

SAFETY FIRST - Episode 1

Info to Leave Before Going into the Mountains

by International Mountain Connection

Hi, I'm Michelle Onofrey with International Mountain Connection. Welcome to Safety First.

When you go into the mountains, do you share your plans with anyone before you go? To be honest I didn't do this in the past but after talking to a mountain rescue professional I understood what information needed to be shared and why.

This information is important if you are hiking, if you're running, if you're skiing, or climbing, or mountaineering. And it doesn't matter if you are a beginner or if you are someone that has 30 years of experience. This information should be shared with someone you trust before you go into the mountains because it could save your life.

So in this video I'm going to share with you what these elements or pieces of information are and why they're important. Remember being prepared and sharing this information doesn't mean that you're inexperienced or that you're not very smart, it just means that in case something does happen it's easier for mountain rescue to find you. And before I forget, if you watch until the end I have a special surprise for you. So are you ready? Let's get started!

Element number one: your destination. Your destination is where you're going. It could be a summit, it could be a lake, or if you're bike riding it could just be a specific area in the mountains. If the trail has a specific name then you should give that name. If the climbing route has a name then you need to give that name as well. If there are several trails that go up to the same summit be as specific as possible about which trail you are going to take.

The destination is probably the most important piece of information that you can give because that helps mountain rescue determine where they can look so the more specific that you can be the easier it is for mountain rescue to determine your location.

Element number two: Where is your starting point? This is closely linked to your destination because like I said before if there are several different trails that go to the same summit it's important to state where you're starting from.

This helps mountain rescue make sure that they are on the correct trail that you are taking. So if you can be specific and say where you're going to park, which valley or which side of the mountain you're starting from, all of this information is helpful to make sure that mountain rescue is looking on the right trail.

Element number three : Departure time Now if the person that you're leaving this information with is the person you live with well they're going to know when you left the house or if you left

really early they're going to be able to tell mountain rescue that you left at five or six o'clock in the morning. However if you're leaving this information with someone that you don't live with then you should indicate what time you plan to leave either your house or the starting point.

This information is helpful for mountain rescue because a lot of times people are really inexperienced when they go into the mountains and they think that a hike is going to take four hours and in reality it's going to take a lot longer. If mountain rescue has this information then they can determine how far along you are on the trail, is it realistic for you to be home yet, and in case there is trouble where you might be along the path.

Element number four : Arrival time So the arrival time could be when you arrive at the car or when you arrive home. Some people call this giving a sign of life. You could send a text message or you could make a quick phone call just saying I'm off the mountain. I'm headed home. Or maybe you're sending a message saying you're okay but you're running late and you'll send a message when you get to the car.

And it's really important that you give this estimated time of arrival or the estimated time to give a sign of life because if you haven't contacted this trusted person by this specific time they know that they need to contact mountain rescue.

So in addition to this information about when you think you're going to be off the mountain the person you've shared this information with also needs to know who to contact. Do you know who to contact in case of emergency in your country? In France you have to dial 1 1 2.

So when you share this information with someone about your plans going into the mountains make sure you also share with them who they need to contact and how they can contact them in case you haven't given that sign of life.

A lot of times people like to wait until the weather starts getting bad or the sun starts going down and this can be problematic for two reasons. Reason number one, if you're waiting for the sun to go down well you're basically waiting for visibility to stop and in some places a helicopter can't fly at night so you're obligated to send out a ground crew and that's going to take much more time to try to find someone especially in the dark. And the second reason this is a problem is if you're waiting until the weather starts to go bad again a helicopter can't go in the air whenever there's bad weather or if it's even windy so again you're waiting until the conditions have deteriorated and it's going to be much more difficult to try to find someone in the mountains.

The last element is your vehicle information. This is the make or the manufacturer of your car, the color, the license plate, and also the information about which department you're coming from or if you're from a specific state or a specific country. All of this information is helpful whenever they're trying to locate your vehicle.

So why would mountain rescue be trying to find your vehicle? Well remember we talked about where is your starting point, where are you parking your car? One of the things that mountain rescue can do is send a vehicle and verify if your vehicle is in the parking area that you indicated if your vehicle is still there then they know that you did take this path and this is the

area that they need to start searching. If your vehicle isn't where you indicated then they need to look for other elements to determine if you've already left or if you decided to go to another part of the mountain.

Also if there's a really big parking area and all you can say is i think that the vehicle is gray well that means that they have to verify every gray vehicle to find out if one of the grey vehicles belongs to you.

Sometimes what happens is mountain rescue has information about the vehicle and as they're taking off in the helicopter to start a search, they see the vehicle coming down the mountain and they can verify oh yeah that's this person we don't actually have to go and search for them.

In case of emergency it can be really helpful if all of this information is written down. It's a lot of different elements and sometimes we think we remember what's the name of the summit but actually we don't remember or maybe we're stressed or panicked and we forget. So if everything is written down then there are no questions everything is clear and you can just send that information to mountain rescue.

So what i've done is i've provided a pdf that you can fill out and you can put your personal information in and just save it and then when you're going to go somewhere you just need to fill in those last details about where you're going and where you're starting from and if for some reason you don't give that sign of life at the time that you indicated all of that information is available and it's easy to get that to mountain rescue.

I know it sounds like a lot of information but i've heard so many stories from mountain rescue talking about how someone contacted them and all they could say was that their husband went into the mountains at six o'clock in the morning and he hasn't come home and it's six o'clock at night and you can imagine how difficult it is to find someone in the mountains who's been out for 12 hours and you have no idea where they are.

So all of this information helps mountain rescue find you faster. So let's review. The information that you need to share is your destination, your starting point, your departure time, your arrival time, and your vehicle information. So this is the information that you should share with someone that you trust before you go into the mountains.

In the next video I'm going to share with you how to find your gps coordinates on your phone in case you're lost or in case you're injured and you need to contact mountain rescue for help.

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Thank you for joining me and I'll see you soon. Bye!