

Policy: Club Sanctioned Trips and Field Training

Approved: MCA Board, February 1995; Amended February 15, 2000, Feb 13, 2001, June 2010; published periodically

Mountaineering involves inherent risk that can result in severe injury and death. In order to minimize risk while providing an enjoyable, adventurous and interesting experience, club sanctioned trips and field training shall adhere to this policy. All participants shall familiarize themselves with this policy prior to participating in any club sanctioned trip or field training course.

By-Laws

The following excerpt from the MCA By-Laws is included for reference.

Adopted as of July 1997 and amended as of Feb 2000 and June 2010.

Section XI SANCTIONED TRIPS

- A. Definition: A sanctioned club trip shall be one which is approved by the Hiking and Climbing Committee or Training Committee and advertised in the club publication or on the club website in the Trips or Training Schedules. Such advertisement shall contain a description of the trip as to the difficulty and special requirements and designated leaders(s).
- B. Classifications: A sanctioned trip shall be classified as to its difficulty according to a classification scheme approved by the Executive Committee.
- C. Leaders: Leaders of any sanctioned trip must be approved by the Hiking and Climbing Committee (a simple majority) prior to the trip date. He/she must be a member of the MCA and must have participated in a trip of the same or higher classification than the one being advertised. A set of guidelines and qualifications approved by the Executive Committee shall determine current club policy as to procedures to be followed by the leader(s).
- D. Rules: A list of club rules for sanctioned trips, formulated by the Hiking and Climbing Committee and approved by the Executive Committee shall be made available to perspective trip participants. Among the rules must be a requirement for all participants to sign a liability release prior to trip departure.

Section IV, Subparagraph F: Trip Officers

Trip Officers: All trip leaders of any sanctioned trip organized and advertised by the club shall be given the position of Trip Officer. This designation as an officer of the organization shall be for the duration of the advertised trip and does not carry with it any power to vote at Executive Committee meetings.

MCA Trip Classification Scheme

MCA sanctioned trips are classified according to the **physical demand** and nature of the **terrain**. Trips that do not require special skills are generally referred to as *non-technical*. These trips usually involve hiking, scrambling and skiing low angle (avalanche free) terrain. Trips that require

special skills are referred to as *technical* trips. Due to the broad nature of potential trips and the subjectivity of a letter designation system, the MCA no longer uses letter designations to classify trips.

Please note that terrain descriptions do not account for potential hazards such as rock fall, bears, etc. Trip leaders shall inform participants of potential hazards either verbally, on the sign-up sheet, or in the trip description on the web site or Scree.

Physical Demand: Simply put this is elevation gain, distance and duration. Please note that terrain can also affect physical demand. For example bushwhacking and scree slogging requires more energy than trail hiking.

Terrain: Terrain may consist of trail hiking; bushwhacking; off-trail hiking on tundra, snow, ice, scree, talus or boulders; exposed hiking on steep slopes covered with snow, ice, slick vegetation, scree, talus or boulders; scrambling; scrambling on loose rock; exposed scrambling; exposed scrambling on loose rock; technical snow, ice, rock and/or mixed climbing; stream crossing; glacier travel on snow, ice and/or scree; etc. Trips are classified as either non-technical or technical depending on the nature of the terrain as follows:

- **Non-Technical:** Non-technical trips generally consist of hiking, scrambling and skiing in low angle, non-avalanche terrain.
- **Hiking and Scrambling:** Trips consisting of hiking and scrambling are classified in accordance with the Sierra Club System described in the Seventh Edition of Mountaineering, The Freedom of the Hills, Appendix A, Rating Systems, as follows:
 - **Class 1:** Hiking on or off trail. Hands are not required for upward or downward movement and climbing can be likened to a stairway.
 - **Class 2:** Hiking over rough terrain. Hands may be required to steady oneself for movement around or over obstacles. Class 2 includes simple scrambling, with possible occasional use of the hands. Examples include ascending, descending and traversing scree and talus slopes.
 - **Class 3:** Scrambling over rock and talus where handholds and footholds are used for balance and upward or downward movement. The terrain is steep and if one were to slip and fall, moderate to serious injury (depending on how you land) may result. In order to be considered non-technical, the exposure must be minimal so that a belay is not required.
- **Technical:** Technical trips, by nature, require specialized equipment, skills and experience. These trips generally involve difficult and hazardous terrain. Technical trips (not classified as *training*) are only open to qualified members who have the appropriate skills and experience. The trip leader and/or Hiking and Climbing Committee will determine the qualifications required to participate on the trip. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - **Class 4:** Scrambling and simple climbing (usually not requiring strength of grip) on very steep but not completely vertical terrain. Exposure can be severe, and may cause vertigo. A fall could be fatal. Knowledge of belays, anchors and rappels is a prerequisite for a Class 4 route.
 - **Class 5:** Fifth class rock climbing. Climbing difficulty varies widely with each trip.
 - **Ice and Mixed Climbing:** Climbing ice or mixed rock and ice. Climbing difficulty varies widely with each trip.

- **Glacier Travel:** Trips involving potentially hazardous glacier travel.
- **Steep Snow Climbing:** Climbing steep (exposed) snow slopes or slopes subject to avalanche.
- **Backcountry Skiing or Snowboarding:** Skiing or snowboarding on steep (exposed) slopes or slopes subject to avalanche. Skiing low angle slopes not subject to avalanche is considered non-technical.
- **Avalanche Terrain:** Any trip in avalanche terrain.
- **Packrafting:** Any trip involving packrafting.
- **Kayaking:** Any trip involving river, lake or sea kayaking.
- **Stream Crossing, Hazardous:** Any trip with a potentially hazardous stream crossing.

General Rules for Participation on MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Participants shall familiarize themselves with the *physical demands, anticipated terrain* and *potential hazards* associated with the proposed trip. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - **Physical Demands:** Estimated elevation gain, distance and duration.
 - **Anticipated Terrain:** Trail hiking; bushwhacking; off-trail hiking on tundra, snow, ice, scree, talus or boulders; exposed hiking on steep slopes covered with snow, ice, slick vegetation, scree, talus or boulders; scrambling on loose rock; exposed scrambling on loose rock; technical snow, ice, rock and/or mixed climbing; stream crossing; glacier travel on snow, ice and/or scree.
 - **Potential Hazards:** Avalanche; falling while skiing, hiking or climbing; falling into a crevasse; being struck by falling rock, snow or ice; attack by a bear, moose or insects (bees, wasps, mosquitoes, biting flies, etc); lightning; fire; carbon monoxide poisoning; suffocation; frostbite; hypothermia; drowning from falling through snow, crossing a stream, packrafting or kayaking; injury from use/ misuse of equipment. Note that it is impossible to predict all potential hazards that may be encountered while participating on MCA sanctioned trips.
2. Participants may be required to demonstrate the skills and experience necessary to participate on any given trip.
3. Participants shall sign-up on the club sanctioned trip sign-up sheet.
4. Participants shall read, initial and sign the Release of Liability Agreement prior to departing on the trip.
5. The trip leader may refuse participation to any member for any reason. If someone feels that they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly, they may present their case to the Hiking and Climbing Committee and/or the Executive Committee.
6. Proper clothing and equipment is required to participate on club sanctioned trips. The trip leader can require special equipment and refuse participation to any person that is ill-prepared (e.g. inappropriate clothing, footwear or gear). See recommended equipment list at the end of this policy.
7. Participants shall follow the leader's instructions. Participants shall not go off alone, return or rush ahead without permission from the leader. Participants shall not ford a stream before the leader assesses the situation. Remember, this is a club trip and the leader must know where

all participants are. Anyone intentionally separating from the group without the leader's approval shall no longer be considered a participant on the club sanctioned trip.

8. The trip leader has the authority to split the group (fast and slow), dependent upon current conditions and experience level of the participants. The leader must appoint a qualified co-leader to lead the second group using the guidelines specified under Trip Leader Responsibilities.
9. **Glacier Travel:** For trips requiring roped travel over glaciers, knowledge of crevasse rescue, and ice axe and crampon skills are required. A basic understanding of ice and snow anchors is also required.
10. Participants who in the leader's opinion, put themselves or other members of the group in danger, shall be subject to sanction by the club. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, reprimand at the general meeting, exclusion from future trips, termination of annual membership, or lifetime exclusion from the club. The Executive Committee, and only the Executive Committee, shall have the authority to issue sanctions.
11. Number of people on club trips:
 - Minimum: For safety reasons, three people minimum. Trips undertaken with fewer than the minimum required participants shall not be considered club sanctioned trips.
 - Maximum: Registration on any particular trip must be restricted to a safe and manageable number of members. The Leader and/or Hiking and Climbing Committee shall determine the maximum number of participants. In trail-less areas or State and National Parks the maximum number depends upon the trail and campsite conditions, but will generally be limited to 12 people.
12. In general dogs are not allowed. Among the reasons are bear problems. Well behaved, bear savvy dogs may be approved at the discretion of the trip leader and all trip participants. Approval must be unanimous and must occur prior to meeting for the trip.
13. Firearms are not allowed on club sanctioned trips, unless approved by the trip leader and all participants. Approval must be unanimous. Aerosol bear repellent is preferred in lieu of firearms.
14. If you find you cannot participate after signing up on the roster, please let the leader know as soon as possible, for transportation and gear-planning and so someone else can go. If you are the leader, help find a replacement.

Hiking and Climbing Committee and Training Committee Qualifications

1. Any current MCA member may serve on the Hiking and Climbing and Training Committees.
2. In order to reduce risk to participants, leaders, instructors, the board of directors, club officers and the MCA as a whole, the combined minimum Alaska mountaineering experience of all members comprising either the Hiking and Climbing Committee or the Training Committee shall be 10 years. In the event the Hiking and Climbing Committee or Training Committee lacks the minimum required experience, all proposed club sanctioned trips and field training courses shall be approved by the Executive Committee.

Hiking and Climbing Committee Responsibilities

1. All club sanctioned trips shall be approved by the Hiking and Climbing Committee in accordance with the by-laws and this policy. The committee reserves the right to disapprove any proposed trip.
2. The Hiking and Climbing Committee shall maintain a list of approved trip leaders. The list shall include descriptions of the types of trips the leaders are approved to lead.
3. The Hiking and Climbing Committee shall review trip reports from all sanctioned trips. All injuries and areas of concern shall be reported to the President.

Training Committee Responsibilities

1. Field training shall be approved by the Training Committee in accordance with the by-laws and this policy. The committee reserves the right to disapprove any proposed training.
2. The Training Committee shall ensure that required permits are obtained for training that takes place in Chugach State Park and other public lands. Permits shall be obtained prior to the training.
3. The Training Committee shall maintain a list of approved instructors, including a description of the type of training that each instructor is approved to teach.
4. The Training Committee shall review reports from all approved field training courses. Areas of concern shall be reported to the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee Responsibilities

1. The Executive Committee shall act in accordance with the MCA By-Laws as necessary to resolve conflicts between participants, trip leaders, instructors and committees.
2. The Executive Committee shall review reports submitted by the Hiking and Climbing and Training Committees and take appropriate action when necessary to minimize risk and improve the quality of future trips and field training courses.
3. The Executive Committee shall investigate allegations of discrimination or inappropriate action by trip leaders, instructors or participants and take appropriate action as necessary.

Instructor Qualifications

1. Instructors must have majority approval of the Training Committee.

2. Instructors must have relevant experience acceptable to the Training Committee.

Instructor Responsibilities

1. Instructors shall use good judgment and act in accordance with this policy and the MCA By-Laws.

Trip Leader Qualifications

1. Must be a member of the MCA.
2. Must have majority approval of the Hiking and Climbing Committee.
3. Must have received certification in Standard First Aid or a more advanced medical certification (e.g. WFR, EMT) within the last 10 years or lead trips with an approved co-leader that meets this requirement.
4. Must attend an MCA Trip Leader Orientation course prior to leading any trips.
5. Must have participated on trips of the same type and classification as the one being led, showing competence in the opinion of the leaders of those trips; or must demonstrate equivalent experience acceptable to the Hiking and Climbing Committee.
6. Leaders on technical trips must have served as a co-leader with an approved MCA trip leader on at least one trip of the same type and classification, or have equivalent experience acceptable to the Hiking and Climbing Committee. Persons with technical climbing experience wishing to waive this requirement must provide a letter to the Hiking and Climbing Committee outlining their climbing/guiding experience, training, and include at least one personal reference.
7. Leaders on trips that involve avalanche terrain must have completed formal training in avalanche hazard recognition and victim search and rescue as approved by the Hiking and Climbing Committee.
8. Leaders on trips that involve hazardous stream crossings must have either formal training in safe stream crossing methods or have extensive experience crossing streams.

Trip Leader Responsibilities

1. Use good judgment.
2. The leader shall obtain approval for the proposed trip from the Hiking and Climbing Committee prior to advertising the trip.
3. Per MCA bylaws, club sanctioned trips must be advertised in the club publication or on the club website.
 - In other words, the MCA membership must be informed of the trip. In order to publish the trip in the Scree, the Hiking and Climbing committee must approve the club trip about 35 days before the trip so that the Hiking and Climbing chair can forward the approved trip list

to the editor of the Scree. For example, a trip for the month of June or later would have to be approved by the Hiking and Climbing committee by April 25. A trip for July or later would need to be approved by May 25th, and so on.

- If a leader does not wish to plan a trip one month in advance, the trip may be submitted to the Hiking and Climbing committee to be posted on the MCA website and then advertised as a club sanctioned trip on the MCA email group list service.
 - **IMPORTANT:** Anyone may advertise a personal trip at the general membership meeting or on the MCA email group list service, which is an important service the club offers to all members -- to help bring hikers and climbers together. Personal trips are not and shall not be considered club sanctioned trips.
4. The trip leader shall ensure that all participants sign up on the club sanctioned trip sign-up sheet. The leader is responsible for providing and maintaining the trip sign-up sheets at monthly meetings.
 5. The leader shall coordinate with the Hiking and Climbing Committee Chair if he/she is unable to make the monthly meeting prior to the trip.
 6. The leader should describe their proposed trip at Club meetings.
 7. The leader shall contact all participants prior to departure and describe the physical demands, anticipated terrain, potential hazards, required skills and required clothing and gear.
 8. The leader shall coordinate meeting arrangements.
 9. The leader shall leave a trip roster containing a brief description of the proposed route and the names and telephone numbers of participants with a responsible person that will be able to contact a Hiking and Climbing Committee member (names and telephone numbers are on the sign-up sheet) in case of an emergency or delayed return.
 10. The leader should brief trip members on the General Rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips using the Trip Leader Checklist. If members already know each other and have been on previous trips, not much may need to be said. If new members are on the trip, use the checklist.
 11. For safety and liability reasons, the leader shall act in accordance with this policy.
 12. The mountains are a very dynamic environment. Since trips are planned more than a month in advance, factors such as weather, snow stability, stream water level, etc. must be evaluated at the time of departure. The trip leader shall use the best relevant tools available such as the National Weather Service, Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center, Hydrology/Stream forecasts, etc. to check conditions prior to departure. When conditions are unsafe, the trip shall be cancelled or postponed.
 13. **Trip Report:** After every trip, the leader shall provide a brief trip report (over the phone or via email) to the Hiking and Climbing Committee. The report shall include any injuries, incidents or personnel problems. When requested by the President, a written report shall be provided.

Attachment - Trip Leader Check List

The intent of this checklist is to provide a well-organized trip for club members, to help minimize risk and make sure participants know what to expect on a MCA trip.

BEFORE the trip

1. Verify that all participants have signed the Release of Liability form. Participants do not have to be MCA members, but they must sign the Release of Liability form.
2. Prepare a trip roster with route description, list of participants, and emergency contact numbers. Make sure that each participant provides the name of a person to contact in case of emergency.
3. Inform participants of potential hazards, discuss the difficulty of the anticipated terrain and review the physical demands of the proposed trip.
4. Inform participants of expected gear and any special equipment that may be required (i.e., ice axe, crampons, etc.).
5. Leave a trip roster with a responsible person that will be able to contact a Hiking and Climbing Committee member (names and telephone numbers are on the sign-up sheet) in case of an emergency or delayed return.

At the Trailhead

1. Set the tone: This trip is for fun. It is a MCA sanctioned outing. The goal may be to hike to a certain destination or climb a mountain. The priorities for a club trip are safety, fun, and achieve the goal, in that order.
2. Take attendance and have everyone introduce themselves.
3. Review the General Rules listed in the Club Sanctioned Trips Policy. Be prepared to disallow a participant if you feel the General Rules are not followed or the individual is not prepared for the trip. For example, if a participant forgot required gear (e.g., helmet or rain gear), the leader is empowered by MCA rules to disallow that person from the outing. One approach to handling this type of situation is to bring that person aside and explain that club rules are designed to provide a safe trip for the entire group. If appropriate, add that this happens once in awhile, and encourage the person to sign up for future MCA trips.
4. Discuss the planned route, anticipated terrain, expected conditions, physical demands and potential hazards. Describe trail, brush, bears, bugs, rock, scree, snow, weather, etc. Also, review the skill level that may be required.
5. Identify who is trained in first aid. Tell the group that if someone gets hurt, the goal of the trip will change immediately to assisting that person. Re-emphasize the priorities of the trip: safety, fun, trip goal.
6. Explain that decisions will generally be based on consensus, but may be authoritarian in emergency situations or at the discretion of the trip leader.
7. Discuss how the group may travel.

- a. The leader will facilitate keeping the group together. Techniques may vary, especially if there is a wide range of capabilities among the participants. Let everyone know common methods used:
 - i. If a fast and slow group develops, the group may split with co-leaders. Alternatively, the fast group may have to stop at intervals so the other can re-join. The fast group, for example, may have to wait 10 minutes every 30 minutes of travel. Or, the fast group may be limited to never losing sight of at least one member in the slower group.
 - ii. The fast group must stop at all trail intersections.
 - iii. If someone gets lost, the leader should collect the remaining group and develop a plan to find the missing person. The lost person should stay put -- not wander around.
8. Ask if anyone has questions or concerns.
 - a. Does anyone have to be back by a certain time?
 - b. Does anyone have any physical concerns (a weak knee, allergies, on medication, etc.) -- see leader after remarks.
 - c. If anyone feels uncomfortable during the trip, let the leader know.
9. Prior to leaving the trailhead, make sure everyone is 100% ready to go. This helps keep the group together, especially with larger groups.

After the Trip

Contact the Hiking and Climbing Committee to file a brief trip report. The report shall include any injuries, incidents or personnel problems.

Attachment - Equipment List

Note: Consult Trip Leader for required equipment.

Summer

Rain gear that works
Wind gear
Wool or fleece pants
Shorts (not recommended due to plants and wasps)
Light long johns
Wool shirt
Jacket
Baseball cap
Gloves
Extra socks
Wool or pile hat
Hiking boots
Stream-crossing footwear
Sunscreen
Mosquito repellent
Whistle
Large plastic bag
Lighter, matches
Map, compass
Aerosol bear repellent (if desired)
Moleskin/Spenco 2nd skin
Ace bandage
Surgical tape
Aspirin
Gauze
Anti-bacterial ointment
4" x 4" pads, Band-Aids
Wire
Vice grips or pliers
Utility cord
Sewing kit
Tent
Sleeping pad
Sleeping bag
Backpack cover
Cook pot
Stove (fires not allowed)
Fuel bottle
Walking stick or ice axe
Water bottles (not canteens)
FOOD

Additional for Glaciers

Ice axe
Gaitors
Climbing boots
Slings, carabiners
Rappel device
Belay device

Rope
Wands
Mittens
Crampons
Seat Harness
Ice screw(s)
Pulleys
Prussiks/ascenders
Glacier glasses/cream

If snow on glacier:

Picket
Skis or snowshoes

Winter

Wind gear
Wool/fleece pants
Wool/fleece shirt
Long johns
Down jacket
Wool/fleece hat
Face mask
Mittens
Double boots
Avalanche beacon
Shovel
Lighter
Headlamp
First aid kit
Repair kit
Tent (or snow shelters)
Sleeping bag
Sleeping pad
Large cook pot
Stove
Windscreen for stove
Fuel bottle
Thermos
Gaitors
Thermometer
Skis or snowshoes