

Safety in the Colorado Mountains

**Rocky Mountain
Rescue Group**
Boulder, Colorado



Use Your Head! It's one of your best tools.

It's your responsibility to be aware of hazards and to prepare for conditions you may encounter. Proper training and experience are invaluable.

Ask Yourself...

- Do we have the appropriate skills and experience?
- Should we modify our objectives in view of the time, the weather and the pace?
- Are we eating and drinking enough?
- Are we using the right clothing and equipment?

Items to Consider

Consider taking a few "essential" items with you:

Water

Extra Food

Extra Clothing

Map, Compass, GPS

Sunglasses and Sunscreen

Headlamp/Flashlight (spare batteries & bulb)

First Aid Supplies

Matches or Lighter

Knife

Whistle

Cell Phone (battery fully charged)

Cell phones may help you summon emergency help quickly. However, battery life is limited and coverage is unreliable in the mountains. Consider turning your cell phone off unless needed.

Colorado Mountain Hazards

Because of Colorado's highly variable climate and terrain, backcountry users need to educate themselves before venturing out. Weather can change rapidly. Check the forecast and keep an eye on the sky to anticipate changing conditions.

Lightning:

Lightning can strike anywhere but tends to hit high places. In Colorado, summer afternoon thunderstorms are common.

Dramatic temperature drops:

Snowfall happens—even in summer!

Precipitation:

If you get wet, it's difficult to stay warm.

High Water:

Water levels in Colorado streams and rivers can rise quickly. High water from flash floods or snowmelt is possible.

Heat/Sun:

Keep well hydrated; avoid sunburn, even on cloudy days. The sun's radiation is intensified at higher altitudes.

Terrain:

Hazards posed by cliffs, loose and rocky slopes, steep snowfields, avalanche-prone slopes or ice require special skills or avoidance altogether.

Wildlife & Plants:

Colorado is home to bears, mountain lions, snakes, bees, mosquitoes, ticks, and other wildlife. Know how to identify and avoid plants such as poison ivy, cactus, and thistle.

High Altitude:

Substantial increases in altitude over a short time may pose a serious risk.

Human Responses:

Consequences of these hazards might include: hypothermia, frostbite, altitude sickness, dehydration, sunburn, rashes, snow-blindness, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Proper training is essential to prevent, recognize and treat these conditions.

Have A Safe Trip

Before you go:

- Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.
- Be prepared. Bring appropriate equipment.
- Gather information on the attractions and hazards you may encounter.
- Check the weather report, but don't depend on it.

While you are out:

- Travel within your ability and knowledge.
- Use good judgment when choosing a route or deciding when to turn back.
- Be responsible for your own safety and the safety of others.
- Be prepared for the unexpected. Consider making contingency plans in case of emergency.

If you run into problems:

- Stop—Think—Evaluate Options—Make a plan.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. A rescue may be more effective if requested early.
- If lost or stranded, stay in a safe place where you can hear rescuers calling and make yourself visible. Attempt to contact rescuers.
- Be aware that it could take some time for rescuers to reach you.

Children in the Outdoors

Take responsibility for children under your care. Until they learn to recognize and avoid hazards, children are especially at risk.

- Prepare them with the proper equipment.
- Teach children about local animals and hazards.
- Discuss what to do in case of separation or other emergency.
- Take advantage of available resources to teach children outdoor safety.

Take time to teach your children outdoor safety. It could be the most valuable education they get.

Resources

Rocky Mountain Rescue Group
<http://www.RockyMountainRescue.org>
(303) 449-4141



Mountain Rescue Association
<http://www.mra.org>



Boulder County Sheriff's Office
<https://www.bouldercounty.org/safety/sheriff/>
(303) 441-4444



City of Boulder Open Space and Mtn. Parks
<https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp>
(303) 441-3040



Boulder County Parks and Open Space
<https://www.bouldercounty.org/departments/parks-and-open-space/> (303) 441-3950



USDA Forest Service, Boulder Ranger District
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/arp/recarea/?recid=28178> (303) 541-2500



Colorado State Parks
<https://cpw.state.co.us/>



The American Red Cross
<https://www.denver-redcross.org>
(303) 722-7474



The Colorado Mountain Club
<https://www.cmc.org>
<https://www.cmc.org/boulder>
(303) 554-7688



NOAA (weather)
<https://www.weather.gov/>
(303) 494-4221



Colorado Avalanche Information Center
<https://avalanche.state.co.us>
(303) 275-5360



Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Inc.

Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Inc. (RMRG) is an all-volunteer organization trained and equipped for search and rescue on mountainous terrain or in extreme weather. RMRG promotes safety in mountain recreation and provides safety education programs for schools, businesses, and community organizations. RMRG provides extensive training for its members and researches mountain rescue equipment and techniques. The Group's diverse membership includes climbers, engineers, healthcare providers, and other professionals, as well as University of Colorado students and faculty. RMRG is an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 organization and does not charge for its services.



Serving the Boulder County and Beyond since 1947

For further information or to make donations, please contact:

Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Inc.
3720 Walnut St.
Boulder, Colorado 80301

E-mail: contact@RockyMountainRescue.org
Messages: (303) 449-4141

<http://www.RockyMountainRescue.org>

**For immediate assistance, call 9-1-1
or Boulder County Sheriff: (303) 441-4444**