

THC OUTINGS LEADER MANUAL (2018)

Outings leadership:

- As an outing leader you have the reward of taking the participants on hikes or cycles that they would never be able to go alone.
- As a leader your goals are to:
 - 1st maintain the safety of the group,
 - 2nd to set the framework for everyone to have a good time and - 3rd is to complete all of the planned outing.
- Many of the ideas about trip planning and what to do during the trip are things you may already do when planning and going on a family vacation or hike. Some leadership skills may have been learned in prior employment as a supervisor or manager, or by observing other outing leaders.
- Realize that your leadership style will vary to adapt to the needs of the group. Sometimes you might have to issue orders; sometimes it helps to hear what the group thinks before deciding.
- If you think it is unsafe to continue, turn back. People will be thankful that you did.
- Be caring and sensitive to others, listen, and deal with conflict.
- Encourage participants to talk and have a good time.
- Lead by example! Set an upbeat tone to have an enjoyable time. Don't do anything that is unsafe.

Planning your trip:

- Where have you hiked/cycled before that you found enjoyable that others may enjoy?
- What are the distance and the elevation gain of the hike/ride?
- Have you done this outing before? If you haven't, it is highly recommended that you scout the trailhead and trail with someone prior to leading a hike there.
- Are there any special attractions such as waterfalls, viewpoints?
- Are there challenging areas like high stream crossings, which may be hazardous or impossible in springtime or after heavy rains, rock scrambles which may be slippery, road crossings?
- What skill level or capability is required? It is recommended that you lead a hike that will only use up to 70% of what you can routinely do.
- Will it be easy, moderate, or difficult?
- How long will it take to drive there and how much time will it take to complete the outing if all goes according to plan?

-
- Will there be daylight for the entire outing? (What time is sunset?)
- What carpool location will you use?
- Is the trailhead parking adequate for the number of cars?
- Is the trailhead parking or access road accessible in winter? Mud season?
- If this is a winter hike are there special winter considerations?
What size group do you want? We recommend 12 people maximum, including the leader. If you feel more comfortable with less, for example just 8, it is OK to cut it off at that point, especially in the winter. We also recommend a minimum of 3 people in the summer and 4 people in the winter.
- Are you going to have a co-leader? A co-leader can be included when you post the outing, or he/she can be unofficial.

Posting the outing:

- Give a brief description of the outing, include the attractions, distance, elevation gain and if there are any challenges. (You may not think a rock scramble is a challenge but someone else might.)
- Rating system?
- Include your name and email and/or phone number.
- It is best to omit the meeting time and location as people may show up without being screened.
- If it is a moderate or difficult hike it is OK to ask for recent hiking, biking (or other aerobic) activities in the posting.

Screening signups:

- Thank them for their interest in your outing.
- Screening is necessary to ensure as far as possible that all participants have the experience and current fitness level to complete the outing without risk to that person or others. A person that is not physically capable will be at a higher risk of injury or illness, and will excessively slow the group, so that no one has a good time.
- Ask what their recent hiking, cycling or other aerobic experience is. If they haven't done recent activities that would give them the fitness level and conditioning needed or if they do not have the skill level needed, politely tell them the outing is beyond their capability at this time, if possible, recommend some easier outing to the person. Sometimes it takes a few email exchanges or a phone call for you to get the information you need. It is OK to politely say no!
- Get the participants full name, email address, and cell phone number for day of trip.
- Minors (<18) must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

-
- Let the participants know they are welcome; you look forward to hiking with them.
- Never guarantee a return time, if they need to get back by a certain time it might be better if they don't sign up.

A couple days before the trip:

- Send an email reminder to the group, confirming the meeting time and place. Provide your cell number in the event of emergency the day of the outing. Remind them to let you know if they cannot make it.
- If the forecast is iffy, let them know when your final decision about cancelling the hike (or not) will be made.
This is a good time to remind them what they will need to bring or wear or any new pertinent information about the outing. If hiking in the winter, remind them that micro-spikes and/or snowshoes are required; depending on where the trip is crampons may be required. If cycling, a helmet is required.
- Review your trail maps and directions if needed.

Day of the trip:

- Show up early.
- Take your list of participants with contact information, directions, map, compass and/or GPS, and waiver.
- Welcome everyone and have each person sign the Liability Waiver. Explain what the waiver is to anyone who has not hiked with the club before.
- Make sure everyone has the appropriate apparel (watch for cotton!), footwear, gear (winter/summer), food and water.
- Have everyone introduce themselves. Set a positive tone.
- Organize who will drive, make sure the drivers have directions. If you plan a car spot, make sure you have enough cars for both trail heads!
- Let them know if and where you are making a restroom or other stop along the way.

At the trail head:

- Take a head count.
- Show them which trails you are taking, when and/or where you expect to break for lunch.
- Review the goals: first is the safety of all participants; second is for everyone to have an enjoyable time; and third is to hopefully do the entire hike (bike ride).
- If it is a large group, assign a capable sweep (not just the slowest hiker)

-
- Remind everyone to stop at any junctions both to wait for others to catch up and to make sure they take the correct trail at the junction; and before stepping off trail for a bio-break, be sure to tell someone.
- Put your cell phone into airplane mode to conserve the battery.
- Tell everyone to have a good time!
- Sign the trail register if there is one.

During the trip:

- Remember: Safety is goal number one! Fun is goal number two.
- Set a pace that everyone can deal with. Try to keep the group together or at least within sight or hearing, even if you need to slow down the faster pace.
- Stop periodically for water, snacks, adjusting layers, and to let everyone catch up. Avoid the slinky effect! Don't leave as soon as the slowest person shows up! That person needs rest too. Take periodic head counts.
- Watch for changes in the weather, the environment, and hours of daylight remaining. Conditions may require that you cut the trip short.
- Make sure everyone is doing OK. Treat hot spots as soon as possible to prevent blisters. Check for signs of hyperthermia on hot humid days or hypothermia on cold days.
- If you have a person that keeps wandering away from the group discuss the behavior with that person and tell the person, he/she needs to stay with the group for everyone's safety. At some point that person may just want to take off from the group; verify that he/she has a map (and how to read it) and other necessities, knows how to get back to the car and make it clear that they have signed off from the group and that he/she is no longer part of the group. (When you return make sure other outing leaders are aware of this person's behavior.)
- If someone does not feel up to the trip and wants to return to the cars, be sure they are accompanied by another qualified hiker, and they have needed car keys.
- If some of the group wants to add a side trip, it is generally best to stay with your original trip plan. Others in the group may not have the energy, supplies or time to add additional mileage. Don't let the group split in two.

At the end of the trip:

- Sign out at register.
- Take a final head count.
- Thank everyone for coming.
- Make sure everyone's car starts and they can get out of the parking lot OK.

-
- Submit the liability waiver.
- If someone was injured, follow up to see how he/she is doing
- Send pictures for Face Book!
- On to the next outing!

Injuries and illnesses

- Any major injury or illness brings the outing to an end.
- If the injured/ill person can walk out, then assist the person going out.
- If the person is not mobile, then send two people to get medical help and have at least one person always stay with the injured/sick person.
- Have someone in the group assist the person to a medical treatment facility (or follow the ambulance if possible) and stay with the person during treatment and ensure the person gets home safely.
- If medical assistance was required notify the Outings Chair and club President ASAP.
- Follow up with the person in a couple days (as deemed appropriate.)

First Aid Kit basics and other emergency supplies:

Emergency contacts and numbers
Band-Aids
Gauze pads
First aid cream or ointment
Bug bite or sting relief
Alcohol wipes
Pain relief pills (such as Advil, Tylenol, Aspirin)
Vinyl or plastic gloves
Moleskin
Small scissors
Tweezers
Tick remover
Small knife
Hand sanitizer
Duct tape
Bandanas
Large safety pins
Zip ties
Head lamp/ extra batteries
Whistle
Extra food and water

Note:

This booklet contains the basics of outdoor leadership for day hikes. It is recommended that anyone that leads outings or frequently hikes take a **Wilderness First Aide** course. Extensive outdoor leadership training courses and outdoor skills training are also provided by other organizations, such as AMC and ADK. More information on hiking safety can be found on the NYS DEC website.

References:

Albany ADK Chapter Trip Leader's Training Guide, 2008
AMC Outdoor Leader Handbook, 2010 - 8th edition