



NBATC GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER HIKE LEADERS

The following guidelines provide suggestions that will help ensure that you lead a successful hike. It is recommended that these guidelines are viewed as the minimum standards that are expected of hike leaders.

GENERAL POLICY

A primary goal of NBATC will be to promote the enjoyment of nature through the scheduling and sponsorship of hikes in the Virginia Hiker.

Cost of hikes: There will be no cost for hikes except for transportation paid to the drivers of privately owned vehicles. This cost is normally listed in the hiking schedule and is based upon total round trip mileage. For mystery hikes or unscheduled hikes, riders and drivers should agree upon the cost prior to departure.

Emergency Procedures: All hike leaders should carry a first aid kit. A fully charged cell phone is also recommended if available, either the hike leader's or a member of the hiking group. The Hike Report Form has a place for emergency contact information; this is particularly important for nonmembers.

Maximum Number of Hikers per Hike: The following are policy guidelines which may be subject to minor modifications if deemed appropriate by the hike leader. The maximum number of hikers for hikes in Wilderness Areas will be 10. For all hikes, the maximum single group size will be 25 hikers. If more than 25 people show up for a hike, split them into two groups and stagger their starting times by at least 15 minutes. Also, for loop hikes, one group can go clockwise and the other counter-clockwise. You should also consider doing a cross-over hike to split up large groups.

Cross-Over Hikes: Cross-over hikes or key exchange hikes are an efficient way to run a hike. By having a group drive to each trailhead of a linear hike, they can hike toward the other group's cars and exchange keys at the midpoint.

Hike Rerouting: Hike leaders may reroute a scheduled hike at their discretion if there is some justification that makes this action advisable.

Hike Cancellation: Leaders should assume that scheduled hikes will go rain or shine unless they have not received a single phone call from a potential hiker. Even so, if a leader intends to cancel a hike, it is recommended that the leader drive to the meeting place in case hikers are there ready to hike.

HIKE LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

PRIOR TO THE HIKE

Scout the Hike: Unless you are familiar with the hike you have volunteered to lead, you should scout the assigned hike at least one week prior to the scheduled hike. Locate the trailhead, assess trail conditions, establish a lunch stop, and locate car parks at both ends.

Meet Hikers: Meet the hikers at the designated meeting spot at least 5 minutes prior to the scheduled departure time. Be on time. Wait no more than 5 minutes past the scheduled departure time for late hikers.

Register All Hikers on the Trip Report Form: All leaders are provided with a trip report form with their copy of the Virginia Hiker. Assure all hikers who show up sign the form. Extra blank forms can be downloaded from the club website at www.nbatc.org.

Assure Adequate Drivers: Make sure enough drivers are on hand to handle all the hikers that show up. If there are not, explain that the hike will be canceled if more drivers are not secured. For cross-over hikes, assure that all drivers understand which trailhead they are driving to. Agree upon a meeting place after the hike to exchange cars, keys, belongings, etc.

Reimburse the Driver: Inform all hikers that they must reimburse the driver for round trip transportation costs to and from the hike site and pay the driver prior to departure. The cost for each hike is listed in the Virginia Hiker.

Take First-Aid Precautions: Ensure there is a first aid kit for the hike (two for cross-over hikes). It is desirable that the leader knows what to do for the more serious problems like broken bones, bleeding, or shock.

Forecast Weather Considerations: Be aware of forecast weather conditions which could influence the safety of the hikers and the protective clothing which may be required. These conditions would include possible thunderstorms, heavy rains, and/or flooding, heat waves, snow, and freezing rain.

Water & Food: Ensure all hikers have adequate water for the hike. In hot humid weather, one quart of water per person for every three hiking miles is recommended. Make sure that all hikers have brought lunch food or snacks if the length and time of the hike warrants this.

Leader Authority: Based on the leader's best judgment that a hiker is not physically capable of completing the hike and/or the hiker is not properly equipped for the hike, the leader has the authority to deny a hiker the right to participate in the hike.

Brief All Hikers on the Following Items: Hike overview, safety precautions and emergency procedures, hike restrictions (if any), environmental concerns (litter, etc.), possible dangers of dehydration, untreated water, bees, ticks, snakes, bears, nettles, pit stops, lunch break, and swimming policy, method/route to spot vehicles at trailhead and terminus.

AT THE TRAILHEAD

Review Trail Maps: Each leader should have a trail map. Show the trail map to the hikers and explain the hike route, key intersections, hike terrain, scenic views, trail marking conventions (i.e., white or blue blazed), possible exit points along the trail in case of problems, and approximately what time and place the hike is scheduled to end. For cross-over hikes, make sure all drivers know where to meet after the hike to exchange cars and keys and belongings.

Assign the "Sweep": Assign an experienced hiker to be the "sweep" (last person in the hiking group) and give this individual the first aid kit. For cross-over hikes, the leader should appoint a competent

co-leader for the second group. In this case, a sweep is needed for both groups. Inform the sweep that their duties will be to reorient confused hikers, provide first aid materials from the first aid kit to any injured hiker and to assure that all hikers are in front of the sweep and that no-one is left behind. The hike should not leave the trailhead until one of the hikers accepts the responsibility for being the sweep.

DURING THE HIKE

Take Leader Actions: Be the lead person at the front of the hiking group. If leading at the front becomes inadvisable for some reason (i.e., assistance required for a weak hiker), the lead should be passed to some other reliable hiker with knowledge of the remaining hiking trail. Ensure the new lead hiker is aware of possible confusing intersections ahead and will take appropriate action to prevent the hikers from making wrong turns on the trail.

Maintain Control of the Hiking Group: On the trail, at every trail junction or every 30 minutes, make stops to insure that all hikers are still with the leader. It is the leader's responsibility to keep the hiking group intact between a leader and a sweep. This does not infer that all hikers must remain within a tight cluster. If a hiker insists on hiking in front of the hike leader, that hiker will be informed that he/she is now on his/her own. He or she will no longer be considered as part of the hike group and assumes all risk for safe return to Lynchburg. If it is apparent that someone cannot keep up, it is advisable to send him/her back with someone.

Watch for Lost Hikers: If any hiker is unaccounted for, the leader must assess the situation and is expected to use good judgment in determining the best course of action to find the lost hiker(s).

AFTER THE HIKE

Count Hikers: Ensure all hikers are accounted for at the hike terminus before returning to Lynchburg.

Attend to Missing Hikers: If a hiker is determined to be missing at the terminus, the leader must initiate action to find the lost hiker(s).

Fill Out the Hike Report Form: Complete the form with mileage driven, trail conditions, and noteworthy events and/or recommendations for running this hike in the future. Mail this form to the club post office box: NBATC, PO Box 3012, Lynchburg, VA 24503.

Report Trail Conditions: report needed trail maintenance or the fact that the trail is "all clear" as noted on the form. Use the email addresses or telephone numbers as noted on the form.

Report Your Hours: Hours spent planning, scouting, and leading club hikes are counted towards club work hours. Report your hours to Emily Helms, Work Hours and Section Leader Coordinator, via email at helms50@verizon.net or by telephone at 434-237-2180.

THANK YOU

The NBATC Outing Committee sincerely thanks you for your participation and help in being a competent, reliable, and knowledgeable hike leader. Please do not take your responsibility lightly. We are counting on you. Thanks again for your help. If you have any suggestions for improving these instructions, we would like to hear from you.