

## 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)

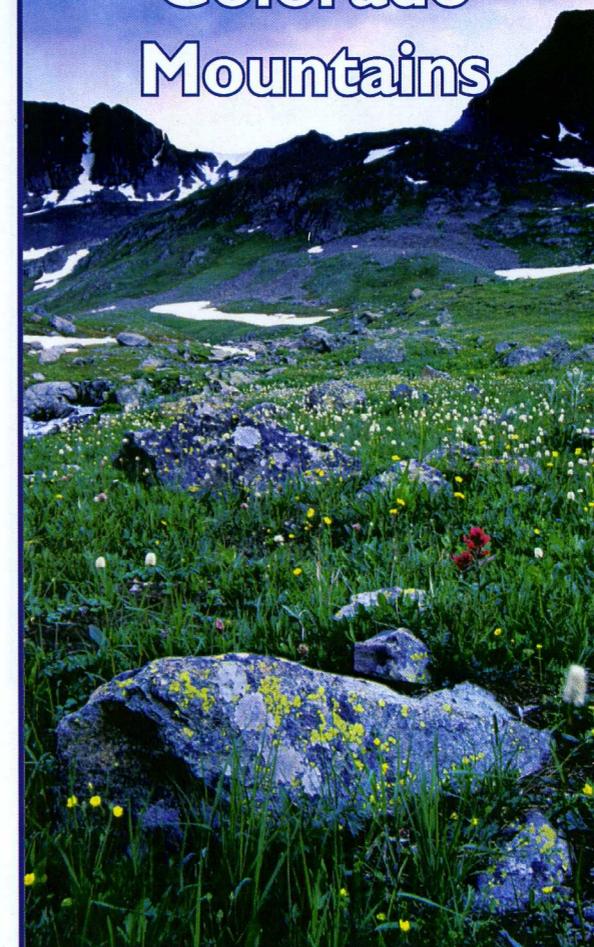
**Knife**

**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**



## Have a Safe Trip

### Before you go:

- Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.
- Be prepared. Bring appropriate equipment.
- Gather information on the attractions and hazards you may encounter.
- Check the weather report, but don't depend on it.

### While you are out:

- Travel within your ability and knowledge.
- Use good judgment when choosing a route or deciding when to turn back.
- Be responsible for your own safety and the safety of others.
- Be prepared for the unexpected. Consider making contingency plans in case of emergency.

### If you run into problems:

- Stop—Think—Evaluate Options—Make a Plan
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. A rescue will be more effective if requested early.
- If lost or stranded, stay in a safe place where you can hear rescuers calling and make yourself visible. Attempt to contact rescuers.
- Be aware that it could take some time for rescuers to reach you.

## Children in the Outdoors

Take responsibility for children under your care. Until they learn to recognize and avoid hazards, children are especially at risk.

- Prepare them with the proper equipment.
- Teach children about local animals and hazards.
- Discuss what to do in case of separation or other emergency.
- Take advantage of available resources to teach children outdoor safety.
- Be sure they are eating and drinking enough.

**Take time to teach your children outdoor safety. It could be the most valuable education they get.**

## Resources

Hinsdale County Search and Rescue  
970.944.2291

Hinsdale County Sheriff's Office  
[www.HinsdaleCountyColorado.us/HCSheriff.html](http://www.HinsdaleCountyColorado.us/HCSheriff.html)  
970.944.2291

USDA Forest Service, Gunnison Ranger District  
[www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug)  
970.944.2500

USDA Forest Service, Divide Ranger District  
[www.fs.fed.us/r2/riogrande](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/riogrande)  
719.657.3321

Colorado State Parks  
<http://parks.state.co.us>

Lake City Area Medical Center  
[www.lcamc.org](http://www.lcamc.org)  
970.944.2331

The American Red Cross  
[www.denver-redcross.org](http://www.denver-redcross.org)  
303.722.7474

Local NOAA weather reports  
[www.crh.noaa.gov/den](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/den)  
303.494.4221

Colorado Avalanche Information Center  
<http://geosurvey.state.co.us/avalanche>  
303.275.5360

### Hinsdale County - Search and Rescue

Hinsdale County Search and Rescue is a unit of the HC Sheriff's Office. It is an all-volunteer organization, trained and equipped for search and rescue on mountainous terrain or in extreme weather. HCSAR provides extensive training for its members and researches mountain rescue equipment and techniques. The organization's diverse membership includes climbers, engineers, healthcare providers, and other professionals. HCSAR is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.

## Hiker's Card (COR SAR)

### What is the COR SAR card?

COR SAR stands for Colorado Outdoors Recreation Search and Rescue. Fees collected go to the CO Search and Rescue Fund for search and rescue missions, training, and equipment. (A portion of hunting and fishing licenses and OHV/snowmobile registrations also go to the fund.)

### Where can I get one?

Cards are available for \$3 at the Visitor's Center, Sheriff's Office, and some local businesses.

### Why should I get one?

To support SAR in Colorado. Also, if you have to be rescued, you may be liable for mission expenses. If you hold a COR SAR card, CO hunting or fishing license, or other participating registration, most, if not all of your rescue expense may be covered by the Fund. (Medical helicopter evacuations are NOT covered by the COR SAR fund.)

### Serving Hinsdale County and beyond...

For further information, to make donations, or to volunteer, please contact:

**Hinsdale County Search and Rescue**  
PO Box 324  
Lake City, CO 81235

Email: [tom@reyburn.net](mailto:tom@reyburn.net)  
Phone: 970.944.2365

**For immediate assistance, call 911  
Or Hinsdale County Sheriff's Office  
970.944.2291**

Special thanks to Rocky Mountain Rescue Group for permission to use ideas and content from their brochure.