

## Colorado Mountain Hazards

Because of Colorado's highly variable climate and terrain, backcountry users need to educate themselves before venturing out. Weather can change rapidly. Check the forecast and keep an eye on the sky to anticipate changing conditions.

**Lightning:** Lightning can strike anywhere but tends to hit high places. In Colorado, summer afternoon thunderstorms are common.

**Dramatic temperature drops:**  
Snowfall happens – even in summer!

**Precipitation:** If you get wet, it's difficult to stay warm.

**High Water:** Water levels in Colorado streams and rivers can rise quickly. High water from flash floods or snowmelt is possible.

**Heat/Sun:** Keep well hydrated; avoid sunburn, even on cloudy days. The sun's radiation is intensified at higher altitudes.

**Terrain:** Hazards caused by cliffs, loose and rocky slopes, steep snowfield, avalanche-prone slopes or ice require special skills or avoidance altogether.

**Wildlife and Plants:** Colorado is home to bears, mountain lions, snakes, bees, mosquitoes, ticks, and other wildlife. Know how to identify and avoid plants such as poison ivy, cactus, and thistle.

**High Altitude:** Substantial increases in altitude over a short time may pose a serious risk. Affects of alcohol and caffeine are magnified at high altitude, and can lead to more rapid dehydration and impaired judgment.

**Human Responses:** Consequences of these hazards might include: hypothermia, frostbite, altitude sickness, dehydration, sunburn, rashes, snow-blindness, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Proper training is essential to prevent, recognize, and treat these conditions.

## Use Your Head!

It's one of your best tools.

It's your responsibility to be aware of hazards and to prepare for conditions you may encounter. Proper training and experience are invaluable.

### Ask Yourself...

- Do we have the appropriate skills and experience?
- Should we modify our objectives in view of the time, the weather, and the pace?
- Are we eating and drinking enough?
- Are we using the right clothing and equipment?
- Do we have our "hikers" card (CORSTAR)?

### Items to Consider

Consider taking a few "essential" items with you:

**Water**

**Extra Food**

**Extra Clothing**

**Waterproof Clothing**

**Map, Compass, GPS**

**Sunglasses and Sunscreen**

**Flashlight** (spare batteries & bulb)

**First Aid Supplies**

**Matches, Lighter, Firestarter** (in waterproof container)

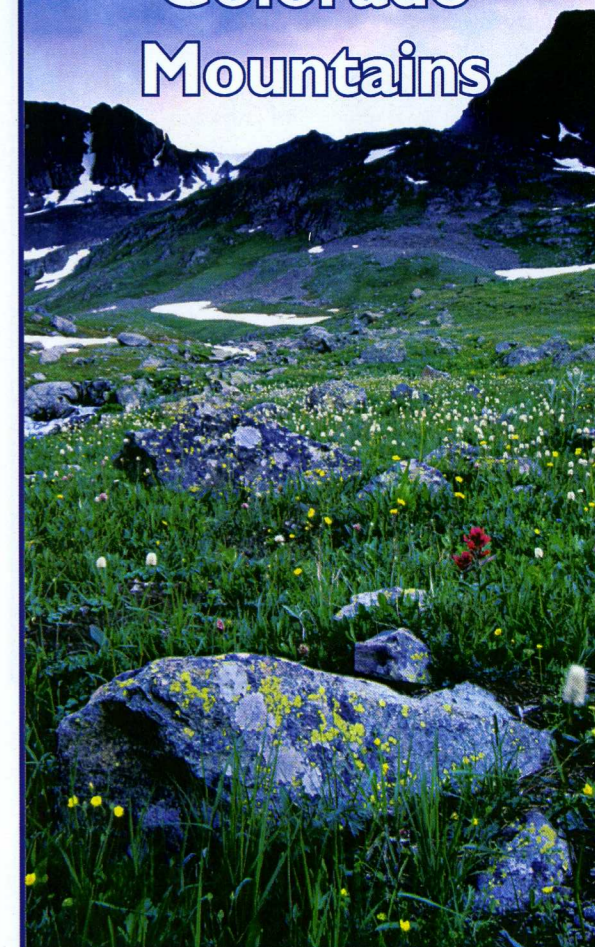
**Knife**

**Whistle**

**Cell Phone** (battery fully charged)

Cell phones may help you summon emergency help quickly. However, battery life is limited and coverage is unreliable in the mountains. Consider turning your cell phone off unless needed.

# Safety In the Colorado Mountains



**Hinsdale County  
Search and Rescue**

**Lake City, Colorado**



