

# Alaska Outdoor Safety

Prepared by: Alaska Mountain Rescue Group

## Topics:

- (A) Trip Planning/Essential Equipment
- (B) Seasonal Hazards
- (C) Backcountry Emergencies---Who to contact?
- (D) Where to Obtain More Outdoor Information/Skills
- (E) Recommended Equipment Lists

## **(A) Trip Planning**

Always carry enough to survive the night if necessary—plenty of food, water, essential clothing.

- Always carry the essential gear when traveling in backcountry (more than 1 mile from a road or on overnight trips), even if just a “day” trip.
- Leave a trip plan with family or friend—(where going, when expected back, what they should do if you are overdue)
- Use wool/synthetic clothing/insulation (NO COTTON) & concept of layering.
- Carry a good topo map for the area
  - \*Unlike Lower 48, few trail signs/directions—need to know how to navigate
  - \*1:63,000 is most detailed topographic map available in AK.

## **(B) SEASONAL HAZARDS**

### **Summer**

#### **HYPOTHERMIA**

Synthetic or wool clothing--- NO cotton

Layering system is best---allows you to adapt to changing conditions

Good raingear (Goretex, or other breathable, non-permeable fabric)

Hat, gloves, some insulating clothing (all seasons)

Plenty of food, water—enough for overnight if necessary

#### **WILDLIFE (Moose & Bears)**

Educate yourself about bear safety and how to behave in bear country

Keep a clean camp---sleep 200 yds away from cooking area.

Carry appropriate protection devices (i.e., those you are comfortable using and know how to use)

Bear spray – (capsicum pepper spray)

Firearms (only in “defense of life and property” can a bear be shot)

#### **COLD WATER**

Cold water kills fast! --- Ocean 39-47<sup>0</sup> F,

Glacial lakes/streams—35-41 F,

Non-glacial lakes/streams 40-60<sup>0</sup> F

Wear your PFD when doing any boating!

Be careful with stream crossings---“fast and cold”

## Winter

\*Always carry essential gear + additional items for warmth/shelter (see lists)

\*Winter backcountry travel requires MORE SKILLS—get additional training!

### MAIN HAZARDS:

#### COLD/FROSTBITE

Always carry sufficient food, clothing, fuel, stove/pot, and shelter

Know how to build a basic snow shelter

Take a class/seminar, learn from others—winter survival is a learned skill

#### AVALANCHES

Increasingly catching winter recreationists who are unfamiliar with the potential hazard

Take classes, educate yourself BEFORE heading into mountain terrain in winter.

Always carry a beacon, probe, and snow shovel (and practice using them)

Alaska Mountain Safety Center, Mountaineering Club of Alaska:

Avalanche hazard recognition and safety class--\$25-50

Level 1 Avalanche Course.

## (C) BACKCOUNTRY EMERGENCIES---Who to contact and how?

- Search and rescue in Alaska is managed by the Alaska State Troopers—they call upon a variety of ground and airborne organizations for search and rescue.

### 1) If you are injured or in need of assistance in backcountry:

- Send others in party or in the area for help—if no others, use signaling devices (cell phone, whistle, flare, PLB, etc.) to attract attention/help.
- If have cell phone and reception—**call AST 907-352-5452 or 911 to request assistance—be prepared to give location!**

### 2) If a family member, friend, or co-worker is overdue from a backcountry trip:

- Did he/she have a trip plan? What did it say about destination, being overdue? **Do NOT wait 24 hours unless trip plan suggests this is a possibility.**
- Contact call AST (907) 428-7200 or 911—request assistance—make sure you are clear that this is a backcountry emergency (not a “missing person”)

## **D) Where to Obtain Outdoor Skills and Training**

### Reference Sources:

Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. 1997. The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA.\*

Wilderness Survival Guide, M. Alford. 1987 Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, Edmonds, WA.

Snow Sense: A Guide to Evaluating Avalanche Hazard, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. J. Fredston & D. Fesler. 1999. Alaska Mountain Safety Center, Anchorage, AK.\*

Medicine for Mountaineering & Other Wilderness Adventures, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, J. Wilkerson (editor), 1992. The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA.\*

### **LOCAL RESOURCES/TRAINING**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org)

Alaska Avalanche School: <http://www.alaskaavalanche.com/Site/Homepage.html>

Alaska Outdoor Source: [www.akoutdoors.net/class.htm](http://www.akoutdoors.net/class.htm)

Skiing  
Climbing  
Boating  
Fishing

Arctic Orienteering Club: <http://www.alaska.net/~oalaska/>

**Resources** (continued)

Knik Canoers and Kayakers: PO Box 242861 Anchorage, AK Hotline - (907) 272-9351

Alaska Snowmachine Association: <http://www.aksnow.org/html/index.php>

REI—holds monthly clinics on a variety of topics from backpacking, winter camping, etc.

Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game: fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing information  
<http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/adfghome.htm>

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

## Recommended Equipment For Overnight Backpacking Trips

### Summer

Rain/wind shell (pants and jacket) that work  
Light wool or fleece pants  
Light long johns  
Insulating shirt/sweater  
Jacket  
Baseball cap  
Gloves  
Extra socks  
Wool or synthetic hat  
Hiking boots  
Sunscreen  
Mosquito repellent  
Whistle  
Large plastic bag(1-2)  
Lighter, matches  
Map, compass  
Aerosol bear repellent (or firearm if chose)  
Medical kit including:  
    Moleskin/Spenco 2nd skin  
    Ace bandage  
    Surgical tape

Aspirin  
Gauze  
Anti-bacterial ointment  
4" x 4" pads, Band-Aids  
Repair kit including:  
    Wire  
    Vice grips or pliers  
    Utility cord  
    Sewing kit  
Tent  
Sleeping pad  
Sleeping bag  
Backpack cover  
Cook pot  
Stove  
Fuel bottle  
Walking stick or ski pole or ice axe  
Water bottles (not canteens) (Nalgene or bladders)  
FOOD! (much of which should be edible without cooking)

### Winter

Wind gear  
Wool/fleece pants  
Wool/fleece shirt  
Long johns  
Down jacket  
Wool/fleece hat  
Face mask/balaclava  
Mittens  
Double boots  
Avalanche beacon & probe  
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