

## **Accidents and First Aid**

Unfortunately, accidents can happen no matter how carefully an event is planned. A comprehensive guide on how to deal with accidents exceeds the scope of this handbook, but *Mountaineering First Aid* by The Mountaineers is an excellent text covering in detail what needs to be done for an outdoor emergency. Please read this book! Please also join a first aid course, like the ones organized periodically by the OCJ. Keep your knowledge fresh by taking refresher courses regularly.

You should also be prepared for accidents by buying mountaineering insurances.

Ultimately, each OCJ member has primary responsibility for his or her own safety as described under Member Responsibilities.

Alcohol as a contributing factor

Alcohol is a contributing factor in many typed of accidents. Alcohol and dangerous activities do not mix. If you consume alcohol before or during activities such as hiking, water sports and cycling, you put yourself and those around you at risk. Please use your best judgment and postpone any drinking until after the event.

## **Seven Steps for First Aid**

Seven Steps for First Aid Response from *Mountaineering First Aid* by The Mountaineers When an accident occurs, suddenly many tasks need to be accomplished. Some tasks must be carried out immediately, while others must wait until the accident is better understood. The Seven Steps for first aid response provide, in order of priority, an outline of the tasks to be completed in any accident situation. Each of the steps listed below is discussed in detail in later sections [of Chapter two of *Mountaineering First Aid* ].

**Step 1: Take charge of the Situation.** Objective: get the party under control for maximum group response in a minimum amount of time. The designated leader must take charge of the situation immediately, develop an initial assessment of the accident scene, organize required activities, and assign specific individuals to do specific tasks. If no leader has previously been agreed upon, then someone must become the self-appointed leader and assume these responsibilities. Other party members must become good followers.

**Step 2: Approach the Patient Safely.** Objectives: avoid further injury to the patient, and keep other party members safe. Approach to the patient must be rapid but safe. It is important to prevent further harm to the patient caused by rockfall, avalanche, or falling rescuers, as well as to prevent injury to the rest of the party.

**Step 3: Perform Emergency Rescue and Urgent First Aid.** Objective: treat conditions that can cause loss of life within a few minutes. In a few instances, immediate rescue may be the most urgent care the first aider can provide. If the patient is in an area of high risk for snow or rock avalanche or extreme lightning danger, quickly move him or her to a safer location. The patient must be checked for breathing, pulse, or severe bleeding and be treated as necessary, focusing only on these immediate threats to life.

**Step 4: Protect the Patient.** Objective: reduce physical and emotional demands on the patient. Whatever the extent of the injuries, the patient will require protection from the environment, either hot or cold. Talk to the patient, explaining who you are, what you are doing, and what you are planning to do. TLC is important in reducing the emotional demands to which the patient must respond.

Step 5: Check for Other Injuries. Objective: identify all injuries, major and minor. Once the life-threatening emergencies have been identified and controlled, the patient can be examined in more detail. Be extremely thorough.

Step 6: Plan What to Do. Objective: organize activities so that maximum treatment is provided with minimum cost to both the patient and the party. After urgently needed first aid has been given, initial protection from the environment has been provided and all the patient's injuries have been identified, time should be spent planning what further tasks must be done. The leader must evaluate the patient's injuries, party size and physical condition, terrain, weather, and the party's location with respect to outside assistance. In short, the situation needs cool analysis and development of a comprehensive plan of action.

Step 7: Carry Out the Plan and First aid. Objectives: accomplish treatment of the patient, and ensure the safety and well-being of the other party members. After a complete examination of the entire accident situation and development of a course of action, the party is ready to carry out its plans. If the plan is for self-evacuation, guidance and continued observation of the patient will be needed to ensure his or her safety. If outside assistance is requested, the party should expect that it will take a minimum of 6 to 24 hours for help to arrive. Changes in the patient's condition, or changes in terrain and weather, may require altering the plan of action.

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