

Philmont Health and Safety

Strict adherence to proper health and safety precautions is crucial, as participants must remain in top physical condition throughout their expedition. Follow these wise trail practices to stay strong, safe, and healthy.

Keep Personally Clean

Besides the health benefits, the personal cleanliness of each participant is important to the morale of the entire crew and to the way the crew appears to the other crews it will encounter on the trail.

A short haircut is recommended the day before you leave for Philmont. Short hair is easier to wash and comb when you are in the rugged, challenging wilderness. Showers are available at Indian Writings, Ponil, Dean Cow, Baldy Camp, Sawmill, Cimarroncito, Clarks Fork, Cyphers Mine, Beaubien, Phillips Junction, Miners Park, Crater Lake, and Abreu (except during drought periods and periods of prolonged cloudy skies - our pumps operate on solar power). Sponge baths can be taken at most camps.

Clothes can be washed at shower houses along the trail. After washing, spread them over tree limbs or shrubs, where they will dry quickly.

Take Care of Your Feet

Because hiking is the primary means of transportation at Philmont, healthy feet are a must.

Proper boots are important. They should be sturdy but not too heavy (2 to 4 pounds per pair for average sizes), 6 to 8 inches high with sturdy soles. Do not confuse hiking boots, which are recommended for Philmont, with the heavier mountaineering boots. The more you weigh the more sturdy your boots should be.

Clean feet and socks will reduce the possibility of blisters. Wash your feet before and after hiking, change your socks daily, and use foot powder each morning. Applications of tincture of benzoin toughen the skin and help prevent blisters. Cut your toenails short and square; don't round the corners.

On the trail, always keep your feet and socks dry. Treat cuts and sores on your feet with antiseptic and adhesive bandages or moleskin. Hot spots should be given immediate attention.

Purify All Drinking Water

All water from all sources—including springs, streams, and wells—must be purified.

The most certain treatment to purify water is to heat it to a rolling boil for about one minute. Philmont provides Micropur© tablets that are effective in killing waterborne bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

Philmont recommends that you use a water purifier. (Purifiers remove giardia, bacteria cryptosporidia, and viruses—filters do not remove viruses.) If using a filter, you must also use the Micropur©, or other additives, or boiling to kill all viruses. You must bring extra cartridges and spare parts.

Dishwashing Procedure

After each meal, scrape and wipe dishes, utensils, and pots as clean as possible using toilet paper. Wash using a mild, biodegradable soap in warm water. Use scrub pads to remove hardened food remains. Rinse them in boiling water.

Before each meal sterilize dishes, utensils, and pots for at least 30 seconds in boiling water. This disinfects any contamination from being in a pack.

Dishes and utensils will air dry quickly in Philmont's low humidity. Wash your dishes near a sump, not a water spigot that may contaminate the area. Proper washing, rinsing, and sterilizing of dishes and utensils will prevent diarrhea, dysentery, and a host of other medical problems.

Use of Sumps

When disposing of waste water, drain it through a strainer provided by Philmont. The water should be disposed of in a provided sump or at least 200 feet from any campsite or water source. Solid matter should be carried to the next staffed camp.

Disposal of Trash and Garbage

Proper disposal of trash and garbage ensures a clean camp and protects everyone's health. Do not bury garbage or dump it in latrines; bears and rodents will soon retrieve it. Put trash and garbage in a plastic bag and deposit it in the steel trash box at the nearest staffed camp.

Latrines

Pit latrines are provided for your use in backcountry camps. They should be kept clean and free of graffiti by members of your crew. At other locations you may

need to dig a cathole latrine. Make it at least 200 feet from any trail, water, or campsite. Dig the hole about 6 inches deep, but no deeper than the organic topsoil. After use, fill the hole completely; pack and mound the earth to avoid erosion. Garbage and trash must not be put in any latrine because animals will dig it out.

Dehydration

Low humidity and strenuous activity cause your body to lose enormous amounts of fluids. You will dehydrate even though you do not feel thirsty.

You need to drink more water than you usually do. Four to six quarts per day is not excessive. The salt content of Philmont's menus is adequate to replace your loss of salt from sweating. Since concentrated intake of salt can cause other problems, salt tablets are not recommended.

Symptoms of dehydration include light-headedness, dizziness, nausea, general weakness, muscle cramps, and sometimes fever and chills. Hot, clear days accelerate loss of body fluids. Plan to hike early in the morning to avoid the intense heat of midday and potential dehydration problems.

Heat Exhaustion and Heatstroke

Prolonged physical exertion in a hot environment may cause heat exhaustion. The subject may feel faint and have a weak, rapid pulse. Body temperature usually remains near normal. The afflicted person should rest in a comfortable environment and drink fluids.

Though less common than heat exhaustion, heatstroke is much more serious. The body's cooling mechanisms stop functioning from overwork. The patient's body temperature soars and the skin is hot, red, and dry. Cool the patient immediately with a dip in a stream or put him/her in the shade and drape bare skin with wet cloths. When the patient is able to drink, give fluids. Treat for shock and get help.

Hyperventilation

A feeling of panic accompanied by rapid breathing with shallow breath is symptomatic of hyperventilation. The subject loses carbon dioxide from the bloodstream and may become numb around the mouth and in the extremities. If untreated, the person may experience violent spasms in the hands and feet and even lose consciousness. Hyperventilation occurs fairly frequently, especially to

teenagers and young adults when undergoing strenuous activity at high elevation.

Although it is usually not serious for an otherwise healthy person, the symptoms of hyperventilation can be frightening to the subject and the crew. The most effective treatment is to have the subject re-breathe his own air from a plastic or stuff sack. The higher concentration of carbon dioxide in re-breathed air will enter the lungs and get into the person's bloodstream, restoring a normal balance in 10 to 20 minutes. Reassure the subject and tell the person to take long, deep breaths from the bag.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia results from exposure to cold, wet weather, with most cases developing in air temperatures of 30° to 50°F (common to Philmont's high country). Symptoms include faltering coordination, slurred speech, loss of good judgment, disorientation, numb with cold, and fatigue. Wind, wet clothing, or exhaustion increases the chance of hypothermia.

Always carry rain gear with you on side hikes. Wet clothing must be replaced with dry (preferably wool or polypropylene) clothing.

Apply heat to the head, neck, sides, and groin with hot-water bottles, warm, moist towels, or the bodies of two other persons. Put the subject in a sleeping bag and give hot sugary liquids if able to drink without choking. Do not rub the subject's body, as that may cause injury.

Sunburn

Prevent sunburn by wearing a broad-brimmed hat and applying a high-numbered sunscreen—at least SPF 15. Cover the most susceptible parts of your body—nose, head, face, neck, ears, knees, and legs. Fair-skinned campers should apply protection early in the morning and reapply it during the day. If you do become sunburned, treat it immediately. Get the afflicted person to shade and administer fluids. The incidence of developing skin cancer is fairly high among people who have been severely sunburned during childhood. Taking preventative measures is a wise precaution.

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS)

Acute mountain sickness (AMS) usually occurs at elevations in excess of 6,500 feet; all of Philmont qualifies. Participants who live at less than 3,000 feet elevation may require two to three days to adapt to a higher elevation above 6,000 feet. Teenagers and young adults have a higher incidence of acute mountain sickness. Crew members who have undertaken regular physical conditioning prior to their trek are generally less affected.

Physical symptoms of AMS include headache, insomnia, fatigue, shortness of breath, lassitude, and intestinal upset. Psychologically, a person may become irritable and have difficulty concentrating.

A gradual ascent of not more than 1,000 feet per day above 6,000 feet elevation will help prevent AMS. Descending to a lower elevation, avoidance of strenuous activity, and taking aspirin for headache may relieve the symptoms of AMS. If this is not successful within 24 hours, the subject may need to be transported to base camp.

Lightning and Flash Floods

The summits of mountains, crests of ridges, slopes above timberline, and large meadows are extremely hazardous places to be during lightning storms. If you are caught in such an exposed place, quickly descend to a lower elevation, away from the direction of the approaching storm, and squat down or kneel down on a pad, keeping your head low.

A dense forest located in a depression provides the best protection. Avoid taking shelter under isolated trees or trees much taller than adjacent trees. Stay away from water, metal fences and other objects, which will conduct electricity long distances. By squatting or kneeling on a pad with your feet close together you have minimal contact with the ground, thus reducing danger from ground currents.

If the threat of lightning strikes is great, your crew should not huddle together, but spread out at least 100 feet apart. If one member of your crew is jolted, the rest of you can give assistance. Keep track of one another by numbering off in a loud voice from time to time.

Whenever lightning is near, take off backpacks with either external or internal metal frames. Be sure to pitch your tents in an area that is protected from lightning strikes.

Thread-like streams can become raging rivers in a few minutes or even seconds. It is important to be alert to the possibility of flash floods and take steps to avoid a dangerous encounter. Pitch your tents on higher ground. During and after periods of heavy rain, stay away from natural drainage areas. Never attempt to cross a stream that is over knee-deep on anyone in the crew.

Retreat to the nearest staffed camp and request an itinerary change. Always know where you are and how to get to higher ground. Watch for indicators of flash flooding, such as an increase in the speed or volume of stream flow. Stay out of floodwaters and narrow canyons.

Protection From Hantavirus

Hantavirus is thought to be the cause of respiratory distress syndrome. This illness has affected persons in most western states. Rodents are the primary carriers of recognized Hantavirus. Hantavirus is carried in the urine, feces, and saliva of deer mice, rabbits, and possibly other wild rodents. A person contracts Hantavirus by coming into contact with rodent feces, urine, saliva, or things that have been contaminated by them. This illness is not suspected to be spread from one person to another.

All participants and staff engaged in hiking and camping should take the following precautions to reduce the likelihood of exposure to potentially infectious materials.

- Avoid coming into contact with rodents and rodent burrows or disturbing dens (such as pack rat nests).
- Do not pitch tents or place sleeping bags in areas near rodent feces or burrows or near possible rodent shelters (e.g., garbage boxes or woodpiles).
- Do not use or enter cabins or other enclosed shelters that are rodent-infested until they have been appropriately cleaned and disinfected. Report these to the next staffed camp.
- If possible, do not sleep on the bare ground. Use tents with floors.
- Store food in a bear bag hung from a cable.
- Properly package all garbage and trash, and discard it in covered trash containers at staffed camps.
- Use only bottled water or water that has been disinfected by boiling, chlorination, or iodination for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, and brushing teeth.

Respect Philmont Wildlife

Philmont includes habitats for many large animals include black bears, Mountain Lions, Elk and Deer. Additionally, Philmont's backcountry hosts a rich combination of ground squirrels, mice and snakes.

Prevent Forest Fires

Our forests are a beautiful and valuable heritage. Philmont's dry climate requires everyone's cooperation to prevent forest fires. The United States Forest Service points out that good outdoorsmen follow these practices when using fires:

1. Never build a fire against a tree, stump, root, or log, as it may be difficult to control or put out.
2. Avoid building a fire on a grassy area, as this destroys one of our most valuable assets. Grass will not grow for several years on a fire spot. (At Philmont, always use established fire lays.)
3. Rake up flammable material before building a fire.
4. Never toss a match away. Put it in the fire or hold the match until it stops smoking, then break it between the thumb and fingers of one hand and step on it.
5. Never leave a fire unwatched, even for a few minutes, particularly on a windy day.
6. Never try to put a fire out by scattering it.
7. Put out your fire with sand, damp earth, or best of all, water. After the first soaking, stir the ashes with a stick and add more water, then feel it with your hands to make sure it is out.
8. Keep in mind the forest and wildlife resources and, possibly, human lives you are protecting by your care in handling fire.

Be alert for wildfires. If you see white smoke boiling up, you may have spotted a forest fire. Prairie fires spread quickly, and their smoke is sweeping. If you spot a fire or think you have, report it to your adviser, who should report it to the nearest camp director or staff member as soon as possible. Your crew should not attempt to fight wildfires and should quickly leave the area. Trained firefighters will extinguish fires quickly once they are reported.

Tobacco

Our Scout Oath reminds us to keep ourselves physically strong. The use of smokeless or smoking tobacco adversely affects the body and causes cancer. Furthermore, because of the ever-present forest fire danger, smoking is not permitted on Philmont trails. If adults must smoke in the backcountry, they must do it in an established camp near a fire ring. No smoking is permitted in Camping Headquarters except in the designated area—the porch of the advisers' lounge. Staff members are limited to designated areas.

Alcohol and Drugs

Possession or use of alcoholic beverages and unprescribed drugs or misuse of prescribed drugs or chemicals is expressly prohibited by national Boy Scouts of

America policy. Groups or individuals found in violation of this policy will be sent home immediately.

Firearms and Fireworks

Firearms are not allowed at Philmont, except for those furnished on designated rifle ranges. Do not bring firearms or archery equipment with you. If you cannot avoid bringing weapons with you, they must be checked in at the Camping Headquarters office during your stay.

Using fireworks at Philmont is prohibited. They are a great fire and safety hazard and must not be brought with you.

Climbing

The "A-B-C" of mountain climbing is **Always Be Careful**.

Falls from cliffs and rocky ridges are the most serious accidents that occur at Philmont. Campers should be constantly alert to this very present danger when climbing steep, rocky, mountain slopes. Common sense will enable you to differentiate between difficult and dangerous areas and to bypass dangerous areas completely.

Philmont conducts rock climbing at three staffed camps. These are the only places where rock climbing is to be done, and then only under the supervision of Philmont rock climbing staff.

Avoid throwing or rolling rocks. This is particularly dangerous in steep country. There may be other hikers below you.

What to Do When Disoriented

When your crew hikes together instead of stretched out over a long distance on the trail, the possibility of anyone becoming disoriented is remote. By using a map and a compass with reasonable proficiency, you will always know where you are.

Never allow one member of your crew to leave camp or side-hike alone. Follow the "rule of four"—always hike together in groups of four or more. If one person is injured, one treats the injured and the other two go for help.

Philmont has many trails. If you become disoriented, it is best to stay put. Make camp at a safe place, build a fire, and keep it going. This may help a search party. Prepare your crew for a comfortable night. Extra food can boost morale.

Accidents

Most accidents occur late in the day in camp, not on the trail. Many of them involve horseplay. Rock throwing; improper use of equipment; foolishness in hanging bear bags; climbing steep, rocky ridges; running through campsites; climbing trees; and carelessness around fire lays are prevalent causes of accidents. To avoid them, individual and crew discipline should be maintained and safety practiced in all activities.

Medical Treatment

Each crew carries its own first aid kit to treat minor cuts, bruises, scratches, and burns. Philmont requires that at least one person (preferably two) in each crew be currently certified in American Red Cross Wilderness First Aid Basic (or the equivalent) and CPR from the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross or the equivalent.

Equivalent training can be obtained from the following nationally-recognized organizations:

- American Red Cross www.redcross.org
- American Safety and Health institute www.ashinstitute.org
- Emergency Care and Safety Institute www.ECSInstitute.org
- National Outdoor Leadership School (WMI) www.nols.edu/wmi/
- National Ski Patrol www.nsp.org
- Stonehealth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO) www.soloschools.com
- Wilderness Medical Associates (WMA) www.wildmed.com
- Wilderness Medical Society (WMS) www.wms.org
- Wilderness Medicine Training Center www.wildmedcenter.com
- Wilderness Safety Council www.wfa.net
- Wilderness Safety & Emergency Response www.wiser-wfr.com

A person may also have medical training beyond the the basic requirement of American Red Cross Wilderness First Aid Basic (or the equivalent). Philmont will accept the following advanced levels of training and a copy of the license or certification must be shared with Philmont during the registration process:

- Wilderness First Responder
- Outdoor Emergency Care
- EMT Basic, Intermediate, or Paramedic
- Military Corpsman or Medic
- Nurse Practitioner

Physician's Assistant
MD or DO

More serious cases must be treated by Philmont's medical staff, which includes doctors, nurses, and medical students. All staffed camps have two-way radios for reporting serious illnesses and injuries to the Health Lodge; this is done by the camp director. The nature of the injury and the patient's location determine whether to transport the patient to Headquarters or send a medical staff member to the patient.

Everyone who gives first aid when blood or bodily fluids may be present must wear latex gloves. Immediately wash (with soap and water) any skin surfaces that come in contact with bodily fluids.