



Green Mountain *National Forest*

Caring for the Land and Serving People

Outdoor Safety - Summer

Planning and Enjoying a Safe Outdoor Trip

National Forest lands can be far from medical attention. Emergency response can take many hours:

- Make sure you know the trail conditions and terrain characteristics before you go.
- Wear sturdy footwear. Carry a good First Aid kit. Suggested kit contents are available.
- Travel in a group of at least two or three people, never alone, and stay together. Plan your trip carefully. Tell someone where you're going and when you'll return. Stick to your route. Carry a map and compass; know how to use them. Take a loud whistle for distress signaling.
- Check the weather and prepare appropriately for forecast conditions. Avoid severe weather. Higher terrain may have more extreme weather with more frequent lightning strikes on ridges.
- Always keep dogs under immediate control to avoid injury to yourself, your dog, other people, and wildlife.

Food and Water

- Backpacking food should ensure a diet of nutritious high-energy foods.
- Stay hydrated. Replace lost fluids to maintain stamina and health. As a guide, an adult needs about 1 liter of fluid per hour while hiking vigorously in humid climates.
- Don't swim in beaver ponds. Never drink, brush teeth, or wash dishes with natural surface waters even if they look pristine. Swimming in or using untreated natural water can cause severe intestinal diseases with possible long-term severe side effects. Carry your own water from a potable source or filter native water using a portable filter with an "absolute" pore size of 1 micron or smaller. You can also treat native water with iodine or strain out debris then boil it at a rolling boil for 5 minutes.

Heat Cramps, Heat Exhaustion, Heat Stroke

Exertion in summer heat and humidity can cause heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke.

- **Heat cramps** often are the first signals that the body is having trouble. Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms that usually occur in the legs and abdomen. They are caused by heat and dehydration. Give cool water to drink. Have the person rest and lightly stretch cramping muscles. Gently massage the area as well. When the cramps stop, the person can resume activity if there are no other signs of problems, but they should keep drinking plenty of water.
- **Heat exhaustion** is a more severe condition than heat cramps. The signals include cool, moist, pale, ashen, or flushed skin; headache; nausea; dizziness; weakness; and exhaustion. Move the person to a cool place. Loosen or remove clothing. Fan and apply water to the skin with a cloth or sponge to cool them. If the person is conscious, give small amounts of water to drink. Once the person improves, encourage them to take it easy for the rest of the day. If the person does not improve, call 911 or seek medical help.



U.S. Department
of Agriculture

Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forests

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- **Heat stroke** is a severe emergency that can occur if you ignore the signals of heat exhaustion. Symptoms include: red, moist or dry skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Treat by moving the person to a cool place. Loosen or remove clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths, taking care to re-wet the cloths often. If the person is conscious, give very small amounts of water. Once the person improves, they must rest for the remainder of the day. If the person does not improve, vomits, or loses consciousness, call 911 or seek help immediately.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is an unwanted lowering of the body temperature caused by exposure to cold, wet, wind, and exertion. It is a medical emergency. It can occur even during summer. Know the symptoms. Avoid it by staying dry and warm. Choose layers of clothes that are warm, waterproof, and cover the head, neck, body, and legs.

Lightning and Thunderstorms

During a thunderstorm:

- Put down all metal objects.
- Do not handle flammable materials such as stove fuel in open containers.
- Stay in your vehicle unless it is metal-tracked, has a nonmetal top, or has an open top.
- Get out of boats and away from ponds, streams, and lakes.
- Take shelter in a building or find a cave, ditch, tunnel, canyon, or head-high clumps of trees. When there is no shelter, avoid tall objects such as lone trees. If you are in relatively open country, drop to your knees, bend forward with your hands resting on your knees, and keep a distance of twice the height of the nearest tree between you and the tree. Keep your feet together. Stay away from wire fences, utility lines, railroad tracks, and electrically conductive objects.
- Avoid parking lots, ridge tops, hilltops, wide-open spaces, ledges, rock out-crops, and sheds or shelters in exposed locations. Avoid grouping people together.
- If your hair stands on end or your skin tingles, a lightning strike may be imminent. People struck by lightning may get an electrical shock and burns but carry no residual electrical charge and can be touched safely. Victims of a lightning strike may suffer respiratory and/or cardiac arrest. Administer CPR immediately if needed and first aid as required.

Rabies and Wild Animals, Lyme Disease, Poisonous Plants

- **Rabies and Wild Animals** - Most wild animals will avoid you but they can become aggressive. Stay away from them even if they are cute and appear friendly. Wash animal bite wounds with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately. Vaccinate your pets against rabies. Call 1-800-4-RABIES with suspected rabies cases.
- **Lyme Disease** - Deer ticks that carry Lyme disease occur in this area. To reduce your risk of a Deer tick bite, wear long clothing tucked in. Spray a DEET insect repellent onto clothing and/or exposed skin according to label instructions. Early Lyme disease symptoms are fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes, and a bull's-eye rash surrounding the bite.
- **Poisonous Plants** - Poison ivy can occur anywhere but is usually found at elevations under 1,300 feet.

For More Information:

Manchester Ranger District, 2538 Depot St., Manchester Center, VT 05255, (802) 362-2307

Middlebury Ranger District, 1007 Route 7 South, Middlebury, VT 05753, (802) 388-4362

Rochester Ranger District, 99 Ranger Rd., Rochester, VT 05767, (802) 767-4261

Rutland Supervisor Office, 231 North Main St., Rutland, VT 05701, (802) 747-6700

This Recreation Guide is Available in Large Print at Forest Service Information Centers

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