

MeadoWatch Safety Bulletin

As a MeadoWatch Volunteer, we expect you to adhere to the following guidelines to ensure safety of yourself and all involved in the MeadoWatch program.

- Please make your own health and safety, and that of friends / relatives / volunteers hiking with you, your top priority. If a member of your team is feeling ill or sustains an injury or weather conditions become hazardous, do not start or complete your hike (i.e. reschedule or turn around).
- To ensure your health and safety, please equip yourself in the following way while participating in our program:
 - Bring and drink plenty of water (2 liters).
 - Bring plenty of high energy food and snacks.
 - Wear good, broken in hiking boots and consider bringing trekking poles (especially early season when there may be snow on the trails).
 - Weather on Mt. Rainier is very changeable! Be prepared for cold, hot, rainy and / or windy conditions by bringing appropriate clothing (i.e. fleece, jackets, woolen hat, sun hat, gloves, rain coat, rain pants, sunglasses) and sunscreen.
 - We recommend you bring your own first aid kit (REI has good ones for day trips).
- Hiking / navigating over snow is a challenge early in the season (June / July, depending on the year). We will try to keep you all informed on the snow status on our trails, but please play your part by prioritizing your own safety. Mt. Rainier National Park provides the following guidelines to ensure your safety (guidelines from Mt. Rainier NP):
 - Choose to turn around instead of crossing steep, snow-covered slopes. A fall could be disastrous.
 - Falling through thin snow bridges (i.e. snow over running water) is a hazard anywhere streams remain snow-covered. Listen for the muffled sound of running water under the snow.
 - Avoid stepping onto snow cornices (over-hanging ledge of snow / ice on ridge of a mountain) as they may collapse under your weight.
 - Falling into snow moats (deep depression around tree trunk, adjacent to logs and rocks), can cause injury. Avoid getting too close.
 - You may need a reliable map, gps and compass skills to traverse snow-covered trails, which can be difficult to follow, particularly in backcountry areas
 - Beware of avalanches! Unstable snow may slide at any time...not just in winter!
 - Before starting a hike, stop by a Wilderness Information Center or visitor center for the latest trail conditions.
 -
- Remember that cell phones generally do not work in the park.
- **Never leave the trail.** You will not need to do so to collect data for our program – all sites are accessible from the trail!
- We recommend that all MeadoWatch volunteers collect data in small groups (2-3 is an optimal size). This is better for data collection (many eyes see more phenophases), but also better for safety (i.e. if one person has a medical issue, the other person can help them and / or hike ahead to get help). If a medical issue arises that prevents one of your team from hiking out (e.g. a sprained ankle), make sure to leave someone with the person affected (after ensuring they are safe and comfortable) while another person

hikes out to find the campground host or a ranger (e.g. at the closest visitor center or park entrance). You may need to flag down another hiker if you are in a group of two to help. If you have to split up and leave the affected person, make sure they have enough food and clothing and are comfortable and safe where they are located.

- We recommend that a family member or friend (i.e. an emergency contact) who is not joining you knows your plans and can communicate with Park Dispatch (360-569-6600 Mt. Rainier National Park Dispatch) should you not return home on time as planned. See below for the information your emergency contact should provide Park Dispatch. Please keep MeadoWatch informed of any such issues (mwatch@uw.edu), but note that we are not in the position to take action (always contact Park Dispatch first).
- **If you hike alone**, we ask that you share your plans with an emergency contact, and check-in and check-out with that same emergency contact (right before and after your hike). Please inform your emergency contact that they should contact Park Dispatch (360-569-6600 Mt. Rainier National Park Dispatch) if you should not return. Keep us informed of any issues (mwatch@uw.edu), but always contact Park Dispatch first. It is most helpful if your emergency contact can provide the following information to Park Dispatch:
 - Where you planned to be; i.e. what hike you were completing (e.g. Mazama Ridge / Skyline Trail, Paradise Glacier Trail if hiking on our Reflection Lakes hike; the Glacier Basin Trail for our Glacier Basin Hike) and where you were likely to have parked (Reflection Lakes parking lot for Reflection Lakes hike; White River campground parking lot for Glacier Basin hike).
 - What your car looks like – make, model, color, year, and ideally license plate
 - What you look like – including backpack color and clothing