



MOUNTAIN SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT

READ THIS. IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE.



S TAY TOGETHER

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T URN AROUND...BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

The only cure for altitude sickness is rapid descent. If you feel sick, turn around.



O WNSHIP

You are responsible for your own safety and rescue is never a guarantee.



P REPARE AND TRAIN

Bring the gear you need and know how to use it before you climb.



STAY TOGETHER

Most SAR emergencies happen when parties split up. Stay with your partners until you return to the trailhead.

If you are hiking in a group, you and your partners are responsible for one another throughout the duration of your hike. **Choose your partners wisely** and discuss how you'll deal with emergencies. **Don't split up** unless you have a solid plan for where and when to meet again. If one of your partners becomes ill or injured, **it is your job to help them descend safely.** Do not leave them unless it is absolutely necessary to get help for them beyond what you can provide.



If you're hiking alone, leave a detailed itinerary with someone who understands where you're going and what you plan to do. Give your emergency contact a reasonable time-frame for your return, and explain how to call for help if you're significantly overdue.



TURN AROUND... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

The only cure for altitude sickness is rapid descent. If you feel sick, turn around.

Altitude sickness can affect anyone and can progress rapidly from discomfort to death. The only cure for altitude sickness is **descent to a lower elevation**. If you or anyone in your party experiences headaches, nausea, shortness of breath, or lack of coordination, know that these symptoms will only get worse as you continue to climb, and you could be risking your life as you ascend. Make sure you're eating and drinking regularly, and stop and rest if you feel sick. If you don't feel better after a rest, **it's time to turn around**. If anyone in your party decides to descend due to altitude sickness, remember that they need your help! Their brain is suffering due to lack of oxygen and they may not be able to make good decisions or find their way to the trailhead safely. **Stay with them and help them descend.**



Even if you don't experience altitude sickness, numerous scenarios may prevent you from completing your hike as planned. Choose a turn-around time before you leave the trailhead, and stick to it. Turn around **BEFORE** it gets dark or you run out of food or water. Turn around if you encounter bad weather for which you are unprepared (thunderstorms, snow accumulation, low visibility, freezing temperatures). Remember that the summit is only halfway and the descent can be the hardest part of the hike. Make the turn-around decision as a group, and stay together.



TAKE OWNERSHIP

You are responsible for your own safety and rescue is never a guarantee.

Remember, you are not guaranteed a rescue! Due to inclement weather or lack of available resources, it could take **six to twenty-four hours** for rescuers to reach your location. Whenever you venture into the wilderness, you should have a plan to **solve your own emergency** should the need arise. Reaching the summit is far less important than returning safely.



Calling SAR or pushing your SOS button is the same as calling 911: only do so if you are in a **life-threatening emergency** or you need specialized assistance beyond what you are qualified to provide. Recognize when illnesses or injuries become too serious for you to handle on your own. You may need to call for assistance if anyone in your party experiences the following:

- Injuries to the head, neck, or spine
- Copious or uncontrollable bleeding
- Extreme difficulty breathing
- Severe chest pain
- Incoherence or inability to walk

Once you've made the call for help, stay with the ill or injured person and be prepared to assist rescuers when they arrive.



PREPARE AND TRAIN

Bring the gear you need and know how to use it before you hike or climb.

You should **prepare for ALL scenarios**, not just the perfect scenario. Your hike may present a variety of conditions requiring specialized training or gear. Check the weather forecast for the area and elevation you'll be visiting. Learn your route and carry maps and navigation tools that you know how to use. Talk to someone who's done this route before. Find out what gear you'll need and use a checklist so you don't forget anything on the big day. Make sure you **know how to use all the gear you bring**, and spend time practicing any specialized skills you may need for your trip. Mount Whitney is **NOT** the right place to learn how to use crampons and an ice axe—you should already be proficient in these skills **before you trust your life** to them in the mountains.



DONATE TO INYO COUNTY SEARCH & RESCUE

The best way to support Inyo SAR is to stay safe out there!
We also welcome your generous donations to our all-volunteer non-profit.

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