



# TRIP LEADER MANUAL

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*Abstract. This manual provides organization, administration and policy information for ACC Great Plains Trip Leaders.*

# INTRODUCTION

## Welcome from the Founding Section Chair

The Great Plains Section is the 23rd section of the Alpine club of Canada. We are excited to be the organization and the voice for the Great Plains area (Treaty 4 lands) community that is involved in the practice of mountaineering and Mountain crafts. The Great Plains Section is the result of hard work from past teachers, leaders, and enthusiasts that had been part of the community for a long time, and had informally organized and lead trips to climbing areas in mountains near and far. This new leadership manual has been assembled on the backs of other Alpine Club of Canada sections and will be used to assist our Great Plains leaders. Our Climbing community grows stronger with the development of leaders willing to share their knowledge, practises and experiences. Please get involved in the club and help the community to grow and develop a group of like-minded people who share in the human experience of climbing endeavours. Climbing - Climb on.

## Acknowledgements

The ACC Ottawa Section's Trip Leader Handbook was used as the template for this document. We are lucky to have benefitted from all the hard work that went into the original document. Thank you to Bill Barrett, Bill Scott and Hai Pham.

## Trip Leader Manual and Guidelines

This manual is one of two documents used for Great Plains Leaders. This manual is a consolidated source of information for Trip Leaders regarding applicable club administration and trip planning. The other document is a Technical Guidelines Document which details recommended practices for each activity.

This manual and the associated Trip Leader guidelines are living documents which will be updated periodically based on experience, evolving best practices and club policy changes. Suggestions for improvements are welcome and can be directed to the Editors at any time.

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# GUIDE TO TRIP LEADING PROCESS

## ***Introduction***

After mulling it over for awhile, you've made the decision to become an ACC Trip Leader. Congratulations, and thank you on behalf of your Section. We know it's all a bit intimidating. We were there ourselves a few years ago. This section of the Trip Leader manual will lay out the steps involved in planning, organizing and running a typical club day trip - be it climbing, hiking, skiing, etc. Some trips will be more or less complicated than what is described here. For example, a return trip to a regular climbing crag for the umpteenth time can be quite straight forward. Later, we'll provide the "fine print", such as details on club policies and standard practices. You can find activity-specific information for each category of club trip offered by ACC Great Plains in the companion Trip Leader Guidelines document. So, let's get started.

## ***Planning and Proposing a Trip***

### 1) Formulate a trip concept

Make it an activity, location and route you are well familiar with. It is best to start with easy trips and work up to more adventuresome outings as you gain experience. Feel free to solicit ideas from and to bounce proposals off experienced Trip Leaders. They will be more than happy to assist. You may also be able to talk one of them into being your mentor while you learn the ropes.

### 2) Select a date for the trip and, perhaps, an alternative in the advent of bad weather.

### 3) Determine participant requirements

Have a good idea of what you expect from participants in terms of fitness, experience, skill level, equipment, training, etc. Don't hesitate to seek advice from experienced leaders

### 4) Recruit other leaders and determine the number of participants

Carefully consider the numbers of participants you will and the other leaders will be comfortable leading on this venture. Small group sizes are more manageable in the beginning. Some activities have specific recommendations on group size (see the Trip Leader Guidelines. Ensure you will have sufficient experienced assistants for the required "leader/participant" ratio, if guidelines specify this. Even if there is no specific guidance, it will be reassuring to have some experienced, familiar faces in the group.

### 5) Reserve any club gear the trip will require.

### 6) Conceptualize how you would handle an accident.

Can you expect cell phone coverage? If not, how would you handle communications in an emergency? Do you need to do some more research about the area of the proposed trip?

7) Propose the trip to the VP of Leadership.

E-mail a brief summary of the trip including the details from the above points. He/she will review the trip and perhaps suggest changes. If the trip is accepted, it will be posted as an official trip on the Section website and social media.

8) Depending on the novelty and complexity of the trip, anticipate a lot of email and phone enquiries from interested members once the event is publicized.

### ***Screen Trip Participants***

During the trip registration process, the trip leader is responsible for screening trip participants. Ensuring that all trip participants are suitable for the level of trip you have planned will go a far ways in having a successful trip. As Trip Leader, you have full authority to screen participants as you see fit but must make decisions objectively and without personal bias. See the "Screening Trip Participant" Section for further details.

### ***Event Co-ordination***

- If required, schedule any pre-trip meetings or general communication.

If applicable, review technical skills i.e. review multi-pitch climbing before climbing Devil's Tower. This would also be a chance for participants to discuss carpooling, accommodations and food coordination.

- About 1-2 weeks in advance, send participants the final trip details by email:
  - Confirm event logistics (e.g.: meeting time & place, transportation, accommodation, meals, etc.)
  - Gear, clothing and supplies appropriate for the trip.
  - Include an e-copy of the waiver. Ask participants to read and understand it ahead of time.
  - If the trip is in the US, remind participants to bring suitable identity documents.
  - Club gear available for participants and where to rent gear if needed
- If appropriate, arrange to pick up whatever club gear you need. Contact the Quartermaster.
- In the week before the trip, monitor weather forecasts and then update participants:
  - Mid-week - update the weather forecast and give a reminder about the waiver.
  - 1-2 days before the trip - a final "GO, NO-GO" decision and any last minute details.
- Ensure a responsible person in town knows the destination and expected return time.

## ***Trip Execution***

### **At the Meeting Place in Town**

- Make introductions amongst the group.
- Ensure all participants read and sign the trip [waiver](#) prior to the trip. Collect and retain the signed waivers.
- Sort out car-pooling, meals, accommodations, responsibility for club gear, need for specific items of personal gear, national parks pass, etc.
- Discuss weather and appropriate clothing.

### **At the Trailhead Parking Lot**

- Check for stragglers.
- Communicate with participants: the route, what to expect, and the anticipated finish time.
- Coordinate with assistant leaders about who's doing what.

### **At the Activity Location or Along the Route**

- Brief participants on activity-specific safety hazards and safety procedures. For a climbing trip this would include areas of objective hazards where helmets are to be worn. For a hiking or skiing trip, it could include discussion of the route and the anticipated challenges. Explaining the "why" behind a desired course of action is always helpful.
- Engage other experienced participants to assist with supervising the activity. Don't lose sight of the big picture. You are responsible for overall supervision.
- Where circumstances permit, mentor less-experienced participants on proper technique.
- Don't get so focussed on your responsibilities that you forget that the purpose of the whole exercise is for everyone to have a good time. That includes you!

### **Wrapping up the Event**

- By monitoring participants, weather, time of day and conditions, determine an appropriate time to wrap up the event.
- Leave the activity site or the route cleaner than found.

### **At the Trailhead Parking Lot**

- Check for stragglers.
- Retrieve ALL the club gear while you have the group together. Trying to collect missing gear after everyone disperses back in town can be a real pain.
- In cold weather, make sure everyone's vehicle gets started.
- A brief social gathering over a beverage on the way home can be a great way to polish tall tales about the day's adventures, to cement bonds with future trip mates and to gather feedback on how the trip went.

### ***Post-Trip***

- Pass signed waivers to the Secretary at the earliest opportunity.
- Clean and return club gear to the Quartermaster.
- Encourage a participant to submit a trip reports and/or photos.

### ***Conclusion***

Congratulations on a trip well done. Kick up your feet and have a cold one. Now, let's flesh out a few details.

## **CLUB ORGANIZATION FROM A TRIP LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE**

The section executive is comprised of the positions listed below. Either an Executive member or member at large acts as the Quartermaster. All board member's duties, and how they relate to leaders/members are described below:

### **Section Chair**

- Oversees the general dealings of the club.

### **VP Membership**

- Handles administration related to Section membership.
- Promotes trips and activities on the sections social media
- He or she has access to the ACC National membership database and can confirm the membership status of an individual with respect to the ACC and the Great Plains Section.

### **Treasurer**

- Administers the Section's funds.
- Point of contact for reimbursement.

### **VP Leadership**

- Recruiting, developing and mentoring new Trip Leaders in their activity field.
- Resolving problems with trips, participants and leaders, as and when appropriate.
- Plans and implements training courses and clinics for Section members. This includes courses given by professional instructors as well as clinics offered by Section members with particular skill and experience in various areas.
- Assessing specific trip proposals and providing guidance to Trip Leaders on refining trip proposals.

### **Quartermaster**

The Quartermaster manages the acquisition, storage, upkeep and administration of the Section's equipment. Items are acquired or replaced with funding from the Section budget.

With input from the Executive, the Quartermaster sources equipment on an as needed basis. Trip Leaders and members should communicate issues, concerns or suggestions regarding gear to the Quartermaster.

## **BEING A TRIP LEADER**

### ***How to Become a Trip Leader***

The Section is always looking for new Trip Leaders. If you think you are ready to make that transition, talk to the VP of Leadership. They will answer your questions about what is involved and provide guidance on the mentoring and training support available.

The basic steps to becoming a Trip Leader are as follows:

- 1) Get training appropriate to the activity. Ask about opportunities to have training reimbursed.
- 2) Raise your skill and experience level by getting some mileage under your belt.
- 3) Volunteer to become a mentor with an experienced Trip Leader. This will primarily include assisting the leader on trip(s).
- 4) When two existing leaders have vouched for your skills to the executive, you will be accepted as a leader.
- 5) Start by leading easy trips with a small number of participants and then build to more difficult trips.

It is important to be honest about one's motivation in seeking to become a Trip Leader.

### **DO NOT Become a Trip Leader If...**

- You have something to prove.
- You don't take constructive criticism well.
- You are not open to learning new skills – you already know everything there is to know.
- You are looking for a date.
- You want to be the hero.
- You want to prove your climbing/skiing/hiking prowess.
- You have a need to show-off.
- You want the adulation of others.

### **But, Please DO Become a Trip Leader If...**

- You have skill and experience in any of the activities of the Alpine Club.
- You enjoy sharing your passion for the outdoors with others.
- You enjoy volunteering and making a contribution to your club.
- You enjoy working as a team.
- You have a strong commitment to protecting the wilderness environment so that it will be available for generations to come.
- You enjoy the challenge and rewards of leadership.



- You are open-minded about constructive feedback.
- You are committed to continuing self-improvement of technical and leadership skills.

### ***Trip Leader Expectations***

Trip Leaders are the Section's most valuable and appreciated asset. They represent the core of the organization. Trip Leaders are unpaid volunteers who donate their time, energy and expertise to plan, organize and implement trips for the benefit of others. We should take advantage of every opportunity to personally express our support and appreciation to these dedicated volunteers working on our behalf. The Section will continue to devote substantial effort and resources within its means to Trip Leader development, mentoring and support.

Without Trip Leaders, we wouldn't have a Section. That being said, trip leading is a privilege, not a right. The authority to grant or to revoke or to attach conditions to trip leading privileges rests solely with the elected Section Executive who are accountable to the membership for the safe and harmonious operation of the Section. Trip leading privileges will not be arbitrarily constrained or revoked. Should problems arise, they will be dealt with transparently and discretely by the Section Executive in a timely manner, following due process with the objective, if possible, of resolving problems to the mutual satisfaction of all involved. In doing so, member safety will be an overriding factor.

It is expected that trip leaders conduct themselves in a responsible and safe manner. The following behaviours may lead to a leader being dismissed:

- Substance abuse on a trip.
- Repeated incidents of unsafe behaviour.
- Repeated incidents of disrespectful behaviour.
- Generally not representing the Section in an appropriate manner.

### ***Trip Leader's Authority***

A Trip Leader's authority includes:

- Developing all aspects of the trip plan, including objectives, routes, acceptable number of participants, required experience, fitness, qualifications and equipment, logistics, cost sharing and other factors.
- Assessing the suitability of potential participants' experience, training, expertise, fitness, equipment and personal compatibility with trip objectives and team composition.
- Screening and accepting or rejecting applications to join a trip. The Trip Leader is expected to not reject participants for unfounded reasons.
- Asking or requiring, if necessary, participants to refrain from activity which is contrary to club policy or which might endanger themselves or fellow participants or disrupt the trip.
- Changing trip plans before or during a trip in the interests of safety, trip enjoyment, logistics or other factors.

### ***Trip Compensation***

Trip leaders are eligible for reimbursement on trips they are a designated leader or mentor. The compensation philosophy is to offset travel and accommodation expenses; not for leaders to financially benefit. To be eligible for full reimbursement, the leader(s) must have shown a credible contributions towards the Section.

1. Mileage from the trip leader's home to location the trip location, or from their actual starting location, whichever is less at \$0.20/km.
2. Accommodation for the duration of the trip at \$50/night (supported by receipt).
3. Food and other expenses are reimbursed at \$35/day of activity.
4. Additional reasonable expenses will be considered (park pass, guide books, permits etc.).
5. The reimbursement is capped at \$70/day per member led. If the total trip claims are in excess of the cap, each leader will be refunded an equal percent of their claim. It is the responsibility of the organizing trip leader to communicate in advance to the other leaders the implications of the cap based on participants registered and forecasted claim amounts.
6. It is appreciated if trip organizers can communicate proposed trip costs to the VP Finance ahead of time. This would be helpful in avoiding surprises or misunderstandings.

### ***Resolving Problems with Trip Participants***

The Trip Leader has full authority to run all aspects of an official club trip and, provided they exercise their authority in a reasonable manner, will have the full backing of the Executive. Trip Leaders are encouraged to handle problems with participants directly one-on-one during the trip. Most problems are best resolved face-to-face, discretely if possible, and in a timely manner. If a participant's behaviour continues to be problematic, the Trip Leader should communicate the facts to the VP Leadership, at which point it will become the responsibility of the Executive to deal with the matter.

### ***Resolving Problems with Trips or Trip Leaders***

Serious problems with trips or Trip Leaders should be rare. However, if problems arise on an official ACC Great Plains trip, a general procedure for resolving the matter is as follows:

- 1) Participants who have concerns about a trip or Trip Leader are encouraged to address their concerns directly with the Trip Leader either during or immediately after the trip. This should be done in a calm, mutually-respectful manner and in private, if possible.
- 2) If reasonable efforts to resolve the issue directly fail to resolve the matter to a trip participant's satisfaction, they can raise the matter to the attention of the VP Leadership. This is best done in person, if possible, else in writing. The VP Leadership will investigate the matter, consulting all relevant parties (including the Trip Leader in question), make a decision and inform those involved.
- 3) Finally, if the preceding steps fail, the VP Leadership will report the concerns to the Section Chair. The Chair will appoint an advisory committee (which may include experts outside the Executive) to investigate and make recommendations. The Executive will review the

committee's findings and vote on the recommendations. The Executive's decision will be final and binding on all parties.

The formal process outlined above should rarely be required. Most problems are best resolved by calm, face-to-face, good faith and timely discussions between the parties involved. Experience has shown that it is a really bad idea to engage in email flaming wars which invariably lead to miscommunication and serious unintended consequences.

## SAFETY

While individuals in leadership roles have specific safety-related duties, safety is the collective responsibility of everyone in the club – the Executive, Trip Leaders and trip participants.

### Trip Leader's Role in Safety

A Trip Leader's principal safety-related role is ensuring the safety of trips that he or she runs. The best way of achieving this is through:

- Good planning
- Appropriate participant screening
- Talking about safety to the participants before the activity
- Conservative approach to trip execution and not taking unnecessary risks
- Showing good judgment in adapting "best practices" as outlined in the companion Trip Leaders Guidelines document
- Heads-up oversight in the field
- Willingness to change plans in the face of adverse conditions or trip participant issues
- Willingness to speak up in the face of safety issues, even when this is controversial
- Commitment to progressive improvement of personal leadership and technical skills
- Receptiveness to constructive criticism and feedback

*Trip Leaders should feel empowered (in fact, it is a part of their duties) to draw safety issues to the attention of the Executive.*

## CLUB GEAR

The [Quartermaster](#) is responsible for the acquisition, storage, upkeep and administration of the Section's equipment.

### Club Gear Inventory

The Section maintains an inventory of gear to support club events and lend to members. It is up to the discretion of the Quartermasters on how gear is distributed however the following guidelines will be adhered to:

1. Club trips take priority over individuals wanting to borrow gear. Where trip booking conflicts arise, Trip Leaders are expected to co-operate to best serve the Sections interests.
2. Members borrowing gear are responsible for that equipment while it is removed from the storage facility. This includes proper storage and cleaning if required.
3. Members shall report any issues or damage of equipment to the Quartermaster. This includes large falls on equipment, dropped equipment, malfunctioning electronics, etc.
4. The Quartermaster will ensure that the members wanting to borrow equipment have the knowledge to maintain the equipment while in their possession.

## **TRIP LEADER TRAINING**

The VP Leadership is responsible for planning and implementing Section training courses and can provide information concerning courses offered by ACC National.

### ***The North Face (TNF) - ACC Leadership Program***

One week TNF-ACC mountaineering leadership programs are offered in summer and winter by ACC National. These outstanding courses are heavily subsidized by TNF and the ACC. Applicants must be current, active ACC Great Plains volunteer Trip Leaders. A continuing commitment to organize Section activities is expected of all course attendees. Applicants must apply to ACC National and be sponsored by their Section. Interested members should contact the VP Leadership. Find out more about the [TNF leadership program](#).

### ***Wilderness First Aid Training***

The Section emphasizes wilderness first aid training for Trip Leaders and, to the extent practicable, for active Section members. Experience has shown that wilderness first aid training has many advantages for Trip Leaders:

### ***Training Reimbursement***

Within its budget capacity, the Section will subsidize Trip Leader training. The Treasurer will need to first approve any financial obligation but the guidelines below will be used to determine training subsidization.

1. Members who are prospective leaders can claim up to \$300 towards a training course. The member should make a letter proposing the training they are taking and submit it to the VP Leadership. That member also has to commit to volunteering 1 day for every \$100 subsidized or an equivalent contribution back to the Section.
2. Section Leader can claim half the cost of training courses that they attend.
3. First aid courses are eligible to be fully reimbursed.

Recipients of training subsidies are expected to commit to continue leading club trips or continue volunteering for the club in the future.

## SCREENING TRIP PARTICIPANTS

This section provides guidance on screening trip participants and covers a number of special cases such as non-ACC members, non-Section members, minors, custodial groups, US citizens and special needs members.

### The Screening Process

An important part of a [Trip Leader's duties](#) is assessing prospective trip participants – specifically, their experience, training, expertise, fitness, equipment and personal compatibility. How this is carried out can have a big impact on the likelihood of success or problems in the field. Trip Leaders are expected to make these decisions objectively and without personal bias. It is not acceptable, for example, to fill a trip with your buddies, then announce it and declare the trip full. Doing that is okay for a private trip, but not for a club event.

When the nature of the trip warrants it, ask prospective participants to provide reasonable information regarding how they meet the specified criteria. This might include references from previous trips with other leaders. Be prepared for some individuals to duck questions, provide incomplete answers or exaggerate their experience and qualifications. Be persistent on issues that matter. Choose your battles. When appropriate, contact the Activity Coordinator or other Trip Leaders for their assessment, experience with and advice regarding prospective participants unknown to you.

A decision to reject an application to join the trip should not be arbitrary. Your reasons should be explained politely and privately. Specific and constructive suggestions should be offered regarding alternative outings or training more suitable for the member's fitness, skill or experience level.

Where appropriate, ask prospective participants to share critical medical information in confidence with you as Trip Leader (this will be mandatory for major ACC trips and camps). The type of information desired relates to medical conditions which could put the individual or other participants at risk, such as serious allergies, asthma, diabetes, seizures, cardiac conditions, etc. Similarly, ensure individuals share with you where they carry medical devices and supplies relating to such conditions – for example, an EpiPen or inhaler. This is always a sensitive topic and you may encounter resistance but it directly impacts your ability to respond to medical emergencies. Use good judgement regarding if and what information you ask for. Needless-to-say, any information provided is to be kept in confidence.

Where appropriate and notably for camps or major trips, ask participants for emergency contact information. It is a good idea to consolidate this information and provide a copy to assistant leaders and any others you deem appropriate.

### **Non-ACC Members**

There is no legal requirement for trip participants to be ACC members, but non-members are not covered by the ACC's insurance should they be found negligent in causing someone personal injury or property damage or loss. It is strongly recommended that all trip participants become members of the ACC, as this protection is one of the benefits of membership.

The VP Membership can confirm if applicants are ACC members.

### **Non-Section Members**

As a general rule, individuals who are ACC members but not members of the Great Plains Section are welcome to join ACC Great Plains trips. However, certain camps and trips may be designated as exclusive to the Great Plains Section or priority may be given to Great Plains Section members. If uncertain about which policy to apply, consult the appropriate Activity Coordinator.

### **Minors**

The ACC believes that children benefit from participating in appropriate club activities and has established a comprehensive policy for persons under the age of majority. Any Trip Leader contemplating including children in a club trip should familiarize him/herself with the policy well in advance of the trip and discuss the trip proposal with the VP Leadership. It would also be advisable to seek out other Trip Leaders with experience in this area and to be informed by their experience.

Here are highlights of the ACC policy regarding the participation of minors in club events:

- The parents of minors should be encouraged to participate in the proposed activity if at all possible or practical. If minors under the age of 12 years will be participating, it would be appropriate to insist their parent or guardian accompany them for the duration of the activity.
- Proper parent/guardian permission forms must be completed. Parents must be informed of the full nature of the activities proposed and the associated risks. At present, the ACC does not have a specific format for this.
- Relevant medical information should be acquired (e.g.: allergies and sensitivities, medication, significant physical conditions, etc.).
- Consider whether the minor concerned has the experience and physical ability to handle the activities planned. Where possible, it would be helpful if minors could be assessed on easier, shorter Section outings before taking part in major activities.
- Adequate supervision is even more essential with minors than with adults. Consider what would be an appropriate supervision ratio.
- All matters relating to safety must be more conservative when minors are involved.

The full ACC policy regarding participation of minors in club events can be found on the national's website.

Parks Canada has established mandatory policies and regulations for "Custodial Groups" planning winter backcountry travel in National Parks. These policies and regulations for custodial groups have been adopted by ACC National and apply to ACC Section trips as well. Leaders planning travel in potential avalanche terrain must be familiar with these guidelines as well as the Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale ([ATES](#)).

### ***Events in the United States***

US citizens and US residents who are ACC members are welcome to participate in ACC National and Section events which take place in Canada.

Due to liability insurance constraints, the situation regarding ACC events which take place in the United States is more complex. The following table (verified by ACC National) specifies the ACC liability insurance coverage for ACC members on official club events in the US, depending on citizenship and residency. Members falling into categories which are not covered by ACC liability insurance cannot participate in ACC National or Section events which take place in the US. Please note that, in some cases, these restrictions apply to Canadian citizens or dual Canadian/US citizens, depending on residency.

**Liability Insurance Coverage for ACC Members on ACC National or Section Trips to the United States**

| <b>Citizenship</b>     | <b>Residency</b> | <b>Coverage</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Canadian               | Canada           | Covered         |
| Canadian               | US               | Not covered     |
| US                     | Canada           | Covered         |
| US                     | US               | Not covered     |
| Dual Canadian/US       | Canada           | Covered         |
| Dual Canadian/US       | US               | Not covered     |
| Neither Canadian or US | Canada           | Covered         |
| Neither Canadian or US | US               | Covered         |

### **Special Needs Members**

Occasionally, ACC members with special needs will enquire about signing up for Section trips. Each case is unique. The experience can be rewarding to all involved. Before making decisions regarding participation, the Trip Leader should discuss the matter with the VP Leadership at the earliest possible time. It would also be advisable to seek advice from other Trip Leaders with experience in this area and to learn from their experience.

Limited experience has shown:

- It will need to be determined if the nature of the trip is compatible with the member's special needs or whether reasonable accommodations can be made to trip plans to facilitate participation. The primary consideration is the safety of all concerned.
- Both the participant and Trip Leader need to be realistic about what is achievable.

- It will be necessary to obtain clarity on relevant medical issues in advance.
- Anticipate that routine things, such as gearing up, may proceed much more slowly than normal. It will be appropriate to assign one or more assistant leaders to assist and monitor the special needs participant.

## LEADING IN A CRISIS

### The Role of the Leader

We hope it never happens, but sometimes things go wrong: perhaps conditions turn dangerous or someone is injured. Then the group focus shifts from recreation to safety and survival. The leader's role also changes to a decisive style. When an accident occurs, there is no time for lengthy debate. Prompt, effective action is needed, and it should be directed by someone with training and experience. The leader should stay "hands off" as much as possible, directing others, maintaining an overview, and thinking ahead to the next steps.

*The party should be guided by the three rules of rescue in managing a crisis:*

- 1- The safety of the rescuers comes first, even before that of the subject.*
- 2- Act promptly, but deliberately and calmly.*
- 3- Use procedures you have learned and practiced; this is no time for experiment.*

It is easy to think that all backcountry mishaps are life-threatening situations and that the outcome depends solely on what the rescuers do. In fact, neither is usually the case. First, most accidents result in cuts and bruises, sprains, sometimes broken bones, but only occasionally anything worse. Second, the outcome is usually determined by factors beyond the rescuers' control. All that can be reasonably expected is that the Trip Leader draws upon training and experience to devise an appropriate plan and then carry it out as safely and effectively as conditions permit.

The best way to avoid trouble is to anticipate it. Leaders should always be thinking ahead, asking: "What if?" In camp, they think of the climb; on the ascent, of the descent; in success, of retreat. They look for early signs of fatigue in participants, mentally record bivouac sites, keep watch on the time, and note any changes in the weather. Everywhere on trips, leaders mentally cross bridges before reaching them. Trying to stay a step ahead, they hope to avoid problems or to catch burgeoning ones before they become crises.

Accidents are unexpected, but you can prepare for them by taking courses, reading, and mentally rehearsing how you would respond in similar circumstances. All Trip Leaders are encouraged to get wilderness first aid training.

### Emergency Communications



The nature of the trip will determine what communication assets to consider. In most cases a cellphone will be adequate, such as at a popular crag at Mt. Rushmore. If at a backcountry hut, a satellite communication device would likely be needed.

Consider internal communication as well. Radios may be beneficial if the group plans on splitting into two.

For more information, an exceptionally thorough reference is [Emergency and Radio Communications for Outdoor Guides and Leaders](#) by ACMG guide Cyril Shokoples.

## LIABILITY INSURANCE AND WAIVERS

### Liability Insurance

The ACC has a comprehensive liability insurance policy similar to the liability insurance most home owners carry. This liability insurance is essential to the ACC's ability to run club trips. Trip Leaders should be familiar with the scope and general coverage of the insurance policy.

As an overview of the liability insurance policy:

- The coverage is in place only when club members are engaged in an official club activity or are acting on behalf of the club.
- An official activity could be any club activity that is part of a Section's or ACC National's published program.
- The maximum coverage is five million dollars per incident (including any legal costs awarded), subject to a \$5,000 deductible.
- Part of ACC membership dues is directed to liability insurance coverage.
- The liability insurance policy is contracted for by ACC National on behalf of the entire club, which includes activities run by National and by Sections.
- The liability insurance protects club officials, Trip Leaders and trip participants from legal claims arising from club activities.

It is to be noted that the liability insurance policy:

- Is not intended to pay any injured party's medical expenses directly.
- Does not apply to personal activities by club members i.e. when not engaged in an official Club activity.

Details on the ACC liability insurance policy can be found on their website.

### Waiver Administration

Trip waivers are an integral component of the club's liability insurance. Trip Leaders are on the front lines of waiver administration. The ACC insurance policy requires trip waivers to be signed by all participants on all club events. If an individual refuses to sign the waiver, the Trip Leader must advise them that he or she will not be able to participate in the activity.

Trip Leaders are required to have participants in all activities sponsored by ACC Great Plains sign the waiver before the activity begins. The importance of this document to the ACC cannot be over-emphasized. The way Trip Leaders conduct themselves in dealing with participants signing the Waiver is of great importance to whether the document would stand up in court later on, should a lawsuit arise from the activity.

Trip Leaders are strongly advised to read the full ACC National policy on Waiver Administration, Incident Management & Reporting, found on their website.

Following the trip, the Trip Leader should pass the signed waivers to the Secretary as soon as convenient. ACC National requires Sections to retain signed waivers for a period of six years.

## INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

There are two components to dealing with accidents/incidents:

- 1) immediate response in the field, and
- 2) post-event administration and reporting

### **Immediate Response in the Field**

Trip Leaders are responsible for carrying out or delegating whatever actions are necessary to manage the situation in the field until the victim has been turned over to the appropriate rescue, health care or other authorities. The Trip Leader's incident report will deal with events up to that point.

Subsequently, the Trip Leader's involvement turns to post-event administration and follow-up, which are time sensitive activities.

### **Post-Event Administration and Reporting**

While we treat the topic separately here, the ACC National policy on incident management and reporting is covered by the waiver policy document referenced earlier in this manual. Trip Leaders are strongly encouraged to read the complete policy.

A synopsis of the accident/incident reporting process is as follows:

- The Trip Leader must inform the applicable VP Leadership as soon as possible. The Section Chair is responsible for informing the ACC National Executive Director.
- A complete written report is to be prepared and submitted to ACC National by the Section Executive. This should include the original, signed waivers of all persons who suffered (or might later claimed to have suffered) personal injury or property damage/ loss as a result of the incident. The report should stick to the facts. In normal circumstances, it is expected that the report will be in the hands of the Executive Director not more than three weeks after the incident.
- Any questions from the media should be referred to the Executive Director.

### **What Constitutes a Reportable Incident?**

Trip Leaders are strongly advised to read the ACC National guidance on what constitutes a reportable accident. ACC Great Plains Section Chair can provide further advice on this matter.

## **TRAVEL IN AVALANCHE TERRAIN**

### **Avalanche Transceiver Policy**

ACC National has established the following guidelines regarding avalanche transceivers.

- Participants on all mountaineering, skiing and ice climbing trips, camps and courses of the Alpine Club of Canada in avalanche terrain are required to use a modern avalanche transceiver, as recommended by Avalanche Canada. Recommended avalanche transceivers are digital, multi-antenna transceivers. Analog and single-antenna transceivers are not acceptable.
- ACC members are advised to take note of the manufacturer's recommendations for the expected useful service life of avalanche transceivers.
- While digital, two-antenna transceivers (eg. Tracker DTS, Ortovox X1) are still acceptable, ACC members are encouraged to upgrade to digital, three-antenna models such as the Tracker 2, Ortovox 3+, Barryvox/ Marmot Pulse, Pieps DSP, etc.
- ACC members are also advised that the usefulness of any transceiver depends on the familiarity of the user with the transceiver. Regular practice throughout the season is strongly encouraged.

### **Avalanche Safety for Mountaineering and Alpine Backcountry Skiing**

Specific guidelines relating to avalanche safety issues are provided for mountaineering, alpine backcountry skiing and snowboarding are in the companion Trip Leader Guidelines document.