

# Hiking in Elevated Temperatures

For all of you still hiking, we've had three incidents recently concerning overheating, exhaustion and cramps while on the trail. This can be very serious and although fellow hikers dealt well with each situation, it is important that we go over the lessons learned from these events to prevent recurrence. This information was obtained through the completion of our incident reports, discussions with eye witnesses and evaluation by the Safety Committee so we are using our new investigation system to help ensure your safety.

1. Adequate hydration with both water and electrolytes is more critical than ever with the onset of higher temperatures. Although this is talked about frequently, there is still room for improvement by hikers. Develop a sense of what quantity you need and take more.
2. Hikers need to develop a better sense of their own capabilities and what their bodies are telling them in light of hike difficulty and length. If the hike as described is a stretch of your abilities, you're putting yourself at risk if it turns out to be longer and / or more difficult especially in warmer weather. Reconsider your attendance.
3. Communication between hikers is critical to assess how an individual is responding especially toward the end of a hike. You cannot expect a hike leader or sweep to read your mind so SPEAK UP. If you're struggling while on a hike, let your sweep know and they will work with the hike leader to address your situation. Hike leaders should also more frequently ask and observe behaviors and reactions to look for signs of distress and avoid walking too far ahead where they may lose contact with the slowest person on the hike. The pace of the hike should be dictated by the slowest person irrespective of the hike level.
4. Frogg cloth has been added to each medical kit to cool off hikers in distress quickly in warmer temperatures. Simply wet them and place them on the back of the neck or head.
5. Hike rigor should be moderated as necessary as a function of who is on the hike and the climate conditions on the day of the hike. *Finishing the hike safely with all participants should be the primary objective.* If that means modifying the hike to do it safely, then the leader should make that decision. Very long hikes should be avoided when temps are going to exceed the 80's.
6. We need a feedback loop that allows correction of hike distance and rigor so we can get better descriptions when the hike is done again in the future. Although better this year than in the past, we still have times where distances and elevations are understated although sometimes that is because the group make add-ons during the hike, which can change the hike dynamics in warmer weather. A hike should never be changed without group consultation but you need to assume the description provided is a minimum of what you'll set out to do. If it sounds very challenging to you, reconsider your attendance.

Let's take care of each other and remember not to let anyone go down the trail alone.