency rules regarding:

- Permit requirements
- Group size limitations
- Seasonal closures
- Guide certifications needed for their course

Leaders should not reach out to land managers directly to apply for permits; instead, they should submit a permit request through the Permit Request Form, or by reaching out to permits@cmc.org

Special Use Permits:

- Required on many public lands for fee-based courses
- Submit permit requests through the CMC website Permit Request Form
- For new requests, include a map showing parking and route
- Questions? Contact: CMC Permit Coordinator (permits@cmc.org)

Emergency Planning

Essential information to gather:

- **Hospitals:** Locations of nearby facilities and routes to reach them
- **Ranger Stations:** Locations and staffing schedules
- **Search and Rescue:** Contact information and protocols
- **Communications:** Cell coverage areas and backup communication options
- **Evacuation Routes:** Identify potential exit points from the backcountry

Emergency Contact Information:

- Ensure participants update their CMC profile with emergency contacts
- Ask participants about medical conditions that could affect participation
- Respect privacy while gathering necessary safety information

Equipment Planning

Leader's Essential Equipment:

1. Navigation tools (map, compass, GPS)
2. Fire starter (matches, lighter)
3. Signaling device (whistle, mirror)
4. Sun protection (sunglasses, sunblock)
5. Extra clothing layers
6. Extra food
7. Water and purification method
8. Headlamp/flashlight with spare batteries
9. First aid kit
10. Emergency shelter

First Aid Kit Considerations:

- Match contents to your training level
- Consider environmental factors (altitude, temperature extremes)
- Scale for group size and trip duration
- Account for distance from medical facilities

- Include personal medications

First Aid Kit Commandments:

1. Regularly inspect and restock your kit
2. Remove unnecessary items for specific trips
3. Only pack items you know how to use
4. Encourage participants to carry personal first aid supplies
5. Remember that skills save lives, not kits

Trip Advertising Timeline

Course Catalog Deadlines:

- **Fall/Winter Catalog** (Oct 1-Mar 31 courses)
 - Post on CMC.org by August 1
 - Publication by September 1
- **Spring/Summer Catalog** (Apr 1-Sep 30 courses)
 - Post on CMC.org by February 1
 - Publication by March 1

Marketing Timeline:

- **2-3 Months before:** Ensure visibility on CMC website
- **1 Month before:** Link to CMC calendar with photos
- **2-4 Weeks before:** Create Facebook event and social media content ([Marketing Request Form](#))
- **Week of event:** Instagram story updates (case-by-case basis) ([Marketing Request Form](#))

Additional Marketing Resources:

- Use the [CMC Brand Manual](#) for standards
- Submit [Marketing Request Form](#) for additional support
- Email marketing@cmc.org with questions

Participant Screening

Key Areas to Assess:

- **Fitness:** Physical conditioning, stamina, and medical readiness
- **Experience:** Technical expertise appropriate for the trip
- **Equipment:** Necessary gear for safety and comfort
- **Expectations:** Understanding of trip purpose and goals

Effective Screening Questions:

- "What is your recent experience with this activity?"
- "Have you done a trip of similar length and difficulty before?"
- "How do you typically prepare physically for trips like this?"
- "Do you have any health concerns that might affect your participation?"
- "Are you prepared to stay with the group throughout the trip?"

Equipment Discussions:

- "Have you used your gear in similar conditions before?"
- "Do you have all the items on the required equipment list?"
- "Is your footwear appropriate for the terrain we'll encounter?"

Redirecting to More Suitable Trips:

- Focus on matching participants to appropriate experiences
- Present realistic expectations about conditions and challenges
- Suggest alternative trips better suited to skill and fitness levels

ADA Considerations: When a potential participant has a disability, assess:

- Reasonable accommodation possibilities
- Safety for the individual and group
- Whether participation would fundamentally change the nature of the activity

PRE-TRIP PLANNING CHECKLIST

Task	Completed
Create trip profile (location, type, classification, length)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Define participant profile (skills, ability, certifications)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider route options and alternatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scout the trip/activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verify group size requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan transportation and meeting locations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain special use permits if required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop emergency plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare equipment list and leader's pack	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screen participants	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHAPTER 5 – ON YOUR TRIP OR CLASS

On the day of your trip or class you want to make sure you are prepared!

Trip or Field Day Checklist

- ☐ Arrive early at meeting location
- ☐ Facilitate carpooling
- ☐ Conduct visual equipment check
- ☐ Ensure everyone arrives safely at trailhead
- ☐ Perform trailhead orientation
- ☐ Monitor group during activity
- ☐ Practice good trail etiquette
- ☐ Conduct proper trip conclusion

Carpooling Coordination

Leader Responsibilities:

- Arrive 5-10 minutes before the designated meeting time
- Check attendance against the roster
- Help coordinate rides among participants
- Verify each driver knows the route to the trailhead
- Consider sharing a location pin or GPS coordinates
- Encourage sharing of cell phone numbers

Important Reminders:

- CMC does not assume responsibility for carpools
- Do not assign participants to specific vehicles
- Share mileage
- Avoid directly arranging carpool details
- Remind participants that CMC liability coverage begins at the trailhead

Trailhead Orientation

1. Group Assembly

- Verify everyone arrived safely
- Remind drivers to secure vehicles

2. Participant Introductions

- Have everyone introduce themselves
- Create opportunity for disclosure of medical concerns
- Maintain privacy and dignity for sensitive information

3. Trip Briefing

- Present trip overview (distance, elevation, conditions)
- Discuss expected pace and stopping points
- Review current weather conditions and forecast
- Identify front and rear leaders if applicable
- Establish communication protocols

4. Group Management

- Remind participants to:
 - Stay within sight and sound of others
 - Communicate needs for breaks or assistance
 - Follow Leave No Trace principles
 - Practice proper trail etiquette

5. Final Checks

- Count participants before departure
- Assess preparedness (gear, physical condition)
- Address any last-minute concerns

Trail Etiquette Guidelines

Group Management:

- Front leader stays in front, rear leader at back
- Maintain communication between leaders
- Regroup periodically (every 15-60 minutes)
- Always stop at trail junctions
- Step aside when taking breaks

- Communicate bathroom breaks to rear leader
- Monitor participant condition and adjust pace if needed

Leave No Trace Practices:

- Stay on designated trails
- Walk through (not around) puddles
- Spread out in open areas when appropriate
- Use stable routes and avoid loose terrain
- Keep bathroom stops 200+ feet from water
- Pack out toilet paper
- Pack out all food waste
- Rest on durable surfaces (rock, not vegetation)
- Leave natural features undisturbed

Managing Early Departures

If a participant wishes to leave the trip early:

1. Discuss the situation privately
2. Discourage leaving if safety concerns exist
3. If departure is unavoidable:
 - a. Get written acknowledgment if possible
 - b. Ensure they have a safe exit route
 - c. Verify they have necessary gear and navigation tools
 - d. Document the circumstances with witnesses

Documentation Note: Have the departing participant sign a statement witnessed by another trip member if possible. If not, document their verbal acknowledgment of leaving voluntarily.

Ending the Trip

Before Dismissing the Group:

- Count participants to ensure all are accounted for
- Thank everyone for participating
- Invite participants to join future CMC trips
- Encourage non-members to join the club

- Share information about upcoming events
- Invite interested participants to consider becoming leaders
- Ensure everyone has transportation home

ON-TRIP CHECKLIST

Task	Completed
Organize carpooling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greet participants and check equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure guests sign waiver forms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verify everyone arrived at trailhead	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check vehicles (locked, lights off)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conduct orientation and trip overview	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss trail etiquette and expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitor participants throughout the trip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow Leave No Trace principles	<input type="checkbox"/>
Document any early departures	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conduct proper trip conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHAPTER 6 – GROUP DYNAMICS, DECISION MAKING & PROBLEMS DURING A TRIP

Effective Leadership

CMC trip leaders and instructors play a crucial role in the success of our trips and courses. They are often the primary point of contact for members and have a significant responsibility in ensuring positive experiences. This section outlines the key competencies and skills that help create enjoyable and rewarding trips for everyone.

Key Leadership Characteristics:

1. Self-confidence
2. Planning and organizing skills
3. Technical competence
4. Compassionate leadership
5. Ability to inspire others
6. Communication and facilitation skills

Leadership Styles

Effective CMC trip leaders and instructors understand that a successful trip or course requires adaptability and a nuanced approach to leadership. While each group and situation are unique, the ability to apply various leadership styles is crucial for ensuring a positive and enriching experience for all participants.

Authoritative Leadership:

- Leader makes decisions and directs the group
- Best for emergencies requiring quick decisions
- Can create dependency or competition if overused
- Provides clear direction in time-sensitive situations

Facilitative Leadership:

- Leader sets framework for group participation
- Encourages development of decision-making skills
- Helps participants feel valued and respected

- Builds stronger group bonds and collective skills
- May not be appropriate in emergencies

Delegative Leadership:

- Leader relies on participants' experience and judgment
- Works best with highly skilled, familiar groups
- Allows testing of advanced groups' capabilities
- Most effective for experienced participants
- Requires trust in participants' abilities

Decision-Making Framework

When facing a decision (such as whether to continue or turn back):

1. **Identify possible actions**
2. **Assess probability of problems** for each option
3. **Evaluate potential consequences** of each outcome
4. **Consider group input** when appropriate
5. **Make a clear decision**

Example Decision Matrix:

Event: Thunderstorm building as you approach summit ridge

Option	Probability of Problems	Potential Consequences
Continue to summit	High probability storm will cross path	Lightning strike (severe); Falls on wet rock (moderate to severe); Panic due to weather (moderate)
Wait in sheltered area	50% chance storm passes	Missed turnaround time; Return to cars later than planned; Potential for wet conditions
Turn around immediately	High probability of rain during descent	Safe return; Disappointed participants; Potential for minor slips

Remember: The trip leader has ultimate decision-making responsibility and must be prepared to override group consensus when safety is at stake.

Effective Communication

Communication Benefits:

- Builds trust between leaders and participants
- Helps establish connections within the group
- Sets a tone of inclusivity and respect

Communication Strategies:

- 1. Provide detailed information**
 - a. Share logistical details proactively
 - b. Set clear expectations for the group
 - c. Communicate timeframes throughout the trip
- 2. Use appropriate vocabulary**
 - a. Adjust terminology to match participant experience
 - b. Explain technical terms when necessary
 - c. Be clear and concise
- 3. Pay attention to non-verbal communication**
 - a. Maintain eye contact and positive expression
 - b. Respect personal space differences
 - c. Monitor participants' body language for cues
- 4. Practice two-way communication**
 - a. Observe participant reactions and behaviors
 - b. Listen actively and empathetically
 - c. Solicit and incorporate feedback

Group Dynamics Management

Trip Components That Affect Group Dynamics:

- 1. Pre-trip Information**
 - a. Detailed trip descriptions set expectations
 - b. Individual communications address concerns
 - c. Identify participants with special skills or needs
- 2. Introductions**
 - a. Set positive tone through personal connections
 - b. Establish name recognition and rapport
 - c. Explain leadership structure and roles

3. Trip Pace

- a. Begin with moderate pace for warm-up
- b. Maintain communication between front and rear
- c. Adjust to accommodate all participants
- d. Consider strategies for varied pace preferences

4. Group Atmosphere

- a. Demonstrate inclusivity and respect
- b. Actively discourage disrespectful behavior
- c. Model positive interactions

5. Challenge and Stress Management

- a. Monitor stress levels in challenging conditions
- b. Provide information to reduce anxiety
- c. Avoid leader exhaustion

6. Goal Alignment

- a. Clarify group goals vs. individual goals
- b. Be prepared to adjust goals as conditions change

7. Decision-Making Transparency

- a. Explain reasoning behind decisions
- b. Include participants when appropriate
- c. Maintain authority when necessary

Stages of Group Formation**1. Forming**

- a. Participants need to feel welcome
- b. Confirm they're on the right trip
- c. Address initial concerns and questions

2. Sorting

- a. Group establishes roles and relationships
- b. Participants assess leader style and credibility
- c. Trip parameters become clear

3. Norming

- a. Group understands expectations and guidelines
- b. Participants become comfortable with procedures
- c. Communication patterns are established

4. Differentiating/Storming

- a. Individuals express personal needs
- b. Potential conflicts may emerge

- c. Leader must balance individual and group needs

5. Closure

- a. Formal conclusion creates sense of completion
- b. Share highlights and appreciation
- c. Ensure all logistical details are resolved

Conflict Management

Prevention Strategies:

- Maintain reasonable pace, especially at the start
- Take regular, scheduled breaks
- Model outdoor skills and proper behavior
- Share your thinking and decision-making process
- Address issues early before they escalate

When Conflicts Arise:

1. Address the conflict directly
2. Identify underlying causes
3. Understand all perspectives
4. Develop acceptable solutions

Handling Problem Behaviors

Addressing Inappropriate Behavior:

1. Speak privately with the participant
2. Focus on behavior, not the person
3. Explain impact on the group
4. State clear expectations for change
5. Outline consequences if behavior continues
6. Assign a constructive role if appropriate

If Problems Persist:

- You may remove a participant if still near trailhead
- Request a signed statement if someone leaves voluntarily
- Consider ending the trip if safety is compromised

- Document the incident thoroughly
- Submit an incident report after the trip

Reporting Process: For harassment or inappropriate behavior, use the CMC Navex Ethicspoint third-party reporting tool (coloradomountainclub.ethicspoint.com). For accidents or injuries, complete an Accident/Incident Report.

GROUP DYNAMICS CHECKLIST

Concept	Understood
Characteristics of effective leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership styles and when to use each	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision-making process and considerations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effective communication techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group dynamics components and management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stages of group formation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict prevention and resolution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handling problem behaviors and reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHAPTER 6 – EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency Response Flowchart



Emergency Communication

In the case of an emergency in the backcountry, you will first contact 911/emergency services. Once your patient and group are safe and secure, please contact the CMC Emergency Call Service.

CMC Emergency Call Service: (269) 384-1056

- Call anytime, day or night
- Collect calls accepted
- If you call 911, also contact this number as soon as possible

Communication Process:

- The call service will relay your message to the CMC's Chief Executive Officer
- Stay on the line if possible
- If disconnected, wait by the phone or call again

Family Communication:

- In life-threatening injuries or fatalities, the CMC Chief Executive Officer will communicate with the family
- Leaders should not contact family members directly

Media Response:

- The CMC Chief Executive Officer is the **ONLY** spokesperson authorized to speak with the press
- Do not answer questions or comment to media
- Direct all inquiries to the Executive Director

Incident Reporting Requirements

Required Reporting Situations:

1. Emergency services (police, hospital, SAR) were involved
2. A participant received or was recommended professional medical care
3. A participant refused recommended medical care
4. The incident resulted in a fatality

How to Report:

- Complete the '[Incident/Injury/Illness Report Form](#)'
- Submit as soon as possible (within 24 hours)
- Include detailed, information

Important: Failure to complete required forms may affect CMC liability coverage for the leader.

"Near Miss" Reporting:

- Leaders are encouraged to report minor injuries and "near misses"
- These reports help improve safety for all CMC activities
- Confidentiality of participant and leader information is maintained

Accident/Injury Response

1. **Assess and stabilize** the situation
2. **Provide appropriate first aid** within your training
3. **Call 911 if necessary**, then CMC emergency service (269-384-1056)
4. **Comfort and reassure** the patient and group
5. **Document the situation** and develop a plan
6. **If patient refuses care**, obtain signed statement (adults only)
7. **If sending for help**, dispatch at least two people with:
 - a. Emergency report with patient information
 - b. Group condition details and location
 - c. Map marked with patient location
 - d. Necessary equipment for safe travel

Documentation Tip: Start taking notes immediately. Include treatment provided, patient condition, and timeline of events. This information is essential for emergency responders and future reports.

Evacuation Considerations

A Leader is responsible for maintaining group safety and using their best judgement in deciding to evacuate. In the case of uncertainty, do not hesitate to contact emergency services and talk through the situation. In any situation you should consider the following:

Evacuation Factors:

- Patient's condition and stability
- Group location and accessibility
- Available outside help
- Group condition and resources
- Terrain and weather conditions

Evacuation Options:

- Patient walks out with escort team
- Patient carried by group or rescue team
- Helicopter evacuation (if available and necessary)

Conditions Requiring Evacuation:

- Head injury with loss of consciousness or altered mental status
- Any injury/illness causing loss of consciousness
- Seizure
- Suspected spinal injury
- Use of epinephrine
- Near drowning
- Lightning strike

Lost Participant Protocol

1. **Gather the group** and determine when/where the person was last seen
2. **Send a search team** of 2+ people to that location if safe to do so
3. **Establish a reassembly plan** with time and location
4. **Use signaling** (whistles, calls) to attempt contact
5. **If not found within 2 hours** (or reasonable time):
 - a. Contact 911 to activate search and rescue
 - b. Call CMC emergency service: (269) 384-1056

In Case of Fatality

1. Ensure mental and physical wellbeing of remaining participants
2. Do not disturb the scene or move the body
3. Keep someone near the body unless unsafe
4. Send for assistance (stick to facts only)
5. Contact the CMC CEO through emergency service (269-384-1056)
6. Direct all media inquiries to the CEO/Executive Director

Lightning Safety

30/30 Lightning Safety Rule:

- Seek shelter if lightning is less than 30 seconds away (6 miles)
- Remain sheltered until 30 minutes after the last thunder

Unsafe Locations:

- Partial buildings, tents, shallow caves
- Lone trees and ledges
- Streams and wet ground
- Metal objects and long conductors

Lightning Position:

- Spread group at least 30 feet apart
- Sit or squat on insulating pad
- Minimize ground contact points
- Keep feet together
- DO NOT lie flat on the ground

Preventive Guidelines:

1. Plan routes to avoid exposure in dangerous areas
2. Choose safe campsites among uniform trees or low rolling hills
3. Monitor approaching storms and relocate when necessary
4. Avoid high points, open terrain, water, and metal objects
5. Use lightning position when safer locations unavailable
6. Be prepared for potential hypothermia

Wildfire Management**Pre-Trip Planning:**

- Check forecasts and current wildfire status
- Identify "Safe Spots" along your route (meadows, talus slopes, tundra)
- Develop communication and evacuation plans

Safety Considerations:

1. Seek areas with minimal fuel (alpine tundra, talus fields, previously burned areas)
2. Water may not provide adequate protection
3. In relatively safe areas, stay low and breathe near the ground

If Confronted by Wildfire:

- Do not attempt to fight the fire
- Evacuate and notify emergency services
- Move away from fire and into the wind
- Avoid being downwind or above the fire
- Stay at the same elevation when moving
- Avoid valleys filled with smoke
- Monitor wind direction and speed
- Avoid saddles, chimneys, gullies, and steep slopes
- Stay away from light fuels (dried grasses)
- Watch for rolling flaming objects and airborne embers

Air Quality Guidelines:

AQI Level	Action
Green (0-50)	No modifications needed
Yellow (51-100) for >12 hours	"Sensitive" participants should consider modifications
Orange (101-150) for >12 hours	Modify program: reduce exertion, consider masks, move teaching indoors
Red (151-200) or Purple (201-300) for >24 hours	Wear KN95 masks, evacuate or reroute trips, move all activities indoors

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Emergency Type	Response
Emergency Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incident Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accident/Injury	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lost Participant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evacuation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fatality	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lightning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildfire	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHAPTER 7 – CMC RISK MANAGEMENT & LIABILITY PROTECTION

Code of Conduct

CMC Core Values:

- **Community:** Building an inclusive and vibrant mountain community
- **Education:** Providing outdoor training and skills development
- **Conservation:** Protecting wild spaces for future generations
- **Adventure:** Offering life-changing mountain experiences

Standards of Conduct:

1. Represent the Club positively and professionally
2. Present Club policies and positions accurately
3. Use Club resources responsibly
4. Respect organizational decisions
5. Cooperate with land management agencies
6. Communicate with courtesy and respect
7. Create an inclusive environment
8. Presume positive intent in interactions
9. Address conflicts constructively
10. Maintain member privacy and confidentiality

Full Code of Conduct: The complete CMC Code of Conduct is available on the CMC website and includes detailed standards, reporting procedures, and resolution protocols.

Anti-Harassment/Non-Discrimination Policy

The Colorado Mountain Club does not discriminate based on race, creed, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, marital status, gender, gender identity, gender variance, sexual orientation, age, physical handicap, veteran status, or political service or affiliation.

All persons participating in CMC activities are expected to treat others with respect. The CMC will not tolerate abusive, sexually harassing, or discriminatory actions or communications.

Drugs and Alcohol Policy

- Alcohol consumption is NOT permitted on single-day trips
- Alcohol use on multi-day trips is based on personal responsibility
- Trip leaders may prohibit alcohol consumption when prudent
- No charges are allowed at CMC events where alcohol is served unless by a licensed entity

Firearm Policy

- Firearms are not allowed on CMC trips, on CMC property, or in CMC facilities

Trip Size Policy

Standard minimum: 4 people total (including leader)

Exceptions:

- Minimum of 3 participants with reliable communication:
 - 2-way satellite communicator, OR
 - Verified cell service coverage
- Minimum of 2 participants for 5th class climbs with reliable communication:
 - Leader must be approved for multi-pitch climbs
 - Second person must have technical training

Liability Insurance Coverage

Commercial General Liability Insurance:

- Provides coverage against claims for bodily injury, property damage, or infringement on others' rights
- Is NOT medical or accident insurance for leaders or participants
- Insures the Club, employees, and volunteers against liability to third parties for unintentional negligence

Coverage Requirements:

- Person must be acting within authorized duties
- Activity must be officially authorized by the Club
- Activity must comply with CMC policies and insurance requirements

Leader Liability Protection

Leaders are protected in four important ways:

1. CMC Liability Waiver

- Every member signs a release
- Non-members must sign before participating
- Courts recognize the validity of these releases

2. CMC Liability Insurance

- Protects against liability claims
- Covers legal defense costs
- Prevents settlement of bogus claims

3. Colorado Volunteer Service Act

- Provides immunity from civil liability
- Protects volunteers acting in good faith
- Exceptions only for "willful and wanton misconduct"

4. Colorado Good Samaritan Statute

- Protects those voluntarily providing assistance
- Covers good-faith actions or omissions
- Provides additional protection beyond the Volunteer Service Act

Important: "Willful and wanton misconduct" means conduct purposefully committed which the actor realized was dangerous, done heedlessly and recklessly, without regard to consequences or the safety of others. Simple mistakes or negligence are NOT considered willful and wanton misconduct.

RISK MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Policy/Issue	Understood
Anti-harassment/non-discrimination policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leader qualifications and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restricted activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trip size requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
General liability insurance coverage	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leader liability protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avalanche education requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climbing helmet requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drugs and alcohol policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave No Trace principles	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX A – CMC DIFFICULTY RATINGS

The CMC uses a rating system of **Easy, Moderate, Challenging, or Difficult** for trips by activity type, aligning with the previous letter system (A, B, C, D). This helps members understand trip difficulty when signing up.

Hiking Activity Standards

Rating	Distance	Elevation Gain	Description
Easy	Up to 4 miles	Up to 600 ft	Suitable for newcomers to hiking
Moderate	4-8 miles	600-2000 ft	For regular hikers
Challenging	8-12 miles	2000-3500 ft	For experienced hikers
Difficult	12+ miles	3500+ ft	For very experienced hikers

Additional Terms:

- **On Trail:** Mainly improved trail or easy trail-like conditions
- **Off Trail:** May involve bushwhacking (below timberline) or Class 2 hiking (above timberline)
- **Scrambling:** Class 3 climbing requiring use of hands
- **Semi-technical:** Class 4 climbing (near technical climbing difficulty)

Leader Pace Rating

In addition to the route difficulty, leaders should specify their intended pace:

Pace Rating	Description
Casual	Average pace under 1 mph; no technical challenges; suitable for beginners
Easy	Average pace 1-1.5 mph; no technical challenges
Moderate	Average pace 1.5-2 mph; may include some route challenges (rough trail, log crossings, steep terrain)
Challenging	Average pace over 2 mph and/or significant route challenges (fixed ropes, rugged terrain, scree, snow crossings)

Hike Leader Recommendations:

- Clearly specify distance, elevation gain, pace, and any special requirements in trip descriptions
- Consider round-trip time, breaks, and elevation when estimating trip duration
- Be prepared to manage different participant abilities and adjust pace accordingly
- Follow established trails except when conditions require reasonable detours
- Avoid avalanche terrain during winter/spring seasons
- Maintain group cohesion with periodic regrouping

For Difficulty ratings of other activities, such as backpacking or biking, see our individual Activity Standards.

APPENDIX B – LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

The CMC has a long, proud tradition of supporting environmental ethics. We have an active partnership with the nonprofit organization Leave No Trace, Inc. to support "Leave No Trace" (LNT) principles. Please be sure to follow LNT principles during your trips and activities with the Club, so that future generations can continue to enjoy the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The classic summary says "Take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints."

How to Minimize Your Impact:

- **Small Groups, Big Difference:** Keeping our trip sizes small helps protect the environment.
- **Quiet on the Trail:** Let's respect the peace and give wildlife a chance to be seen.
- **Stick to the Path:** Staying on established trails prevents erosion and damage to plants. If you must go off-trail, use durable surfaces like rocks or sand, and let the land managers know about any impassable sections.
- **Break Time:** When you stop to rest, choose rocks or sand, and avoid stepping on plants.

Camping Responsibly:

- **Find a Secluded Spot:** Set up camp away from water and trails, and choose a site that's not easily visible.
- **Follow the Rules:** Always adhere to campsite regulations.
- **Plan Ahead:** Pick your campsite before it gets dark. Tiredness is no excuse for damaging fragile areas.
- **Choose Wisely:** When possible, camp on sites that are already impacted or naturally barren.
- **Leave It Better:** Ensure your campsite is clean and inviting for the next group.

Waste: Pack It In, Pack It Out:

- **Your Trash, and Maybe More:** Take all your trash with you, and consider picking up any litter you see.
- **Leave No Trace:** This means removing everything you bring.
- **Leave Nature as You Found It:** Don't take natural items.
- **Campfires: A No-Go:** We strongly discourage campfires.

Dealing with Human Waste:

- **Protect Our Water:** Proper disposal of human waste prevents pollution and disease.
- **The "Cat Hole" Method:**
 - Dig a hole 6-8 inches deep and 4-6 inches wide, at least 200 feet from water, trails, and campsites.
 - After use, fill the hole and cover it with natural materials.
 - If you're camping for multiple nights or with a group, spread out your "cat holes."
- **Toilet Paper:** Use plain, white, unscented toilet paper sparingly. Bury it in your "cat hole" or pack it out. Never burn it.

[Leave No Trace Graphic](#)

By following these guidelines, we can all help protect the beautiful Colorado wilderness for years to come.

APPENDIX C – HOW TO BECOME A TECHNICAL TRIP LEADER

Technical Trip Leader Requirements

To become a Technical Trip Leader (TTL) for the CMC:

1. **Be a current CMC Trip Leader** in good standing with your regional Group
2. **Have appropriate mountain skills** for your discipline:
 - a. Top Rope rock and/or ice climbing
 - b. Sport climbing
 - c. Traditional rock climbing
 - d. Multi-pitch rock climbing
 - e. Ice Lead climbing
 - f. Alpine climbing
3. **Submit an application** to the CMC State Technical Climbing School Committee
4. **Complete a Technical Leader In Training (LIT) trip** with an approved Technical Trip Leader Evaluator
5. **Receive approval** from the Technical Climbing Schools Committee

Application Process

1. **Complete the [Technical Trip Leader Application Form](#)**
2. **Wait for review** by the State TCS Committee (monthly review cycle)
3. **Schedule LIT/co-lead trips** with approved evaluators
 - a. Multiple disciplines can often be combined in a single trip
 - b. Example combinations:
 - i. Sport and Trad climbing at mixed crags
 - ii. Trad and Multi-pitch climbing at locations like Eldorado Canyon

Maintaining Technical Leader Status

- Lead trips within your current ability level
- Maintain standard Trip Leader certifications (WFA, Avalanche/AIARE)
- Stay current on CMC policies
- Lead at least one technical trip annually

Additional Information

- Enter technical trips as "State CMC" in the CMC database
- Denver Group Technical Trip Leaders grandfathered in 2018 may continue leading
- For questions, contact TCS Committee or Technical Schools Support Manager

APPENDIX D – POLICY HISTORY

This section contains historical information about the development and evolution of key CMC policies, including:

- Trip Planning, Descriptions, and Substitutions (1974)
- Climbing Helmet Requirements (1990)
- Avalanche Transceiver Policy (1996)
- Leave No Trace Endorsement (1997)
- Guest Fee Policies (1998)
- Alcohol Policies (2003)
- Release of Liability Requirements (2004)
- Leader Qualification Standards (1975-2004)

- Complaint Handling Procedures
- Vehicle-Supported Camping Guidelines (2007)
- Trip Size Requirements (2022)

APPENDIX E – First Aid Kit Considerations

Copyright Backcountry Pulse – Little Book of Wilderness Medicine by Raquel Sapp

Trauma	Medical	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloves, Hand Sanitizer (PPE) • CPR Face Shield with filter • Tourniquet • ACE wrap • Hemostatic Agent (Quickclot gauze) • Triangular Bandage • SAM Splint • Sharpie • Bulb Syringe • Irrigation Syringe • Aquaphor • Plastic Bags • Tegaderm • Tape • Superglue • Safety Pins / lighter • Tweezers • Trauma Shears • Iodine • Dental Wax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloves, Mask, Hand sanitizer (PPE) • Chewable Aspirin (Cardiac) • Sugar Source + complex carbs (Hypoglycemia) • Cetirizine or Diphenhydramine + Famotidine (Allergies) • Guaifenesin (Mucolytic) • Dramamine (Motion Sickness) • Loperamide (Diarrhea) • Maalox or Tums (heartburn) • Miralax (Constipation) • Bismuth Subsalicylate (Nausea) • Simethicone (Gas) • Hydrocortisone Cream (Topical Itch) • Cranberry Pills (UTIs) • Plant or Natural Medicines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Blanket / Space Blanket • Emergency Bivy / Shelter • Chemical Hand and Food Warmers • Extra Socks/Gloves • Sunscreen and Lip Protection (SPF 30) • Aloe Vera Gel • Wide-brim Hat and Buff • UV protection or Glacier Sunglasses • Electrolyte Packets • Water Filtration or Purification • Headlamp • Fire starting Materials • Emergency Whistle • Compass / Topo Map / Altimeter / Watch • Communication Device (Cell phone, PLB, Satellite Phone, Radio) • External Battery Packs and Cords • Extra Batteries

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poison Control in your phone (800)222-1222 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet Paper / Wipes
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APPENDIX F - PRE-TRIP EMAIL EXAMPLE

Trip Email:

Course Email:

Dear <<Member Name>>,

Thank you for signing up to get outside with the Colorado Mountain Club. We are writing to confirm that you are now registered for the <<Course Name>>. Here are some additional details:

Course Name:

Leader:

<<Provide details about course layout. Are there required lectures and field days? Where should participants sign up for those? Do they need to do anything specific to be prepared for the course?>>.

For additional course information, please visit your [profile page](#) and click on the 'My Courses' tab. For specific course questions, please contact the leader. You can find their contact information by clicking on their name in on the course page.

To help you prepare, here are a few guidelines for participating in a Colorado Mountain Club course:

- Colorado Mountain Club activities are run by volunteers who share their skills and love for wild places voluntarily – they are not professional guides.
- When you register for an activity you are responsible for choosing a trip within your capabilities, selecting suitable clothing, and carrying [The Ten Essentials](#).

- You may be required to bring special equipment - please check with the leader before your activity to confirm.
- To see updated notes and instructions from your leader visit the My Activities section of your [profile page](#).

When you sign up for an activity with us, you are agreeing to be appropriately prepared and you understand that the group stays together. The Colorado Mountain Club wants to ensure this is a fun and safe experience for all participants.

Cancellation Policy

If you need to cancel your participation, please visit your [profile page](#) or contact Member Services. If you need to cancel after registration has closed, please contact the leader directly.

See you in the mountains!

<<Your Name>>

Colorado Mountain Club
office@cmc.org | 303-279-3080