



LARIMER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Larimer County Sheriff's Office
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Subject: Hiker Safety
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Tens of thousands of people annually visit the back country in Larimer County and some of them get into situations which require the Emergency Services Unit of the Sheriff's Office and the Larimer County Search and Rescue Team to assist with a search or carry-out. Many of these missions could have been avoided had hikers used some common sense and a little preparation. Consider the following suggestions:

- **Tell someone where you're going**, your general route and when you intend to return. Stick to your time frame or you may find yourself the object of a search the next day, and don't separate from your hiking companions unless you have an emergency. If you change your plans at the last minute, leave a note on your car with the new plans.
- **Carry matches, first aid kit**, a flashlight with fresh batteries and clothes warm enough to wear if you have to spend the night. Be sure to have a whistle or other noisemaking device you could use to help rescuers locate you if needed.
- **Have rain gear with you** on every hike. Colorado weather can change quickly. When your clothes are soaking wet, hypothermia is a danger even in the summer and rain parkas can provide extra warmth. The same goes for ponchos, which can also provide rudimentary shelter. Carry an extra jacket and gear. Dress appropriately, the weather where you are hiking to may be radically different than where you start.
- **Carry a map and compass** and don't be lulled into a sense of security by merely carrying them as a magic talisman. You also need to know how to use them. If you're unsure, get a book on the subject of "orienteeing." If you have a GPS unit, practice its proper use and bring it with you. Recognize that there may be times when the GPS, like the cell phone, will not work on our mountain trails.
- **Don't depend on a cell phone** to send a plea for assistance if you get into trouble, another very good reason to avoid going solo. Make sure your cell phone is fully charged if you take it.
- **"Short cuts" can easily end up costing you time** and energy to find your trail again and serve to create erosion on switch-backed mountain trails. Please avoid them.
- **Don't trust the water**. Even our clear mountain streams can and do contain Giardia, causing diarrhea, cramps and nausea. Use a filter pump (available from most outdoor shops) or boil your water for at least five minutes.

- **“Take only pictures — leave only footprints.”** Take out what you brought in and do the land and all of us a favor by taking out other people’s trash, too. Every little bit helps.

- **What to do if you are lost -** Stop walking! Find a tree to hug. Draw attention to yourself any safe way possible. Put on your brightest clothing. Yell or whistle if you hear your name called or another whistle. Keep calm! Pull out your survival gear, build a fire if necessary, and wait. If you have a cell phone, and can find a cell signal, call 911. Do not waste batteries calling friends and family.

The Larimer County Search and Rescue Team has additional safety information, including a printable brochure, on their website at <http://www.larimercountysar.org/safety.htm> .

The Search and Rescue Team also offers wilderness safety education programs. More information is available at their website at <http://www.larimercountysar.org/psar.htm> .

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