Health & Safety for the Land Stewards, Trail Maintenance, Trail Captains

Know the risks –

- Animals - which ones are in the area and first aid procedures
- Terrain – are there cliffs, crevices, water bodies etc
- Human elements – barbed wire fences, garbage with sharp edges (metal, nails)
- Weather – sunburn, thunderstorms etc

When inspecting your properties –

- Be careful, go slow and use common sense
- If possible try to have someone with you, use the buddy system but if you prefer to go out alone tell someone, a friend, partner, family member, where you are going and approx how long you will be away
- Know where you are so you can describe your location. In an emergency, assistance may be delayed if you cannot describe your location in detail
- Always have a cell phone and know its capability. When on your property take it out and check the reception to ensure you can get a signal
- If you don't have a phone or can't get a signal, the standard call for distress consists of three short calls, audible or visible, repeated at regular intervals. A whistle, which should be a standard piece of gear for everyone, is particularly good for audible signals and a flashlight for visual signals
- Carry a basic first-aid kit that can treat scrapes, blisters, sprains, and aches
- Always carry a compass or GPS unit and a map of your property
- Wear appropriate clothing, hiking boots, hats for sun protection etc
- Suggest applying sunscreen and insect repellant
- Always check your body for ticks after finishing
- Make sure you have adequate water to keep yourself hydrated
- Don't attempt any rock-climbing on cliffs or in crevices or caves. Stay a safe distance from any cliff edges
- If you hear thunder or see lightning exit to your car immediately - Boulders, rocky overhangs, and shallow caves offer no protection from lightning, which may actually flow through them along the ground after a strike
- Know the local hunting seasons and stay off the property when they are active. Even though we do not allow hunting, neighbouring lands may and bullets can travel far distances

Heat

Dry hot summers are common along the Trail. Water may be scarce on humid days, sweat does not evaporate well, and many hikers face the danger of heat stroke and heat exhaustion if they haven't taken proper precautions. The best measures against heat emergencies are wearing a hat and
sunscreen, staying well hydrated as you walk, and drinking plenty of water.
The following are the most common types of heat problems:

**Sunburn** - occurs rapidly and can be quite severe; it is surprising how bad sunburn in spring can be when no leaves are on the trees.

**Heat Cramps** - During heavy exertion such as hiking in warm or hot weather painful, involuntary muscle spasms may occur that are called heat cramps. A dehydrated hiker is especially vulnerable to getting heat cramps.

Symptoms of Heat Cramps: The pain of heat cramps can affect a hiker's leg muscles, calves, abdominal wall, back or even arms. Any muscle group that is over exerted in heat may feel the pain of heat cramps.

Treatment of Heat Cramps:
- Hikers should stop and relax in as cool and shaded an area as possible. Great time to find a cool stream!
- Take in plenty of fluids preferably water and or sports drinks with electrolytes without caffeine
- Gently massage the effected muscles and stretch gently

If the heat cramps do not go away after an hour of rest, fluids and stretching, it is time to seek medical attention.

**Heat exhaustion** - can strike suddenly without warning and can range in severity from mild heat cramps to heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion in hikers is caused by heavy exertion in a hot environment often accompanied by dehydration caused by excessive fluid loss through perspiration. Additional factors which may contribute to heat exhaustion are the intake of caffeine or alcohol, obesity, cardiovascular disease, medications, or persons with an impaired ability to sweat.

**Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion:**
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Nausea
- Low blood pressure
- A rapid weak heartbeat
- Cool, moist, pale skin
- Low-grade fever
- Sweating Heavily
- Heat cramps
- Fatigue
- Headache
• Dark-colored urine

**Treatment for heat exhaustion:**

• Get the hiker to as cool an area as possible out of the sun

• Hydrate with water and electrolytes

• Cool water is your friend, soak body, hands, wrists and feet in a stream, or wet down loosened clothing and hat or sponge down overheated hiker with damp cloth

• Lay down legs and feet slightly elevated

It’s a good idea for any hiker who experiences significant heat exertion, especially one with existing medical conditions to be checked out by a professional health practitioner as soon as possible.

**If you think a hiker is suffering from heat stroke you must get immediate medical attention! If you don’t have someone else to send for help along with you, stabilize the hiker in heat stroke first but get professional help as quickly as possible.**

**Heatstroke** - a potentially deadly heat related syndrome that occurs when the human body loses its ability to deal with heat stress by using its normal mechanisms for dealing with heat such as sweating and thermal control and is often caused by improper hydration and heavy exertion in hot weather such as hiking uphill or with heavy packs.

Untreated heat exhaustion can rapidly turn into Heat Stroke. The factors that cause, raise the risk factor or can exacerbate heat exhaustion are the same for heat stroke.

The main sign that someone is going into heat stroke when hiking is that their body temperature can reach 104 F (40 C) and beyond at which point the hikers may exhibit personality changes, confusion and even go into a coma.

**Symptoms of Heat Stroke:**

• Skin hot to the touch

• Irritability, confusion or unconsciousness

• Feeling dizzy or lightheaded

• Rapid heartbeat

• Rapid and shallow breathing

• Elevated or lowered blood pressure

• Cessation of sweating

• Headache
- Nausea
- Fainting (Often the first sign in older adults)

**Treatment for heat exhaustion:**

- Get medical attention immediately for anyone that is suffering from heat stroke
- Cool the victim of heat stroke down by removing them from direct sun
- If possible move them into a stream or creek or soak their clothes with water
- If the hiker suffering from heat stroke is conscious have them rehydrate by drinking water or sports drink

**Hypothermia**

Hypothermia begins when exhausted hikers are exposed to wet and windy conditions outdoors, combined with low temperatures. Under such conditions body heat is lost and internal temperature drops. Hypothermia is even possible on a warm sunny day. For example: If you work up a good sweat hiking all day and your clothes are damp and you are a little tired or exhausted, Hypothermia is a very real threat, particularly when the sun dips late in the day.

**Avoiding Hypothermia**

You can avoid hypothermia if you guard against dehydration, fatigue, cold winds, and wet clothes. Be sure to:

- Dress warmly, in layers.
- Stay dry.
- Protect yourself from wind, rain, and snow. (This can be done most effectively by wearing clothes that block wind and moisture.)
- Eat high-energy snacks and drink plenty of water.
- Do not over-exert.

**Symptoms**

You can also guard against hypothermia by being aware of the symptoms and taking action early to treat them. Progressive symptoms include:

- Shivering. An early sign of hypothermia, shivering starts mildly, but can become more severe and finally convulsive before ceasing.
- Slurred speech.
- Loss of coordination. This might begin as difficulty tying one's shoelaces or zipping one's jacket, and eventually include stumbling or falling.
- Confusion.
- Apathy (for example, the victim not taking care of his or her own needs).
- Irrational behavior.
Treatment
If you recognize hypothermia in someone, take action. If the victim is unconscious, seek medical help immediately. If the victim is conscious, or after medical help has been sent for an unconscious victim:

- Move the victim to shelter. Be very gentle with unconscious victims — their hearts are fragile and sensitive to jarring.
- Remove wet clothes, and replace them with warm, dry garments.
- If the victim is alert enough to hold a cup, give warm, but not hot, liquids to drink. Sugary drinks, such as warm Tang or Jello, are especially helpful. Never give food or drink to an unconscious victim — he or she may choke.
- If the victim is conscious and able, moderate exercise such as walking will help to generate heat.
- If the victim is unconscious or unable to exercise, place the victim in a sleeping bag to help speed rewarming, and insulate the sleeping bag with a plastic sheet (or a tarp) above and a pad below.

Thunderstorms
Avoid open spaces, hills and high places or steep slopes.

If you are in the forest stay there, but keep away from the edge of the forest, clearings or isolated trees.

Do not lie down on the ground. Squat low to the ground with your feet together and keep your arms near your body. Tuck your head between your knees and avoid making contact with the ground with any other part of your body. This will reduce your risk of being struck by lightning.

Rivers, streams and other water bodies
Fording streams and rivers can be deceptively hazardous. Even a very shallow, swiftly flowing body of water can pack enough force to knock you off your feet. Use caution and common sense.

Caves, Cliffs and Crevices
Be aware of the location of these areas on the property and do not take risks around them.

Animals
Coyotes - Coyotes are a medium sized member of the Canidae family. Coyotes have grayish fawn coloured coat with black tipped hairs along the back and tail with a whitish tinge to the belly and throat. Have ears that are relatively large as compared to the rest of the head and a black tipped bushy tail that points down when running. Coydogs are a cross between a Coyote and a domestic dog and have a more variable coat colouring ranging from grayish-brown to yellowish-gray to reddish-brown. These animals keep the predatory nature of the Coyote and the dogs lack of fear of humans and are often to blame for many livestock attacks instead of purebred Coyotes. Recently there has been a heightened awareness of Coyotes as there are increased sightings in urban areas and a few close calls with people being approached by them. They are generally afraid of humans and will avoid us at all costs but sometimes they become less timid from the chance at an easy meal
through our curbside garbage or in some cases people even feeding them. This time of year is when they breeding habits and a shortage of food can bring them closer to residential areas. If you are approached stay calm, back away slowly and never turn your back or run. If the animal still seems aggressive stand tall, wave your arms and make lots of noise. Carry a flashlight to scare the animals away at night and if they pose an immediate threat, call 911. Always keep your pets on a leash when hiking the Trail as they may get injured if they chase a Coyote. You can get more information about living with Coyotes by visiting the OMNR website at http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/FW/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD_088694.html.

Black Bears – Make noise as you move through wooded areas
• Travel with others if possible
• Carry and have readily accessible a whistle or an air horn, and bear pepper spray. Know how to use this spray.
• Avoid strong fragrances that may cause a bear to be curious; put any food you are carrying in sealed containers in your pack.
• If you encounter a bear and it is not paying any attention to you, slowly and quietly back away while watching the bear to make sure it isn’t following you.
• If the bear obviously knows you are there, raise your arms to let the bear know you are a human. Make yourself look as big as possible. Speak in a firm but non-threatening voice while looking at the bear and backing away.
• If the bear continues to try to approach, stand your ground and be aggressive - use your whistle or air horn, yell, stand tall, wave your arms and throw objects – fight back if you have to!
• Do not climb a tree!

Rattlesnakes – Have a brownish grey to dark grey background with dark saddle-shaped blotches on the back with several rows of alternating blotches on the side. Have a diamond shaped head with white stripes along jaw and slited pupils like a cats. Heavily bodied snake with narrower neck. Have a rattle at the end of their tail.
• Wear footwear that covers the ankles and long pants.
• Be careful reaching into brush or under rocks.
• If you hear a rattlesnake stay calm, stop walking, determine its location and slowly walk away – give it plenty of room to move away. Do not harm the snake.
• If bit – remain calm, call 911, reduce activity and lay down to prevent circulation of venom, remove any jewelry from around the bite and wash and cleanse the wound.

**Ticks and Lyme Disease** - Caused by the bite of the Black legged Tick / Deer Tick not Dog Tick.

- More of a southerly concern
- Early symptoms - fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, fatigue and a skin rash resembling a bull's eye
- After being in the wilderness, promptly check your body for presence of ticks

**Poison Ivy** -

- Three leaves
- Variable leaf shape
- Centre leaf stalked
- Can be a vine, shrub or herbaceous plant

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**Workparties** - (garbage removal, barricade building etc)

• Should have a group leader
• If garbage clean-up should know what is there beforehand (any hazardous or unknown liquids should be left for staff to dispose of)
• Leader should go over any safety issues (general and site specific) and proper tool usage (if any) at the beginning of the project (ie if picking up garbage what type, are there any sharp items such as glass, metal edges, unknown liquids)
• Any protective equipment should be provided or mentioned before the project so volunteers can bring safety items from home if they wish (gloves). Most of the Clubs have a stock of commonly used tools and safety equipment. However, some volunteers who go out to work on the properties may find it more convenient to have their own basic equipment.
• Leader or organizer of the project should have a full first aid kit on site and everyone should know where it is kept. Someone in the group should have first aid training and be identified at the start of the project

If you do injure yourself while performing your stewardship duties please inform your Land Steward Director and fill out an incident report form which are available from your director or the BTC head office.