

## Hiking Safety

Having made my share of mistakes in the wilderness over the years, I have compiled a list of gotcha's that can be applied to any outdoor adventure. I urge you to print this out and store with your outdoor gear. Hiking can be a most rewarding distraction from the daily grind, but safety should NEVER be taken for granted!

### Preparation

#### 1) Plan your hike.

You are more likely to have a safe and happy hike if you "plan your hike, and hike your plan". To rush out on a big hike w/o proper planning is asking for trouble! ALWAYS notify someone close to you where you will be and how long you will be gone.

#### 2) Know your terrain.

Use every resource available to get to know your hiking trail before you set out. This will prepare you for the walking conditions. "Are there streams to ford?, Elevation changes?, Is terrain rocky or smooth?", Just some of the questions that can be answered BEFORE you set out.

#### 3) Know your climate.

Hypothermia is real, dangerous, and misunderstood. Hypothermia can strike in relatively warm environments. Hypothermia plain and simple is a rapid cooling of the body. This can be caused by cold, wet or a combination of both. Hypothermia can easily be prevented with proper preparation.

### In The Pack Essentials

#### 1) Potable water.

Always have fresh water available, on any excursion. It is also a good idea to bring along purification tablets and/or a filtration device. Having the ability to produce drinking water can be just as important as the water you pack in. I also bring along some protein snacks, just in case.

#### 2) First Aid Kit.

Although an obvious choice, it is surprising how many folks go in the wilderness without one. Items as simple as pain relief tablets can be a welcome addition when you are far from civilization. Other items are bandages, tweezers, moleskin, antiseptic, needle and thread (for repairs).

#### 3) Fire and light source.

Matches and a lighter are essentials for me. I usually pack along a small piece of commercial starter stick for quick fires in moist environments. I also pack a small conventional flashlight and an LED light, as well.

#### 4) Clothing.

It is always wise to pack some extra layers. The weight of these items will be dictated by the environment, err to the side of caution, as temps can fluctuate greatly, especially in mountainous environments. An extra pair of socks can be life savers.

#### 5) Orienteering.

Packing along a map and compass has gotten me out of a jam more than once. I also carry a cell phone, even though I may not get reception in most places, in a pinch, I may be able to get a call out.

The single most important item to pack on your next hike is common sense. Making sound decisions while on the trail will keep you out of most troubled situations. If you hike with your family members, especially children or seniors, remember that they may not have the stamina handle the same level hike as you, and you ultimately must make the right decision.