



EVENT LEADER HANDBOOK

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CHAPTER 1.1 – INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your interest on becoming a SMC Event Leader ("EL"). For a new leader, this handbook will give you the valuable information to become a great SMC Event Leader.

If you are already an Event Leader, this handbook will be both a resource and review for you. Either way, it is meant to serve as a reference for those who volunteer their time to organize SMC events and a resource for Event Leader trainers. Reading this guide is another way to increase your knowledge of Event Leader responsibilities. ELs will learn about their duties and responsibilities, as well as a number of "tried and true" tips to organize safe and engaging events while adhering to SMC guidelines. This handbook does not cover technical information and may not cover all the information required to execute certain events.

Future revisions of the EL handbook rely on feedback and ideas from volunteers who are organizing trips, as well as best practices in the outdoor education field. Please contribute by submitting your suggestions to the SMC Executive Director.

SECTION 2.1 – EVENT LEADER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Sierra Mountaineering Club Event Leaders are board-approved volunteers who organize official club events such as club climbs, expeditions and training classes to accomplish the mission of Sierra Mountaineering Club ("SMC") which is to "Connect, Learn & Climb".

ELs are critical to the mission of SMC to provide a diverse year-round calendar of events that appeal to a wide range of climbers and their equally broad skill level. As an EL, you will have the unique opportunity to share your knowledge and passion for climbing with others, and the satisfaction of organizing a quality event that benefits and enhances individual members of SMC and the membership at large.

2.2 How to Become an Event Leader

This process begins with approval to become an Event Leader (EL). After meeting the minimum standards (see below) the member submits the signed agreement for review by the Board of Directors. If approved, the prospective EL then meets with an SMC officer to decide on what events they will offer. After this is determined ELs can then begin leading events and have access to EL privileges. All ELs are subject to periodic Board approval and review at monthly board meetings. For more complete information, please refer to the current SMC Event Leader Agreement document.

2.3 Specific Roles of an SMC Event Leader

Being an EL involves five key roles and related responsibilities:

1. Decision-maker

- Plan the trip goals, route, and logistics.
- Make appropriate decisions for changing situations.
- Use your experience to develop good judgment.
- Harness the strengths and knowledge of your group members to solve problems.
- Make focused decisions even when under stress.

2. Risk Manager
 - Follow the SMC policies and procedures.
 - Be competent in technical skills needed for the trip, including first aid, or insure that someone who is on the trip has those skills.
 - Have an emergency plan.
 - To the best of your ability determine the adequacy of a member's skills, gear, and physical fitness for the event.
 - Willingness to enforce trip requirements, policies and procedures and, if necessary, remove unsafe persons from a trip or terminate a trip early if safety is compromised.
3. Mentor
 - Observe skills and knowledge demonstrated explicitly or implicitly by all individuals on the event.
 - Help each person participate on the event using their best set of skills and expertise.
4. Group Facilitator
 - Communicate effectively with participants before during and after the trip.
 - See the possibilities in any situation and find creative ways to move the group forward.
 - Turn challenging situations into opportunities.
 - Use personal relationships and other tools to keep things in perspective.
 - Role-model and teach outdoor skills.
5. Administrative Tasks and Follow-Through
 - Write event description and see that it gets accurately posted.
 - Screen and select your team in advance of the event date.
 - Complete required trip forms in a timely manner, such as expedition paperwork.
 - Write a trip report to be posted on the website.
 - Follow-up after an emergency.
6. Ambassador for SMC
 - Be able to describe the mission and basic programs of SMC.
 - Present a positive perspective of SMC.
 - Respond constructively to feedback or criticism about the organization.

SECTION 3.1 – ABOUT SMC EVENTS

One of the perks of membership in a club is access to an array of exciting events. SMC has seven types of club-sponsored ("official") events: field training courses, online training classes, club climbs, expeditions, presentations, social events, and business. SMC also has presentations which are open to the public.

3.2 Field Training Classes are free single-day or weekend events where the objective is not a summit but rather the demonstration and practice of certain skillsets within the scope of mountaineering. Event Leaders are not required to lead these events; however doing so will greatly enhance a leader's technical abilities, leadership, and people skills, and all ELs have unlimited access to attend these events.

There are multiple levels each to three distinct disciplines, which are "Rock Climbing" (RCK), "Snow, Ice and Glacier Climbing" (SIG), and "Mountaineering" (MTN) which

encompasses everything else. Training courses are held at locations involving minimal travel in order to provide maximum time to demonstrate and practice the skill set on-site. Classes are held in sequence so those coming from a distance can attend multiple sessions if desired.

The training courses follow a curriculum which is available before and followed during the event. These courses are taught year-round as conditions warrant. Attendance at training courses better qualifies members to attend events which require the application of these skills, which is all technical club climbs and expeditions. Their attendance is automatically recorded on their member profile and is used to appropriately RSVP them in the future.

3.3 Online Training Classes are live training sessions held over the internet via video conferencing. They are paid sessions, or included for those with full membership, and usually held on a weekday evening in 1.5 hour blocks. They follow the same pattern as the SMC training classes, only that there is only one class for level each discipline, such as SIG 1, SIG 2, and SIG 3 only. The only exception is the rescue classes of RCK 3.4 and SIG 3.4 which are stand alone for those sessions only. The online training classes are preparatory in nature; those that attend are better qualified to be RSVPed for the free training classes held in the field, and also better qualified to be RSVPed to all SMC events at that level.

3.4 Club Climbs are free official events where the focus is the traditional experience of climbing. They can range from one to three days in length and have a specific objective, typically a summit or a number of summits. They may range from 4-10 participants and may be held in any mountain environment at any time of year.

Club climbs range in difficulty from short beginner events that are little more than hiking to technical climbing on a large scale. Events are rated in terms of the minimum level of skillset proficiency that participants should have to participate, such as MTN 1 or RCK 3. Of course, an EL must be at or above the level of the event they are leading. All members - free or paid - may join the interest list and it is the responsibility of the EL to assemble the best team, all things taken into account.

Occasionally, the club has non-technical events are hiking or "peakbagging" only. They do not have any prior training course attendance and will be open to general membership RSVP on a first-come, first-serve basis.

3.5 Expeditions are large scale, member-financed club climbs on difficult or distant peaks that require a high level of training, expertise and planning to summit. They are for full members only. Expeditions happen year-round in places like the Cascades, Tetons, Rockies or other ranges. Some long term and ambitious events in the Sierra also qualify as an expedition. The exact peaks and routes selected are the result of motivated ELs and a carefully selected group of team members who put in time over many months in preparation. Each event will be posted up to a year in advance and will involve mandatory skills training and certification, commitment to physical fitness training, and financial commitments for gear, permits, and travel expenses. Expeditions are typically led by ELs with significant experience. Upon prior approval, ELs who lead expeditions can have their travel costs reimbursed by the participants of that expedition. Even so, SMC expeditions can be offered to the membership at a fraction of the cost of guided climb. They are a major benefit to SMC membership.

3.6 Social Events are held at a location and a timeframe that allows all members to attend. Some of these events allow for members to bring a few guests. Some are also coupled with instruction or climbing activities. The focus of social events is to build community, fellowship with friends, and recruit new members. They may also

be held to plan future events, raise money, or showcase accomplishments and hear stories, pictures or video of club climbs. The premier event is the Annual Dinner held in November.

3.7 Business Events are of two types: Board meetings and Member meetings. As a not-for-profit organization, we are required to have periodic board meetings and an annual member meeting. Typically, the SMC Board meets on the first Tuesday of every month. The annual meeting is usually held in the spring. It is at this meeting that the board and officers are voted in.

3.8 Free Presentations: These are 1-2 hour events open to members and the public held on a weekday evening. They are intended to promote and publicize the club and provide a low commitment entry point for potential members. They are typically broadcasted live to all paying members over the internet. They range among different types of formats such as instruction on skills attractive to non-members, a presentation of club climbs and events in photo or video format, or information on climbing destinations. The focus of the event is captured in the title, such as "Sierra Mountaineering Club presents: Rock Climbing Basics" or "Sierra Mountaineering Club presents: Climbing Mt. Whitney"

3.9 Requirement for Contractors Or Sub-Contractors

On occasion, SMC will utilize non-member professionals, such as licensed guide services, as contractors or sub-contractors to provide training opportunities or other services for the benefit of club members. In such a case, proof of insurance and a certificate naming SMC as additional insured will be required.

3.10 Summary of Operations Parameters for Official Events

- Under the direction of the Executive Director or the board, only Event Leaders may host official club events.
- ELs cannot post, host, or lead "member-organized" events on Meetup.com
- Official events will be released and members can join the interest list also about ideally about four - six weeks prior. For expeditions, this is many months ahead.
- The ELs leading a technical event will select members based on the level of their documented proficiencies, their attendance at SMC training courses, their fitness level, and an overall assessment of their ability to contribute to the safety and success of the endeavor.
- All persons embarking on an outdoor event, including the leaders, shall have signed the SMC Waiver / Emergency Contact List online or on paper.
- The emergency contact list shall be taken in the leaders pack or otherwise available for the duration of the trip. Any paper signed waivers shall be given to the SMC Executive Director upon completion of the event.
- The Event Leader shall carry a first aid kit, any reasonable emergency items for the group, and have access to a cell phone or radio. If ELs do not own a FRS/GMRS radio, the club has several FRS/GMRS radios which may be checked out for use on club events. ELs should be familiar with the proper use of these radios and carry spare batteries. Radios should be tested by ELs prior to use to make sure they are in good working condition. The club's radios include the NOAA "weather channels" so ELs can stay abreast of changing weather conditions. Please note that reception of weather channels may be limited or unavailable in remote areas.
- SMC members may meetup initially at locations that are accessible by passenger car. Individual members may choose to ride share with one another from the meetup location. However, ELs should not designate specific vehicles, drivers or passengers for rideshare vehicles. Directions to locations shall be made known prior to the event in the event description.

- If there is a need to coordinate accommodations and meals prior to the event this is the responsibility of the Event Leaders, otherwise this is individually determined.
- All participants who are RSVPed to any event which has a technical 4th class or higher climbing, belaying, or rappelling component should be carefully assessed for the appropriate skill set via their profile beforehand. All participants will be screened by the Event Leaders. Group size will not normally be more than 10 persons, including the Event Leaders.
- Events rated at the RCK 1, SIG 1, or MTN 1 level will not involve roped climbing and will be led by an EL or a team of ELs at or above that level. Participants will be selected from an interest list. Group size will not normally be more than 10 people, including the ELs.
- Events designated at the RCK 2, SIG 2 or MTN 2 level will involve roped snow climbing or moderate rock climbing, off trail navigation, or winter climbing and will be led by an EL or a team of ELs at or above that level. All participants will be screened. Group size will not normally be more than 8 people, including the ELs.
- Events at the RCK 3, SIG 3, or MTN 3 level will involve rock or ice lead climbing, travel in technical terrain, or expedition grade climbing. These will be led by ELs with significant experience and managed on a case by case basis.

3.11 SMC Event Classifications by Discipline

Because SMC offers many types of events, we use several criteria in our trip descriptions to classify our various types of offerings. No classification system is perfect, and event difficulties can vary greatly depending on the season and other factors. If after reading the event description you have any questions contact the SMC Executive Director.

These are brief summaries to help accurately rate official events. For further description, please reference the Summary of SMC Training Events or the SMC Member Handbook.

3.12 Level 1 events will require "BEGINNER" level skills and knowledge:

- RCK 1: Non-technical rock climbing or scrambling, where no ropes are used. Spotting, short belay from a leader may be used.
- SIG 1: Non-technical snow climbing where no ropes are used. Ability to self arrest is required.
- MTN 1: 3-season events with trailed and/or off-trail travel, but with simple navigation.

3.13 Level 2 events will require "INTERMEDIATE" level skills and knowledge:

- RCK 2: Moderately technical rock climbing, short in duration, where ropes may be used for safety and participants should have some prior rock climbing experience. Knowledge of anchor building using rock protection and belaying is required.
- SIG 2: Moderately technical steeper snow or easy ice climbing where ropes may be used for safety and participants should have some prior snow and/or ice climbing experience. Knowledge of snow and ice protection, anchor building, and belaying is required.
- MTN 2: Winter mountaineering, glacier travel, and/or more extensive off-trail travel and navigation required, or a fixed line may be present.

3.14 Level 3 events will require "ADVANCED" level skills and knowledge

- RCK 3: Ability to lead climb rock is required, possibly in a multi-pitch or alpine setting, as well as all other skillsets such as anchor building, lead belaying, following, rappelling, etc.
- SIG 3: Ability to lead climb ice or alpine ice is required, possibly in a multi-pitch or alpine setting, as well as other skillsets such as anchor building, lead belaying, following, rappelling, etc.
- MTN 3: Expedition mountaineering, possibly involving serious glacier travel and difficult or remote climbing with challenging navigation and/or routefinding requirements. Significant mountain experience and self-sufficiency is critical because outside assistance and/or rescue will be difficult.

3.15 Definitions of Terms Used in Event Descriptions

The following terms may be used to describe the difficulty of the terrain at an event:

- Trail: The approach is mainly on an improved trail in reasonable condition. Any portion of the trip not on trail is easy "like trail" conditions. These events typically will not have an SMC rating and will be open to all members.
- Off Trail: Below timberline, the trip may involve bushwhacking or travel through forested terrain. Above timberline, the trip may cross open tundra or involve Class 2 hiking under the Yosemite Decimal System: i.e., moving on or around talus, scree and boulders where the use of hands may be used, but only to maintain balance. No special hiking or climbing skills are required. Exposure is usually minimal or nonexistent except for loose rock. These events typically will not have an SMC rating and will be open to all members.
- Non-Technical, Scrambling: The event involves Class 2 and 3 climbing: i.e., climbing that is relatively easy with plentiful handholds. These events typically will not have an SMC rating and will be open to all members. Although a rope is rarely required, Class 3 climbing may be intimidating for less experienced climbers. Always consider bringing and wearing a climbing helmet to ensure your own safety. A fall on a Class 3 route usually results in a minor injury, but can on occasion result in something more serious.
- Technical, Class 4: The event involves Class 4 climbing or very exposed Class 3 climbing where a rope is a very likely possibility. These types of events are usually rated at least RCK 1 or SIG 1. The event involves climbing with hands and feet at the same time and is within the realm of technical rock climbing, but with relatively plentiful handholds. Some people will desire a rope, but usually just for protection on the descent. Participants must wear climbing helmets. A fall without the protection of a rope on a Class 4 route usually results in serious injury or death.
- Technical, Class 5: The event includes travel on Class 5 terrain where a protective system involving a rope is mandatory. These events are usually rated at least RCK 2 or SIG 2. Technical rock climbing is rated according to the standard Yosemite Decimal System. Snow climbs are rated at their steepest point, in degrees. Ice climbs are rated using the standard for alpine ice from I – IV. Participants must wear climbing helmets and use all appropriate personal safety gear and climbing tools and gear. A fall without the protection of a rope on a Class 5 route results in serious injury or death.

SECTION 4.1 – BEFORE YOUR EVENT

Organizing an event requires several steps, beginning with the type of event you want to lead. The club has lists of many excellent events that have been developed in the past; these can be helpful guides, especially for new ELs.

4.2 Planning and Posting Your Event

1. Create a description for the trip by deciding on a location and a route, the type of climbing, how rigorous the trip will be, and how long it will last. Remember: leaders generally move faster than participants. Add time for unforeseen delays (environmental and human), breaks, and elevation gain or loss.
2. Estimate how many participants can safely take part in the trip. Consider the following: Will the trip be strenuous or more leisurely? Will beginners be welcome or only experienced climbers?
3. Assess what skillset will be required to safely participate in the event. Look at each category in the training course spectrum for RCK, SIG, and MTN, and designate the appropriate level. You must be qualified for the skill level of your trip or higher.
3. Decide how many ELs the event will require, what each EL's role will be, and any special experience, conditioning, or equipment they will need.
4. Using the Official Template on the Google Drive create a posting and send it to the Events Committee at events@smc.club.
5. The Events Committee or an SMC Officer will review the postings, and once approved they will publish it to the calendar, install the necessary links, then announce it to the membership at large.

4.3 RSVPing Members To Your Event

Once an event has been posted and announced, members will follow the links to take them to our official website at www.sierramountaineeringclub.org where they can put their name on the interest list.

The goals of the club in RSVPing members are to allow as many qualified members as possible to attend as many events as possible. We want a good mix of men and women of different ages, locales, and backgrounds on our events.

Although open to individual interpretation, here are some suggested parameters for RSVPing:

1. Take a good amount of people who are clearly qualified - technically, know-how, team ethic, past events, reputation, etc - to contribute to the success of the team.
2. Those who have never attended, have not attended for a long time, or have only attended very few events get priority over those who have attended many events or recently attended.
3. To the extent you can determine they will not be a detriment to the safety or success of the team, take a few individuals for whom the demands of the event may be a stretch - but that that can be overcome by the strength and mentoring of your team.
4. Women on the interest list get priority over men. This is because there are less women in the club and we want to encourage participation. Try to get at least two or three women, especially if the event involves camping.
5. Anyone who has previously attended an online or field training session should be considered over those that have not.
6. Members who are outside of the Sacramento Section get higher priority to encourage participation and help grow membership in those areas.

4.4 Screening Participants

Because of the often demanding and / or technical nature of mountaineering events, it is important for ELs to have skills in screening participants' readiness and abilities to participate. This information can be gathered from member profiles which show

the skills and training they have, or from an email or phone conversation. The following are key areas to consider when communicating with potential participants:

- **Fitness:** Participants should be physically (including conditioning and stamina) and medically fit enough to enjoy the event and not compromise their safety or the group's safety.
- **Experience:** Participants should have the technical expertise appropriate for the type of event, such as ice climbing or exposed rock scrambling in mountain boots. For example, for an event at the RCK 2 level, those who have taken RCK 2 or who have experience at the RCK 2 level are the most appropriate participants.
- **Equipment:** Participants should have the necessary equipment to participate in the trip safely, such as food and water, or appropriate footwear.
- **Expectations:** Purpose of event (e.g., social event vs. technical climb)

4.5 Screening and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

If a potential participant has a disability, there are additional criteria that must be considered according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

- **Reasonable accommodation:** Can the person take part on the trip without SMC incurring excessive cost or effort to allow participation?
- **Safety:** Can the person take part on the trip without endangering his or her own safety or the safety of others?
- **Fundamental nature of the trip/activity:** Can the person take part on the trip without fundamentally changing the nature of the activity?

4.6 Asking Good Questions

Ask open-ended questions with the goal of obtaining as much information as possible. It is the EL's role to judge the suitability of an event for an individual, not to judge the participant by their general fitness and equipment. Here are some tenets of good questions:

- Screening participants off the event is not the goal. Instead, the goal is to determine whether the event is right for them. Consider framing the questions with, "In order to assess whether this is the right event for you, I want to ask you a couple of questions."
- Asking a few good, open-ended questions solicits more information while putting the potential participants at ease. Open-ended questions tend to be the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" questions. They ask for more information than a simple yes or no.

4.7 Sample Questions

The goal of these questions is to determine whether the event is a good fit for participants physical abilities and skill level. Here are some open-ended questions to consider:

- "What is your mountaineering (rock, snow, ice) experience and how recent is this experience?"
- "How often do you do this activity?" If the participant has never done it before, ask, "What sort of exercise do you do to stay fit?"
- "Have you done a climb of this length and difficulty before?"
- "How is your general physical condition? Do you have any allergies or have had major injuries in the past?"
- "Are you willing to stay with the group, even if it's a slow pace for you, or we don't reach the destination?"

The goal of these questions is to help ensure that participants have the appropriate abilities, skills, and in some cases equipment for the activity (and not too much). An EL should use his or her creativity to describe to newer participants the value of and

reasons for appropriate footwear, rain gear, etc. Speak of past experiences you've seen to reinforce your suggestions.

4.8 Steering Participants to More Appropriate Events

As an EL, it is best to get the participant invested in screening him or herself off a trip. The EL should paint the real expectations of the event and how the participant's fitness, skill level or equipment may prevent him or her from having a safe and enjoyable event. Here are some ways to discuss the suitability of the event and to suggest alternative events:

- "Generally this event is more appropriate for people who are able to climb at a higher technical level [for a longer time, at high elevations, in difficult conditions]."
- "I am concerned that this event may be too long [hard, strenuous, etc.] for you and will not be enjoyable."
- "Though this event does not seem like a good fit for you, we have a great event next week that I think you might enjoy."
- "I know that this weight in your pack is okay right now, but think how it will feel in talus and 3,000 feet higher."

4.9 The RSVP Process, Step by Step:

1. About 4 - 6 weeks before the event you can begin to screen those on the interest list for suitability. Click the link called "member report" which will deliver a data sheet of all the individuals on the interest list.
2. You can add custom columns. This is a starting place - use all of this information to help you designate individuals who may be good candidates.
3. To investigate further, in the member report list click on any person's name. All the info from their SMC profile such as fitness, competencies, and how many events they have attended will appear. Here you can see what they have attended, what they are currently RSVPed for, what interests lists they have joined, and how they rate themselves and their skill level. All of this should paint a picture of that person's suitability for the event.
4. If this does not provide enough information to make a reliable decision, you should contact the participants individually to assure that they do or do not have appropriate skill level, physical fitness and gear to safely participate.
5. Back on the event page on our website, you can then select your team by clicking the "RSVP" button underneath their name which will put them on the waitlist on Meetup.
6. Then you must go to the event listing on Meetup, and in the "Tools" menu select "Edit RSVPs".
7. On the Meetup waitlist select that person as going.
8. Once this happens, they will no longer have the "RSVP" text next to their name on the list on the official site, and they will be listed as attending the event on Meetup. Meetup will automatically send them an email.
9. You can use either lists - on the official site or Meetup - to keep track of who has been RSVPed. Be sure that the lists are the same!

4.10 The Pre-Trip Email(s)

The trip description should fully explain the purpose, requirements, itinerary, equipment needed, conditions to be expected as well as meeting time and other details. However, ELs are required to send out at least one pre-trip email a few days prior. If the event is an expedition or requires more extensive planning and preparation ELs are encouraged to use email to communicate with the team over a longer period of time.

1. Between one week and two days prior to your event, please send out a brief, detailed pre-trip email to all participants. You can do this in Meetup by going to "Tools" and in the drop down box select "Email Attendees."

2. Write the email in another program and copy-paste into Meetup or write it directly in Meetup. Be sure your pre-trip email lists a link to the official event, ride sharing options (take them to the discussion board on Meetup), updates on any gear needed, an outlook at the weather, and any other necessary preparations and considerations. Please include your contact information. Be brief, to the point and positive.
3. Once you've determined the information if helpful, complete and accurate, select all people who have "RSVPed Yes" for that event, and press send. You will receive a copy of the email in your inbox.
4. Forward a copy of the email to the SMC Executive Director.

Individual communications between the EL and participants are encouraged so that participants have the proper prerequisites and attitudes for the event, as well as to address concerns that the participants might have. In addition ELs can use these conversations as a way to identify people who can be resources in an emergency (e.g. people with advanced first aid training).

4.11 Route Considerations

Become familiar with the route, its length, difficulties and requirements for successful and safe completion. When ELs consider the route they would like to take, they should keep their participants in mind. Also, check for location advisories or restrictions that might be associated with the area. Leaders should have a "plan B" for each event, and if the event involves multiple routes, a plan B for each one. Leaders should be respectful of the general public and let them have the right of way. Remember you and your group represent SMC.

When considering any changes to the planned route, either before or during the event, be sure to consider the impact of these changes on the difficulty of the event, participant expectations, and the emergency plan. If a route change affects the difficulty of the trip, participants must be notified, further screening and/or discussion should be considered, and the emergency plan should be reexamined.

4.12 Scouting or "Recon"

It is a good idea to scout the route and look for hazards, trail conditions, recent snow, escape or descent options. If scouting is not feasible, use maps, guidebooks, other leaders, local sources, and other resources to obtain as much information as possible prior to the event.

While scouting a route make notes of the location and travel time for the approach, possible safe zones, belays, water sources, alternate routes, and escape routes.

4.13 Group Size

SMC policy states that the minimum event size is four people. The rationale is that in case of a single injury or accident, one person can stay with the patient and two people can seek assistance. If your event has cancellations or "no-shows" with a result of less than four total people (including you, the leader) please realize that compromises your ability to respond to an emergency.

4.14 Transportation

Consider the following when making transportation plans:

- Where is the meeting place? Do you have permission to park cars there while people are on the trip?
- How will the group get to the trailhead or trip location?
- Will rideshare be used? If so, provide definitive directions.
- Important: SMC liability insurance does not cover drivers, vehicle owners, or passengers. ELs must inform participants that the SMC event officially starts and ends at the trailhead, not at a rideshare meeting location.

4.15 Leave No Trace Planning

Prior to the event, ELs must understand Leave No Trace principles and their relevance to the event location in question. Make sure the co-organizer (if applicable) and participants understand these points before the event begins. SMC recommends that ELs seek out additional training in Leave No Trace practices. See www.lnt.org for more information.

4.16 Public Lands

The majority of SMC events take place on public lands. These lands may be federal (USDA Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service) state, county, or city open space. Event Leaders are required to follow all of the established regulations when using public lands. Because different areas have different regulations, it is essential that the EL take personal responsibility to understand and practice the regulations specific to his or her events. These include group size, permits needed, et cetera. These regulations are subject to change so the EL needs to check with the agency or its website.

ELs are responsible to have a permit when they are required by the land agency. For example, The Mt. Whitney Zone and much of Inyo National Forest requires permits during certain times of the year. Contact the SMC office for additional information.

Typically ELs secure the permits with personal funds and SMC reimburses them post-trip, but SMC can also arrange to get the permits for the trip. In either case, obtaining the permits in a timely manner is the responsibility of the EL.

4.17 Emergency Planning Before the Event

Safety management is a state of mind and should be infused throughout the planning process for the event. ELs also need to make the participants aware of any risks associated with the event. Good event organization and anticipating potential incidents is the best way to prevent an emergency. ELs should have an emergency plan before the trip begins. This plan should include the trip itinerary, emergency resources, and contingency/evacuation plans.

Emergency information to know:

- Hospitals: Know the locations of nearby hospitals and how to get to them.
- Ranger Stations: Know the locations of park ranger stations and if/when they are staffed.
- Search and Rescue: Note the contact information for the relevant providers of this service (i.e. Sherriff's office or park rangers), and most important, find out under what circumstances they will provide assistance and evacuation.
- Phones: Determine whether cell phones work reliably in the area. It is generally not a good idea to rely solely on cell phones as a critical part of the trip's safety management/emergency response plan.
- Evacuation Routes: Identify potential exits from the backcountry that may not be on your planned trip route.

4.18 Emergency Contact Information and Medical Information

Emergency contact information is automatically generated to a list for ELs. Just click the link "Trip Report" on the official event posting, and print it. Each EL should have a copy. Alternately, if you can find how to download that information to a mobile phone you can carry it into the backcountry that way. All SMC members can update their emergency contact information in their online member profile. ELs should encourage participants to keep their information up to date.

SMC does not currently collect medical information on participants, so it is a good idea about any medical conditions and/or special medication or medical equipment,

such as allergy to bee stings, asthma (inhalers), heart conditions, etc. that could affect their participation.

For any events which occur outside of the US (including Canada) ELs must require participants to confirm that their health insurance covers them while abroad including at the destination and in all intermediary travel locations. Travel insurance is recommended, but not required. Regardless, under no circumstances will SMC or other participants on a trip or expedition be responsible for these costs.

4.19 Equipment, Food, and Water

Make sure trip participants know to bring enough food and water for the trip. This can be in the official trip description. In the pre-trip email it is a good idea to mention this and possibly offer suggestions.

4.20 Water Purification

When planning a multi-day route, ensure there is sufficient water along the trail and remind participants to carry water purification methods. Suitable means of water purification sufficient to cover all trip members for the duration of the trip must be present. Suitable means of water purification include: commercial bacterial/viral filter devices; sterilpens which utilize UV radiation; commercial sterilization tablets (chlorine and iodine based); or boiling of water. Consider having several means of water purification available to meet the expected conditions and the needs of the group.

4.21 Sanitation

ELs should be aware of basic sanitation protocols for the handling and preparation of food and for first aid. Hand washing and use of commercial hand sanitizers should be employed before preparing or handling food or administering first aid. Likewise, care should be used to keep from contaminating drinking water. Surgical gloves should be carried and used in instances where first aid must be administered to protect the provider and the patient from body fluids.

4.22 Event Leader's Pack

There are many variations of the "essential" items to carry, depending on the trip and the environment. Listed below are the concept-based "Ten Essential Systems" as adapted from the Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills, 8th edition by the Mountaineers. This is a good starting list of what leaders should consider bringing and expect the participants to bring:

- Navigation equipment (map and compass) - and know how to use them!
- Fire (matches or lighters)
- Signaling device (whistle or mirror)
- Sun protection (sunglasses and sun block)
- Insulation (an adequate clothing system)
- Nutrition (enough food)
- Hydration (enough water and/or the means to purify more)
- Illumination (flashlight/headlamp)
- First aid kit (see below)
- Emergency shelter - Tarp (10' by 10' light-weight nylon tarp with grommets) or Tent.
- Emergency items: Trip-specific repair kit and tools (ski, pack, etc.), personal locator beacons, two-way radios, cell phones, GPS receivers, or even a SAT phone

In addition, ELs can consider bringing extras (may be left in the car) to loan to participants who may have forgotten an essential item, like sunglasses, mittens, etc. If these items are not discussed at the trailhead, ELs might consider carrying extras

on the trail; having extras might save the group from having to turn around early due to an unprepared participant.

4.23 First Aid Kits

The EL's first aid kit will include items necessary to address common wilderness-based emergencies. Considerations when compiling a first aid kit:

- Leader's first aid training
- Environmental extremes (altitude, cold, heat, endemic diseases)
- Number of people that may require care
- Number of days the kit will be in use
- Distance from definitive medical care
- Availability of a rescue (helicopter, pack animal, etc.)
- Pre-existing medical problems of group members
- Board approved first aid kit (including SOAP notes, documentation report, checklist).

4.24 Five Commandments of Wilderness First Aid Kits From the Wilderness Medicine Institute

1. It is impossible to assemble the perfect first aid kit, but trip leaders should still try. Leaders should keep track of things they wish they had brought on previous trips, and things they wish they had brought more of, and reassemble their kit periodically.
2. Repack or recheck the first aid kit before each trip. Check the expiration dates on medications; make sure sterile items have not been torn open, damaged, or dampened; and consider the specific needs that special trips might require. Replace items when damaged by heat or cold. Remove unnecessary items (e.g., insect repellent when conducting a winter trip).
3. Leaders should not pack anything they do not know how to use. Before the trip, leaders should go through each item in the kit and familiarize themselves with what is there and how to use it.
4. Encourage, if not require, participants to pack and carry a personal first aid kit.
5. Remember that ultimately life and limb are not saved by a kit, but by knowledge and skill, so be sure to get properly trained.

4.25 Use and Check Out of Club Gear

Equipment owned by SMC may only be used on official club events. This gear was purchased with membership money so it seems only fair that it should be used by members only. Club gear may not be checked out or used on private non-official events.

To check out gear:

1. Make a mental or actual list of what gear and equipment you will need for your event.
2. Please coordinate when you will come by the SMC office in Sacramento. You may also coordinate having a participant check out the gear for the group to deliver it on the first day of the event. In all cases, an SMC officer will need to be present to do the check out. Typical days to check out club gear are Wednesday or Thursday evenings.
3. Select the gear and equipment you need, inspecting each to make sure it is functional. Be hesitant to take all the available inventory of a certain item - other events may also need that gear.
4. A check out sheet listing all the gear for the event must be filled out. This is in a binder in the gear check out room.
5. Take the gear with you in one or more bins and keep them safe and accounted for throughout the duration of the event.

6. Post event, dry out and arrange the gear.
7. Arrange for and drop off the gear to an SMC officer. Typical days to do so are Tuesday or Wednesday evenings.
8. Upon return, all gear and equipment will be reviewed to insure no items are missing or damaged.
9. If gear does end up missing or damaged you may be asked to replace or repair it. Please inform the club immediately so it can be replaced or repaired prior to further usage.

All club gear should be inspected by ELs prior to use and after each use. Notations should be made for all signs of wear, corrosion, or damage. Gear which has absorbed shocks, drops, wear, use or damage exceeding the manufacturers recommendations will be retired from use immediately. Any soft goods such as ropes and webbing that has been in use for longer than 5 years will be retired from service.

SECTION 5.1 – AT YOUR EVENT

The following section is intended as a help for you in the process of leading your event.

5.2 Ridesharing

Although ELs' responsibilities begin and end at the trailhead, it is possible that participants may wish to rideshare from town to the trailhead. Rideshare transportation is ultimately the responsibility of the participants, both drivers and passengers. If ridesharing occurs, ELs should be aware of the following:

- ELs should advise participants that SMC does not assume responsibility for rideshare. (SMC cannot be responsible for evaluating the safety and condition of a driver's vehicle or the driver's competence).
- ELs should not assign participants to specific cars. They should limit their involvement in rideshare arrangements to helping participants identify who needs and who are offering rides. This precaution limits the ELs' liability as a result of ridesharing activity.
- ELs should check that each rideshare driver knows the directions to the trailhead.
- If available, ELs should encourage the sharing of cell phone numbers from each vehicle.
- Encourage drivers to rotate shifts to and from any trailhead that is more than three hours drive from our meetup location.
- At the rideshare meeting place, typically at a convenient parking area, ELs should arrive 5-10 minutes before the designated meeting time and use this time to check attendance roster and to greet participants as they arrive.

As participants arrive, ELs should:

- Greet participants individually and introduce yourself. Be genuine.
- Do a visual check of their required equipment and clothing. It may be helpful to remind them of essentials for the season such as technical gear, footwear, extra clothing, etc. If someone does not appear to be prepared for the trip, this is the best place to let them know and encourage them to leave the event as they will have transportation available to them.
- If they have not already done so by completing an online member profile, have participants sign the SMC assumption of risk and waiver of liability form.

5.3 Safety Orientation at the Trailhead

- Check that everyone arrived safely and remind drivers to check vehicles for locked doors, lights off, etc.
- Gather the group to orient them to the trip and group safety guidelines. This orientation should include a description of the trips inherent dangers, safety precautions while underway, and what to do in the event of an emergency.
- Provide an opportunity for people to introduce themselves, possibly including any special skills/interests or background.
- Ask that people with special medical needs or conditions inform the leader. Create opportunities for participants to come to him or her privately to discuss sensitive health and fitness issues, because asking personal questions in front of the group will likely not result in honest answers (e.g., “Does anyone here have a history of heart attacks?” “Who has absolutely no experience?”)
- Always honor the participant’s dignity.
- Questions to avoid: Avoid highly personal or discriminatory questions
- Discuss trip goals and emphasize that these goals may change due to weather or safety factors.
- Present a trip overview, including mileage, elevation gain, and traveling conditions as well as expected pace, stops (e.g., clothing adjustment stop in 20 minutes), turnaround time, and return time to trailhead.
- Discuss the weather conditions and their impact on the trip, if appropriate.
- In smaller groups, a single leader can effectively monitor all participants, and may choose to be at the front, middle or rear of the group.
- Larger groups may need a designated “front leader” and “rear leader” (or “sweep”). Either the EL or a capable and trustworthy participant can be designated as front or sweep. The front leader keeps track of the route and sets an appropriate pace. The sweep ensures that no participant is left behind by bringing up the rear of the group.
- It is a good idea for front and sweep to carry a method of emergency communication, such as two-way radios, or whistles.
- Remind participants to stay within vision and hearing of each other.
- Discuss emergency procedures and identify those with First Aid and other medical training.
- Ask people to communicate if they need to stop or have any special needs.
- Review applicable LNT principles and trail etiquette.

5.3 Continue Participant Screening

While orienting participants, observe each person’s level of preparation, both their gear (e.g. look over their boots, packs, clothing, and pertinent equipment) and their physical and mental condition. Be sure to count the number of participants before leaving the trailhead for comparison with periodic counts during the trip and upon return to the trailhead.

5.4 Trail Etiquette

- The front leader stays at the front and the rear leader (or sweep) is the last person in the group.
- Communication between the front and rear leaders is important, especially if a participant strays from the group.
- Assemble the entire group periodically, between every 15 to 60 minutes depending on weather, terrain, and strength of the group.
- Regroup at trail junctions and stream crossings.
- Step to the side or off the trail when stopping for breaks.
- If someone needs a bathroom break, be sure the sweep is aware of this (e.g., tell another participant to tell the rear leader) so that no one is left behind.

- Observe and talk to participants to see if they are having problems with the pace or need more frequent breaks.
- Expect the unexpected, monitor the time, and be aware of changing group dynamics, group stamina, and weather.

5.5 "Leave No Trace" Policy is SMC Policy

Sierra Mountaineering Club endorses the principles of LEAVE NO TRACE and expects all participants to abide by the following procedures on public lands.

We Plan Ahead and Prepare By:

- Checking with local public land agencies
- Conducting research to know the area and what to expect
- Encouraging ride sharing to the trailhead
- Planning travel distances and activities
- Being prepared for emergencies and changing conditions
- Selecting the proper equipment for our activities and know how to use them
- Conducting trainings to increase the safety of our teams

We Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces By:

- Concentrating trail use in popular areas
- Hiking on existing trails to minimize impacts to soils and wildlife
- Selecting an appropriate campsite 200 feet from water and trails
- When selecting a backcountry campsite, choosing one with a durable surface
- When going off-trail, spreading our use to avoid trampling vegetation

We Pack It In and Pack It Out By:

- Reducing litter at the source by minimizing packaging
- Carrying out all trash, no matter how small

We Properly Dispose of What We Can't Pack Out By:

- Disposing of urine properly on rocks or durable surfaces
- Burying human feces in a cathole 6 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, trails and campsites.
- Carrying out solid waste in areas where required
- Carrying out all used toilet paper and personal sanitary products
- Keeping cooking and waste away from water sources
- Understanding and following all regulations for bear country

We Minimize Use and Impact of Fires By:

- Using portable camp stoves for cooking
- If fires are permissible and necessary for warmth or safety, using a mound fire

We Leave What We Find By:

- Respecting wildlife
- Minimizing campsite alterations - we believe good campsites are found, not made
- Avoiding damaging live trees and plants
- Leaving natural and cultural artifacts

We Are Considerate of Others By:

- Choose secluded camps and less popular areas to climb
- Taking rests in areas not visible from the trail
- Traveling in the smallest groups possible

5.6 Leaving an Event Early

It is the EL's job to keep track of participants from the start of an event to the end. If a participant wishes to depart from the group before the end of the event, he or she should be encouraged to clearly indicate that they are leaving the event to the EL and another witness.

Please see Section 5 for more information about group dynamics, and dealing with problems during the trip.

5.7 Ending the Event

Before everybody goes home, make sure that you:

- Count the participants, checking the trip roster if necessary, to ensure that all participants are accounted for.
- Thank everyone for coming on the trip and invite them to join another SMC trip.
- Inform participants of upcoming club events (trainings, expeditions, etc.)
- Make sure everyone has a way home.

5.8 Incident and "Close Call" Definition

If any of the following conditions occur, an event is classified as an incident.

- Unexpected occurrence that results in a loss, such as an illness, bodily injury, or fatality by a participant or a leader while engaged on an SMC event
- An individual was evacuated from the trip
- Medical assistance was required to safeguard the health and safety of an individual.

A close call is one in which any of the above conditions might have occurred if not for favorable conditions, random chance, or the timely intervention of a leader or participant. If after witnessing an event you feel compelled to say "whew, that was a close call"...then it should be reported as well.

5.9 Incident Reporting and Follow-Up

ELs are required to immediately report all incidents, regardless of the perceived severity of the event. The report should be made verbally and followed up using the club's incident reporting template. Include signed statements from other trip participants where appropriate.

5.10 SMC Safety Committee

The SMC Safety Committee exists to review the club's safety practices, policies, and incidents in order to provide informed direction to operate as safely as possible. The committee is comprised of a least two current Event Leaders, at least two Board Members and at least one SMC Officer. They meet bi-annually, typically in conjunction with a Board Meeting or training.

Upon review of the club's safety practices, policies, accident and incident reports the Safety Committee finds changes are needed to the club's safety practices, they shall provide a written recommendation of such changes to the Board for approval.

SECTION 6.1 – LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION & GROUP DYNAMICS

The Event Leader sets the tone for every SMC event. Either purposely or by default, the EL's attitude and behavior go a long way towards determining how participants get along with each other. Even if your group makes the goal, poor group dynamics will limit the success of the event.

Group leadership is an acquired skill, just like mountaineering and technical climbing. A few people have natural, charismatic leadership ability; however, research shows that most leadership skills are learned through exposure to leadership theory, experience, and practice.

Sierra Mountaineering Club ELs are much more than individuals with experience relevant to their trip. They are also responsible for:

- Effective communication of trip expectations to participants.
- Making sound decisions for (and sometimes, with) the group in a variety of outdoor conditions.
- Facilitating positive group dynamics and maintaining a good example.
- Decisively yet calmly dealing with conflict and/or emergency situations.
- Following established SMC organizational policies.

6.2 Characteristics of Effective Leaders

SMC encourages Event Leaders to obtain and continually improve these characteristics:

1. Self-confidence
2. Planning and organizing skills
3. Competence in required mountaineering skills
4. Concern for other people and the natural environment
5. Ability to inspire others to aspire to reach both individual and group goals
6. Effective communication and group facilitation skills

6.3 Leadership Styles

The way an EL communicates, makes decisions, and interacts with the group is their leadership style. Each person has a unique style of leadership. While it might be easiest to rely on one's natural leadership style, trying different approaches to problems often provides additional and sometimes better options in given situations. Leadership styles can be seen as authoritative (No Time to Burn) and facilitative (Time to Learn). While each style is different, no style is "right" in all situations. In fact, flexibility in leadership style is important because each event and each group is unique and changing. On any event either style can be appropriate, but usually a combination of both, partly authoritative and partly facilitative, is most effective.

6.4 Authoritative

The leader makes the decisions and tells individuals in the group what to do. This is the stereotypical leadership style associated with the military. While it is particularly important in emergency situations, and in laying the groundwork for the trip, this style can be a catalyst for passive dependency or conversely, competition, when it is a rigid style used throughout the trip. Also known as "No time to Burn", this is the fastest style for emergencies requiring quick, decisive decisions. This style should be used cautiously because it does not directly foster buy-in to group goals by participants.

6.5 Facilitative

The leader sets the framework for the group to participate in decision making. The name comes from Latin, "to make easy". This approach encourages group members to develop their own outdoor decision making skills because they are thinking and contributing, instead of just following what the leader says to do. Facilitative leadership gives participants a sense of being valued, acknowledged, and respected, which encourages sharing of information and skills. This style can help both leaders and participants develop better mountain skills as well as make the trip more fun for all. For example, flexible discussion of alternate routes and developing situations (e.g., weather) can allow the group to bond. However, there are times during the trip when this style may not be appropriate, such as during an emergency or when time is of the essence.

6.6 Decision Making

Leading a group of people in the backcountry requires constant decision making. Changes in weather, accidents, or other unexpected events often happen. The lack of standard emergency resources which are typically available in populated areas makes it essential for leaders to be well versed in decision making.

One way to approach backcountry decision making is to consider scenarios and evaluate possible consequences. For example, if a storm is building in the west, as you approach the final ridge to your peak, you realize you must make a decision about whether the group should continue toward the summit or turn back.

Using a partly facilitative style, the leader would share this information with the group, gather input, and taking the input into consideration, make a final decision. Note that the last step, the decision, is necessarily authoritative.

With a purely authoritative style (perhaps due to a need for an immediate decision), the leader would let that group know he or she has made the decision.

Remember that the trip leader has the ultimate decision making responsibility. Leaders must be prepared to be decisive, and even veto the group's consensus, especially when dealing with hazards like electrical storms and avalanche danger.

6.7 Communication

Communication allows us to interact with each other; the skill with which we communicate may improve, or even destroy, our relationships. The EL sends messages to participants through a variety of means: facial expressions, words and vocabulary, eye contact, body position, handshake, etc.

Effective communication:

- Builds trust in group members. People will be more open to participation when you communicate that you are proficient, want to share your outdoor/leadership skills, and that you care about them.
- Helps group members establish connections and build relationships with each other.
- Sets the tone for inclusivity of all group members. Be aware of jokes or comments that stereotype or may offend people in your group. Remember, people have many "hidden" identities such as socio-economic background, religion, race, politics, and family status.

6.8 Keys for Effective Communication

- Provide detailed information. Note during your event planning things to tell the group. For example, the length of the approach or recent route conditions.
- Outline your expectations for the group. For example, explain that participants will hike together between the lead and rear leaders and ask everyone to communicate with you if they need to stop or leave the group for any reason.
- Throughout the event, communication about the time frame of events is important. Each person in the group should know how long they will have to eat, take care of personal needs, rest or get harnessed up. This is especially important during an alpine start where each person will need to arise, get dressed, eat, and be ready for the demands of climbing before leaving camp. This almost always happens before dawn and it can take much longer than most people suspect to accomplish all these things in order to meet the pre-determined departure time.
- Target your vocabulary and information to your audience. Use common language as you use more technical terms. For example, when you use words

like arête, lockers, bivouacs, or other mountaineering terms take the time to explain them to participants.

- Remember non-verbal language. Body language is worth many words. Establish eye contact with each person and smile! Please realize that different people have different personal space – hugs are not always acceptable. Check-in often with participants to ensure they understand you.

Communication is a two-way mechanism:

- Watch group member's body language and actions – how are they doing?
- Listen to participants with a caring attitude.
- Solicit feedback from the group members
- Use this feedback to modify your approach to both the group and to individuals as well as improve your own skills.

6.9 Group Dynamics

Groups are made up of individuals, each with individual strengths, weaknesses, fears, abilities, etc. The purpose of a group on an SMC event is to accomplish a common goal together. While individuals may have unique goals for particular trips, they need to understand that these are secondary to group goals.

The EL should communicate the main group goals. Emphasize that on a group climb, the safety of all individuals in the group is foremost; emotional well-being is as important as physical.

6.10 Trip Components Affecting Group Dynamics

These seven components affect each participant's ability to contribute positively to the group dynamics:

6.10.1 Pre-Trip Information:

The trip description should fully explain the purpose, requirements, itinerary, equipment needed, conditions to be expected as well as meeting time and other details. However, ELs are required to send out at least one pre-trip email a few days prior, as described in section 4.10.

Individual communications between the EL and participants are encouraged so that participants have the proper prerequisites and attitudes for the event, as well as to address concerns that the participants might have. In addition ELs can use these conversations as a way to identify people who can be resources in an emergency (e.g., people with advanced first aid training).

6.10.2 Introductions:

The leader sets the tone by sharing relevant information and encouraging personal connections between participants. Having each person give a very short personal introduction fosters an environment of inclusiveness for all group members. Introductions help participants establish eye contact with each other, learn names, and begin physical recognition. Name recognition is important later in case of an emergency and lends enjoyment to the group. Remember, most people join SMC events to meet like-minded people.

The EL can take this opportunity to set out the envisioned leadership format, such as the use of sweep and forward leaders, and their responsibilities. In many cases, the most effective leadership is inclusive, with different people rotating through different roles.

6.10.3 Pace:

Typically, most of the challenges during trips come with the differences in individual paces. Pace has a large impact on group dynamics. Since the anticipated trip pace information is pre-trip information, participants can select trips that match their

ability. A reasonably slow, steady pace at the beginning of the trip allows individuals to warm-up their muscles, to converse, and continue with name recognition. Some essential components for establishing the pace for the trip include front leader and rear leader communication and frequent check in with participants. The pace needs to be within the ability of all participants.

Remember that the “slowest” person may have feelings of guilt for holding up the group and increasing anxiety. These feelings cause mental exhaustion which can transform into not taking care of their personal needs, leading to safety issues. Conversely, if the trip pace is too slow for the majority of the group, a variety of reactions may occur that also affect the group dynamics and safety.

One way to involve everyone in group leadership is to ask each person to keep the person behind them within sight distance. This is called “caravan technique” This can eliminate unnecessary gaps and allow the group to collectively establish a pace determined by the slowest person in the group.

The maximum pace should be kept to that advertised for the trip. If one of the participants has trouble keeping up with the advertised pace or appears not to be capable of this pace, the EL must take action. Likewise, a participant who is continuously pushing the pace should be encouraged to slow down.

If someone seems to be laboring inappropriately hard an EL should notice and engage them in conversation to establish the source of the problem. Possibilities include inadequate conditioning, equipment, or sickness.

As an EL one thing that you don’t want to happen is for the group to split up without everyone having a clear idea of what is happening. Thus, it can be best to convene the entire group and explore options.

There are several options once the situation is clarified:

- The EL can slow the pace to one which can be safely maintained by the stressed participant. You may want to put this individual right behind the front leader.
- If the participant is willing, ELs can arrange an escort of two strong and well equipped people, preferably including an extra leader, back to the trailhead, if that is a place where the person can either return home independently or with one of the escorting people, or if it has a sheltered and safe location for the participant to stay until the trip returns.
- If there are sufficient well-equipped leaders, a decision to split the trip into two groups of different paces can be made. Both groups should have clearly defined plans and rendezvous points. For instance, in an out-and-back trip, the faster group may continue farther up the trail and rendezvous with the slower group on their way back. The slower group may want to turn around at a pre-set time so that both groups return to the trailhead at approximately the same time.
- Finally, the leaders may decide return to the trailhead.

6.10.4 Supportive/Respectful Atmosphere:

The EL is encouraged to demonstrate that he/she believes that all participants contribute to the group. The leader sets tone for respectful language, LNT practices, etc. The leader should proactively discourage any non-respectful actions and conversations; failure to respond to such actions/conversations gives the message that these are acceptable.

6.10.5 Challenge and Stress:

There are two related issues that greatly affect group dynamics – challenge and stress. It is important that the pre-trip information provide an accurate indication of the physical challenge. Still, adverse conditions may make a trip more strenuous and stressful than anticipated. In addition, we allow SMC members to choose their own challenges, and sometimes participants overestimate their abilities, causing stress. Research shows that too much stress often leads to poor performance, crisis, fear, and reaction instead of pro-action. The EL can reduce potentially stressful situations by providing information, compassionate reassurance and a reasonable level of personal choice throughout the trip.

ELs should not allow themselves to become unnecessarily exhausted (e.g., taking most of the trail breaking duties) as the group relies on their decision making capacity.

6.10.6 Group Goal Accomplishment:

Everyone should know the group goals and acknowledge that these supersede their individual goals. It is important to emphasize to individuals that the group goal of reaching a published trip destination may change due to weather conditions or other factors.

6.10.7 Decision Making:

The decision making process affects everyone in the group. Flexibility in decision making style can allow group members to contribute appropriately while the leader uses his/her experience and judgment effectively.

6.11 Group Formation Stages

Groups may go through identified stages. It is helpful for the EL to recognize these stages, as well as potential implications (e.g., emotions) to individual participants. This knowledge helps ELs plan actions that help facilitate smooth group formation. The identified stages of group formation include:

1. **Forming:** Individuals need to feel welcome and that they are on the right trip. This starts with pre-trip information and being open to dialog with participants before the trip.
2. **Sorting:** People are figuring out the group and what the group guidelines are, such as skills/experience of other trip participants, the leader's leadership style(s), trip pace, etc. Personal introductions and a summary of trip expectations and goals at the trailhead give a reassuring jump-start to this process.
3. **Norming:** Participants need to know the guidelines. For example, when at a rest stop, they know that the men go on one side of the trail and women on the other (or whatever other guidelines were established). Or, a participant communicates with the trip leader if she wants to explore during the lunch break, etc.
4. **Storming or Differentiating:** This is an important stage for individuals in the group. One model of group development includes a "storming" stage, when group members experience conflict. However, many groups do not experience that level of conflict. Another model includes the differentiating stage where group members feel safe (emotionally and physically) enough to express their own needs, yet have the ability to be part of the group. Previous experience and readiness for the particular trip are important factors in each individual's ability to gain the comfort needed to differentiate.

5. Closure: For many participants, some sort of gathering near or at the end of the event is needed to fully complete the event. This formalized conclusion may be a brief "thank you for participating", or may include a quick sharing of event highlights by each group member, or verbal/written evaluations. This is a great opportunity to share plans for future events and the opportunity to share addresses/phone numbers. It is important that everyone is back to the trailhead and that all of the cars have started before leaders leave the trailhead.

6.12 Dealing With Problems

One of the biggest and most rewarding challenges for Event Leaders is to take a group of individuals and have them form an effective group that can travel together harmoniously. Occasionally problems arise on an event related to differences in people's abilities, fitness or personalities; it is helpful for ELs to be aware of this potential and have an idea of ways to lead the group effectively through difficulties.

The following problems and strategies have been used effectively by many outdoor leaders in the past.

6.13 Conflicts

Most people have experienced conflict during group situations on outdoor events. However, communicating effectively throughout the event and establishing a caring ethic among group members can prevent many conflicts.

The following are tips to help avoid conflict:

- Begin the trip at a reasonable, steady pace. Research shows that a slower pace at the beginning helps to facilitate positive group dynamics, allowing participants to talk and to feel a part of the group.
- Plan to take regular, short breaks, and communicate your plan to participants. At breaks, model outdoor "skills" such as drinking, eating a snack, adjusting your clothing, etc.
- Breaks offer you opportunities to share interesting tidbits such as names of visible peaks, signs of wildlife, et cetera, as well as important route information and/or instructions. (For example, "We are approaching an exposed ridge, please put on your wind gear now.")
- Share your thinking as the day goes along. For example, if weather is building, say to all that it bears watching, and may force an early turn-back time, or an alternate route. In the winter, be talking about avalanche hazard and your route selection.

Be aware that there may be an individual who appears to seek conflict; their need to make conflict can degrade the experience of other participants.

If conflict arises, the group can occasionally be effective in giving the necessary response. But more commonly, the leader needs to take action, using the following principles:

- Face the conflict. Generally, avoiding conflict does not make it go away and often causes escalation.
- Identify the underlying causes of the conflict. Often the key causes are not on the surface.
- Try to understand all of the sides of the conflict and the needs or desires of the people involved.
- Identify possible actions to resolve the conflict to the agreement of the parties involved.

6.14 Harassment and Problem Behavior

Occasionally, individuals will exhibit inappropriate behaviors including harassment of other participants or actions seen as a threat to other participants and ELs. It is important to immediately address the problem behavior with the participant.

While each situation is different, it is recommended that the EL pull the participant aside and speak to him or her in private. Diplomacy and peer pressure can be effective tools for resolving these types of issues. Be kind but firm in stating the problem and what needs to change in order for the event to continue.

When speaking to the participant:

- Identify the participant's inappropriate behavior.
- Listen to and acknowledge their concerns.
- Explain and discuss that the person's behavior has an impact on the group, that the behavior needs to change, and that there are specific consequences if the behavior is not changed.
- If appropriate, identify a way to have the participant invest in the group (for example, give them a task).

If attempts to deal with a participant's problem behavior fail, the EL should act. If the trip has not left the trailhead or if the trailhead is close by and the participant has the means to return home safely, an EL has the authority to remove the participant from the event. ELs should only do this if the participant's behavior is truly disruptive to the progress or safety of the event. If possible, the individual should be escorted to their vehicle by at least two people.

If a participant insists on leaving on their own, try to have the participant sign out. This may be done by writing and signing a note saying "I'm signing off the trip." This note should be dated and signed by other trip participants observing the signing out. If the EL thinks the person's safety is in jeopardy, they should try to dissuade the participant from leaving. If the person leaves anyway, the EL should make efforts to verify that the participant returned back to town safely.

If the person will not willingly leave, the best option may be to turn the group around to the trailhead, ending the event early.

6.15 Reporting Problem Behavior

In case of a problem behavior, such as harassment, make sure to document what occurred. Write down what happened, including the names of the affected parties and their contact information. Have witnesses write their own account of what happened. After the event, immediately complete an Incident Report and send it to the SMC office.

SECTION 7.1 – SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

7.2 Lost Participant

If someone on an event becomes separated from the group, gather the rest of the group together and determine when and where the missing person was last seen. Send two or more people to that location, if possible. Before splitting up, agree upon a time and place to reassemble the group. Consider signaling with a whistle, or other means. If the person is not found within a reasonable amount of time, contact 911 who will activate the search and rescue system. Also call the SMC Executive Director at (916) 872-3399 as soon as possible. If the Executive Director cannot be reached, try the Assistant Directors and continue contacting other ELs or SMC Directors until you are able to speak to someone in person.

7.3 Late Running Groups / People

All trips will include a starting and ending date and time and locations in the trip description. Any changes to the designated ending dates, times or locations must be approved by the Executive Director (or in his absence, Assistant Directors). Changes should not be made on the fly during a trip unless group safety is at stake or an emergency occurs.

Late running trips are a cause for concern for loved ones and the club as a whole. Turnaround times should be set and respected to insure that late-running trips are avoided. At the conclusion of the trip, the Event Leader must check in as soon as practically possible with the Executive Director or in his absence the Assistant Directors. A text or voice message with prompt return acknowledgement is adequate. SMC policy is that event leaders contact an SMC Officer within 24 hours of the conclusion of the event. Any incidents occurring on the trip should be reported immediately to the Executive Director or the Assistant Directors.

7.4 Emergency Weather Procedures

Weather is one of the most common and important safety factors we manage. Conditions in the mountains can change rapidly. Always monitor the weather changes you see occurring and make decisions based on what is happening and what is more likely to happen. Do not take unjustifiable chances with potentially volatile weather conditions.

If any of the following conditions exist, the group should abandon the ascent and retreat to lower elevation or safer (and usually lower) ground. The group can also choose to set up camp in a safer location to wait it out, or return to a prior camp. In all cases the group should endeavor to stay together.

- If snow or ice conditions on route are not safe from avalanche, serac fall, or crevasse collapses
- When visibility deteriorates to the extent that route finding and navigation is compromised or impossible
- If conditions with thunder or lightning are observed at or near any prominent location within a mile of the team
- If excessive rainfall or snowmelt will create hazardous river or stream crossings

7.5 Emergency or Rescue Procedures

If an emergency occurs or a rescue is needed, manage the situation in the field with human health, safety and well-being as the top priority. Work to ensure that scene is safe for all uninjured parties. If at any point managing the situation requires accessing outside assistance before notifying SMC, use your best judgment.

- Assess and stabilize the situation. Provide first aid accepted procedures for the level of training you have. Remember if you start first aid plan to attend to the patient until people with more training take over.
- If outside assistance is necessary, call 911. The dispatcher will connect with the relevant emergency medical response. If you need to call 911, also contact SMC (as described above) as soon as possible.
- If available, consider using the Emergency Locator Beacon (ELB) to contact rescue or medical services. Such a course of action also provides an accurate location to emergency services can locate your party quickly
- Comfort and reassure the patient and others present.
- Assess the patient and begin a written documentation. Develop a plan. If planning for rescue and evacuation, make a backup plan as well. Do not assume immediate outside assistance.
- If the patient refuses care that is apparently needed, have the patient sign a release acknowledging their refusal of care.

- If unable to call from your location send at least two people to initiate outside assistance.

People going for help should take the following:

- Emergency report (include copy of patient information; names of all persons with patient; condition of group, time, temperature, map marked with patient's location; and other pertinent information regarding location and state of patient's condition).
- Pertinent information from patient's medical form (if applicable) including emergency contact information.
- Necessary equipment, food, water, maps and other items to maintain health and well-being of the "runner" team.

Documentation is important. The Incident Report begins with and is based on what is written on the scene. Start taking notes immediately. If it is necessary to send for help, take a copy of the first aid treatment and pertinent medical information so that responders know what to expect.

ELs are required to immediately report all incidents which negatively impact the wellbeing or safety of any trip participant, regardless of the perceived severity of the incident. The report should be made verbally and followed up using the Club's incident reporting template. Include signed statements from other trip participants where appropriate. SMC management must in turn report all such incidents to its insurance company.

7.5 Emergency Evacuations

Evacuations are usually conducted by trained and equipped rescuers. Evacuation of participants may be considered for medical or behavioral reasons. Work to ensure the participant's condition is stabilized as much as possible. The well being of the patient should be a priority.

When considering an evacuation, the following items should be analyzed and performed in an attempt to match the evacuation method and expediency with the nature and severity of the problem:

The type of evacuation should be determined by:

- Patient's condition – can they walk out or do they need transport?
- Group location
- Availability of outside help if required
- Group condition, resources and equipment
- Terrain and weather

Some evacuation options include:

- Participant walks out escorted by a self-sufficient evacuation team.
- Patient is carried out in a litter by group or by a rescue team.
- Patient is carried to helicopter landing site and evacuated from there.

The mode and urgency of the evacuation should be appropriate for the injury, illness or problem. The EL must use their judgment to determine the seriousness of each situation; however, the following conditions require evacuation from the field and follow-up medical care.

- Head injury or blow to the head resulting in loss of consciousness or altered mental status
- Any injury or illness related loss of consciousness
- Seizure
- Suspected spinal injury
- Use of epinephrine ("epi-pen")

- Near drowning
- Lightning strike

If a participant chooses to leave an event, it is their right to do so. However, efforts should be made to address issues that are contributing to the participant's desire to leave. If these efforts fail, the participant should be encouraged to remain with the group until reaching the most ideal evacuation point.

In the event that a participant chooses to self evacuate from the group and the ELs have (a) made all attempts to convince them to stay with the group and (b) determined that it is not in the best interest of all of the participants to evacuate the entire group, the EL should attempt to obtain written refusal of treatment and desire to leave the trip, signed by the patient and a witness.

7.6 Fatality

In the event of a fatality, the primary job of the EL is to work to ensure the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the rest of the participants. Do not disturb the scene of the incident or move the body. Keep people in the vicinity of the body unless the scene becomes unsafe. Send for assistance (stick to the facts only), and wait for legal authority before moving the body. The EL should contact SMC Executive Director at (916) 872-3399 or in his absence, the Assistant Directors or other SMC Board Members. Direct all media inquiries to the SMC Executive Director or alternate as described above.

7.7 Communication with the Family

The SMC Executive Director, or in his absence, the Assistant Director or other SMC Board Members will communicate with the family in case of life-threatening injury or fatality of a member or guest.

7.8 Media Response

Please remember the SMC Executive Director, or in his absence, the Assistant Directors or other SMC Board Members are the only spokespersons authorized to speak with the press. Do not answer questions or comment to the press without the approval. If a reporter approaches you, simply say that you need them to speak with the SMC Executive Director or alternate as described above, who will answer their questions as soon as possible.

SECTION 8.1 – HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

Sierra Mountaineering Club is a private mountaineering club that was formed on Meetup.com in September 2009 and grew to become a California not-for-profit corporation by April 2011. As of 2013, SMC achieved state and federal recognition as a 501(c)7, tax exempt, not-for-profit social and recreational club.

The club is overseen by a Board of Directors with Darren Shutt as Chairman of the Board and the SMC Executive Director and Chris Antonucci as Assistant Director, with the other director positions filled by member volunteers. The Board has capacity for 12 members who are elected on an ongoing basis and fulfill terms as desired.

The Board oversees all SMC Officers such as the Executive Director and Assistant Directors. The Officers in turn are the "hands" of the organization, conducting business, making decisions, and acting on behalf of SMC members on a daily basis – managing all the costs and tasks associated with organizing the group and its

members, maintaining the websites and online information, and managing all group events, resources, and activities.

All members can attend and contribute their voice at the monthly board meeting held the second Tuesday of every month. Every year in the spring the Board and the members hold an annual members meeting to review business and make decisions in the interests of SMC membership.

As of 2016 SMC is headquartered at 1805 Tribute Road Suite H, Sacramento CA 95815. We list our official home city as Sacramento, but hold events in all of California and other western states.

SECTION 9.1 – SMC ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

These policies are "non-negotiables" that you must always follow. These policies are in place to help SMC as an organization be safe, responsible, and professional, as well as abide by the parameters of our liability insurance.

You are protected by this insurance as long as you follow these policies when acting as an EL. If, whether out of ignorance or carelessness you do not abide by these policies you are at risk of losing your EL status and can be held liable for negligence as decided in a court of law. Please read and know this information!

9.2 Safety Check - "Helmet to Helmet"

Each individual is personally responsible to have another person check their tie in knot, harness, helmet and belay configuration prior to climbing.

9.3 Rappelling

When rappelling on official SMC events, each person on rappel will use a friction hitch back up, be given a "fireman's belay", or use a device which auto-locks in rappel configuration.

9.4 Safety Equipment Inspection

Usage of all personal safety equipment such as harnesses, helmets, axes, crampons and boots are subject to the inspection and approval of the Event Leaders. If the lead EL determines the equipment unsuitable for usage either a replacement must be found or that person cannot participate in the activity.

Whether or not the personal safety equipment is inspected by the EL, the integrity of all such equipment is ultimately the responsibility of the individuals using them.

9.5 Climbing Helmets

All participants on SMC climbs rated Class 4 and above in the Yosemite Decimal System, snow climbing over 45 degrees and all ice climbing events are required to wear helmets at all times when in this type of terrain. All helmets must meet UIAA standards.

In addition, helmets are to be worn whenever ice axes are in active use, there is a potential of rock fall, and during any roped climbing on any terrain.

9.6 Descending 5th Class Terrain Alone

No person shall be allowed to descend 5th class terrain alone except in an emergency.

9.7 Splitting Up Into Smaller Groups

When considering deliberately splitting up into groups for the purposes of travel or convenience, all "groups" must have at least one functional radio and consist of at

least two people. If they do not have a radio and/or cannot be at least two people, you cannot split up and must remain together.

9.8 Descending Alone

In general, if a person wishes to quit the ascent early to return to a basecamp or the trailhead without the group they must only do so if they have a companion to accompany them and a radio. Upon safe return to a basecamp or trailhead they must communicate that with the EL in some fashion, either radio call, phone call, or even written message.

9.9 Being Alone and Unmonitored on an SMC Event

The only situation in which a person can be alone and unmonitored while on an SMC Event is at basecamp. Otherwise, all SMC participants on the event must be, at a minimum, with at least one other person at all times.

9.10 Anti-Harassment/Non-Discrimination

Sierra Mountaineering Club does not discriminate in accepting individuals for membership based upon race, creed, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, marital status, gender, gender identity, gender variance, sexual orientation, age, physical handicap, veteran status, or political service or affiliation.

The exception is persons must be 18 to join, based on the inability of the club to protect itself from liability inherent in programming with minors.

All persons participating in SMC activities are expected to treat all other with respect and concern. SMC will not tolerate abusive, sexually harassing, or discriminatory actions or communications. Anyone experiencing or witnessing such behavior is invited to submit a written complaint to the SMC Executive Director for investigation. Consequences of inappropriate behavior may include a verbal warning, written warning, suspension, or expulsion from the SMC.

9.11 Dogs

Dogs are not permitted on official SMC outings, except at trailheads and in a "car camping" situation, as permissible by law.

9.12 Alcohol

SMC does not permit the consumption of alcohol on climbing, training or expeditions. while such events are in the backcountry. If an EL suspects participants of possession or use of alcohol that participant must be removed from the event. An event begins at the trailhead and ends upon return to the trailhead. SMC affirmatively disclaims any duty of care to anyone concerning the use of alcohol by its members or guests while those individuals are elsewhere.

This policy is silent as to consumption of alcohol on SMC social activities, other than to leave such consumption as the sole responsibility of the consumer and to otherwise comply with applicable law.

9.13 Leave No Trace

The concept of "Leave No Trace/An Outdoor Ethic" is wholeheartedly supported by SMC as our method of preserving the backcountry. As a group we have a duty to teach, follow and distill the concepts of Leave No Trace on every event.

9.14 Event Leader Qualification and Responsibility

Event Leaders must be at least 21 years old and have current wilderness first aid and CPR training.

Event Leaders will be assigned to trips on the basis of leadership, technical, and personal skills demonstrated on SMC events of a type similar to that of the type being led.

Sufficient member records will be maintained to assure that only qualified ELs are assigned to lead events.

Each EL is responsible for the safety of his party to the best of their ability and will have commensurate authority.

All events and ELs shall be approved prior to posting.

9.15 Event Leader Suspension

Any Event Leader named in a legitimate written complaint may be suspended until investigation is completed by the Board of Directors. Investigations must be completed as promptly as possible.

One or more verifiable complaints may result in permanent suspension.

The organizer of any official SMC event on which there is a fatality or serious injury will be temporarily suspended from organizing events, pending a prompt investigation of the incident.

9.16 Assumption or Risk and Release of Liability Form

It is mandatory that all event participants sign the assumption of risk and release of liability waiver before participating in any SMC event. Refusal to sign is an acknowledgement that they cannot participate in the event.

9.16 Minimum Participants for Official Events

There will be a minimum of four participants per event, except for technical climbing trips where the nature and demands of the route do not allow a large party to participate and prior approval has been granted by the Executive Director.

9.17 Cancelling or Suspending Events

Any official event can be questioned or suspended indefinitely by the Board if event descriptions contain omissions or inaccurate information, if trips are deemed unsafe, or are scheduled for too short a period of time before departure.

9.18 SMC General Liability Insurance

General liability insurance is purchased to protect against losses from acts that are unusual, unintentional, and catastrophic. SMC insurance does not protect an individual against actions that violate SMC policies or when driving a vehicle.

Commercial general liability insurance provides coverage against claims for bodily injury, death, damage to property of others, or infringement on others' personal and property rights. It is not a medical or accident policy to insure leaders or participants against losses from injuries. It does insure SMC, its employees, and its volunteers against liability to third parties for unintentional negligence and provides a defense against such claims.

For insurance coverage to apply, the following conditions must be met:

- The person must be an employee or a volunteer of SMC while acting within the scope of his or her authorized duties.
- It must be an official SMC event, led by a board-recognized EL.
- The event must comply with all applicable SMC policies and insurance requirements.

END EL HANDBOOK