

FOREWORD

The Colorado Mountain Club realizes the importance of standardized requirements for all CMC leaders as evidenced by our motto to ‘unite the...knowledge of the students...of the mountains of Colorado’. The State Safety and Leadership Committee and individual Groups can help improve new and current leaders’ skills by exchanging trip leader training resources and by providing a basic CMC Leadership Manual that describes agreed upon standards and information. Group input and ideas are valuable to this and future editions of the Manual.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1912 the CMC has offered a variety of mountain-oriented activities. A group of motivated, properly trained leaders is essential to provide safe and successful mountain trips.

Leadership manuals have been updated since the first edition in 1935. This version is designed to provide guidance for both new and experienced CMC trip leaders, by presenting general requirements for safety and leadership for the entire Colorado Mountain Club.

It also provides information about essential leadership components such as communication, group dynamics, and decision-making. Each CMC Group has unique needs for leadership, based on the makeup of its membership. Some Groups, for example, have stronger emphasis on technical rock climbing, others on day hikes. In all cases, basic fundamentals of leadership should be followed, and each Group should incorporate this material into leadership training and trip protocol. We invite you to supplement this manual with your Group’s own unique procedures.

The Colorado Mountain Club is organized to:

- **Unite the energy, interest, and knowledge of the students, explorers and lovers of the mountains of Colorado**
- **Collect and disseminate information regarding the Rocky Mountains**
- **Stimulate public interest in our mountain area**
- **Encourage the preservation of forests, flowers, fauna and natural scenery**
- **Render readily accessible the alpine attractions of this region**

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LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

People are not expected to be “naturally” skilled at mountaineering or technical climbing. Although some people have innate potential to learn the essential skills more quickly, it is assumed that most people can gain a basic level of climbing competence as long as they seek out instruction and practice.

The same is true of leadership. A few people have natural, charismatic leadership ability; however, research shows that most leadership skills are learned through experience, practice, and theory.

One may think the “leader” is merely the person who has hiked the trail before, or who has climbed the peak previously. Yet, in the context of CMC trips, the leader is responsible for much more, including:

- Making sound decisions for (and sometimes, with) the group in a variety of outdoor conditions.
- Facilitating positive group dynamics.
- Dealing with conflict and/or emergency situations with calm and reason.
- Ensuring that the CMC established trip procedures are followed.

Every official Colorado Mountain Club trip must be led by a member authorized for leadership by a CMC group.

“Leadership is the capacity to move others towards goals shared with you, with a focus and competency they would not achieve on their own.”

-John Graham¹

The mountain setting demands several supplemental qualities of leaders: Attention to detail, decisiveness, and continual alertness. In such matters, experience is the best teacher. But no amount of experience can make it easy to tell a poorly equipped novice to stay behind or to face a group of peak-baggers when conditions clearly call for aborting the trip. These cases call for tact, objectivity, and courage.

Most of all, a leader must inspire confidence in others.

-John Graham¹

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS & STYLES

The CMC Safety and Leadership Committee has identified the following characteristics of effective leaders. The CMC expects trip leaders to obtain and continually improve these characteristics:

- Self-confidence
- Planning and organizing skills
- Competence in required mountaineering skills
- Care for other people and the natural environment
- Ability to inspire others to push for their best
- Effective communication and group facilitation skills

A Leadership style is the way people communicate, make decisions, and interact with their groups. Each person has his/her unique style of leading groups. It is important to play on one's natural strengths, as well as to stretch and grow into different styles.

While each style is different, no style is "right" in all situations. In fact, flexibility in leadership style is important because each trip and each group is unique and changing. Theorists have categorized leadership styles and different names of different styles emerge throughout time. Authoritative and Facilitative are two leadership styles that may enhance each other:

1. Authoritative

The leader makes the decisions and tells individuals in the group what to do. This is the stereotypical leadership style associated with the military. While it is particularly important in emergency situations, and in laying the groundwork for the trip, this style can be a catalyst for passive dependency or conversely, competition, when it is a rigid style used throughout the trip.

2. Facilitative

The leader sets the framework for the group to participate in decision-making. The name comes from Latin, "to make easy." Indeed, this approach encourages group members to develop their own outdoor decision making skills because they are thinking and contributing, instead of just following what the leader says to do. Facilitative leadership gives a sense of being valued, acknowledged, and respected, which encourages sharing of information and skills. However, there are times during the trip when this style may not be appropriate, such as during an emergency or when time is of essence. Remember that the trip leader has the ultimate decision-making responsibility.

Leadership style
is the way people
communicate,
make decisions, &
interact
with their groups.

The effective
leader is aware of
decisions
that the group
members can
participate in
or are best made
in a more
authoritative
style.

COMMUNICATION

Communication allows us to interact with each other; the skill with which we communicate may improve, or even destroy our relationships. The trip leader sends messages to participants through a variety of means: facial expressions (Smile!), words and vocabulary, eye contact, body position, handshake or hug, et cetera.

Effective communication by the leader:

- Builds trust with group members. People will be more open to participation when you communicate that you are proficient, want to share your outdoor/leadership skills, and that you care about them.
- Helps group members establish connections and build relationships with each other.
- Sets the tone for including all group members. Be aware of jokes or comments that stereotype or may offend people in your group. Remember, people may have “hidden” identities such as socio-economic background, race, or family status.

KEYS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Provide detailed information

- Take notes during your trip planning and scouting of things to tell the group. For example, information about road construction on the way to the trailhead, recent route conditions, and the distance to a good lunch spot all make a difference when participants know what to expect.
- Outline your expectations for the group. For example, explain that they will hike together between the lead and rear leaders and ask everyone to communicate with you if they need to stop or leave the group for any reason.

Target your vocabulary and information to your audience.

- Use common language, as you teach more technical terms. For example on an A hike it isn't appropriate to use words like arete, carabiners, bivouacs, or other mountaineering terms that would be straightforward to climbers on a D hike.

Remember non-verbal language. Body language is worth many words:

- Establish eye contact with each person
- Smile!

Check-in often with participants to ensure they understand you.

Good communication with trip participants is essential for safe, fun backcountry adventures.

Many unfortunate situations are caused by breakdowns in communication.

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Communication is a two-way mechanism:

- Watch group member's body language and actions. Are they doing what you described?
- Listen to participants with a caring attitude.

Solicit feedback from the group members:

- You can use feedback to improve your own skills.

GROUP DYNAMICS

- Groups are made of individuals, each with individual strengths, weaknesses, fears, abilities, etc.
- The purpose of a group on a CMC trip is to accomplish a common goal together. In addition, individuals may have unique goals for particular trips.
- The leader needs to make sure that individuals all have the main trip goal in common (ie: climbing Mt. Bierstadt at a moderate pace – C hike with 7 miles, 2,800 feet elevation gain.)
- The trip leader must communicate that on a group trip, the safety of the individuals of the group is foremost. Safety includes both physical and emotional well being.

The following TRIP COMPONENTS affect each participant's ability to contribute positively to the GROUP DYNAMICS

1. **Pretrip information:** The schedule in the Trail & Timberline description, information from the trip leader of CMC office when the person signs-up about how to be prepared for the trip, i.e.: equipment and/or clothing requirements, meeting place, etc.
2. **Introductions:** The leader sets the tone to share relevant information, that starts to make connections with each other. Introductions set an example of inclusiveness to all of the group members. They help each person establish eye contact with each other, learn names and begin physical recognition. Name recognition is important later in case of an emergency and lends enjoyment to the group. Remember, some people join CMC trips to meet others.
3. **Trip pace:** This is the most obvious component that affects group dynamics. Therefore, the anticipated trip pace information is essential pretrip information, so participants can select trips that match their ability. A reasonably slow, steady pace at the beginning of the trip allows individuals to warm-up their muscles, to converse, and continue with name recognition. Some essential components for establishing the best pace for the trip include: Front leader and rear leader communication and frequent check-in with participants. Remember that the "slowest" person may have feelings of guilt, fear of holding the up

Positive Group Dynamics are encouraged by the leader's effective communication and decision making skills.

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group, and increasing anxiety. These feelings can transform into actions of not taking care of their personal needs, which is a safety issue. Conversely, if the trip pace is too slow for the majority of the group, a variety of reactions may occur that also affect the group dynamics and safety.

4. **Supportive/respectful atmosphere:** The leader demonstrates that he/she believes that the participants contribute to the group. The leader sets tone for respectful language, LNT practices, etc. He/she discourages “conquer the peak” and competitive attitudes.
5. **Challenge/stress:** These are two different experiences that greatly affect group dynamics. Research shows that stress often leads to poor performance, crisis, fear, and re-action instead of pro-action.
Adults must be able to choose their own challenges. Because the level of physical challenge may be closely related to the trip route and itinerary, this information is again essential pre-trip (pre sign-up) information. The leader should work to reduce potential stressful situations, by providing information and a reasonable level of personal choice throughout the trip.
6. **Goal accomplishment:** Everyone must know the group goal. In addition, they may have individual goals. It is important to emphasize to individuals that the group goal may be different from the trip destination, which may change due to weather conditions or other factors.
7. **Decision-making:** The decision making process affects everyone in the group. Flexibility in decision making style is important, so group members can contribute appropriately while the leader uses his/her experience and judgement effectively.

**Every trip
has a destination and a
goal.**

**We may not reach the
destination, but we'll
always attain our goal:
An enjoyable trip!**

-Al Ossinger
CMC trip leader and former
Safety and Leadership
Committee Chair

GROUP FORMATION STAGES

Every group goes through identified stages. It is helpful for the trip leader to recognize these stages, as well as potential emotions of the individual participants. This knowledge helps leaders plan actions that help facilitate smooth group formation.

1. **Forming:** Individuals need to feel welcome and that they are on the right trip. Pre-trip information helps members determine their ability in relation to the trip description including difficulty, pace, and skills required. The leader may determine that an individual is not qualified for the trip at any point in the pre-trip process and inform the individual of the decision. Qualifying participants at the earliest stage (during signup or follow up calls) through questioning of recent experience is ideal.
2. **Sorting:** People are figuring out the group and what the group guidelines are, such as skills/experience of other trip participants, the leader's leadership style(s), trip pace, etc.

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3. **Norming:** Participants are following the guidelines. For example, when at a rest stop, they know that the men go on one side of the trail and women on the other (or whatever other guidelines were established). Or, a participant communicates with the trip leader if she wants to explore during the lunch break, et cetera.
4. **Differentiating:** This is an important stage for individuals in the group. They feel safe (emotionally and physically) enough to express their own needs, yet have the ability to be in the group. Previous experience and readiness for the particular trip are important factors in each individual's ability to "differentiate."
8. **Closure:** In order for the trip to feel complete, some sort of gathering is important near or at the end of the trip. This formalized conclusion may be a brief "thank you for participating", or may include a quick sharing of trip highlights by each group member, or verbal or written evaluations. This is a great opportunity to include marketing for future trips and possibly to share addresses/phone numbers. It is important that everyone is back to the trailhead and that all of the cars have started before individuals leave the group.

DECISION MAKING

Leading a group of people in the backcountry requires constant decision making.

- Changes in weather, accidents, or other unexpected events often happen.
- Distance from standard emergency response and resources available in the city make it essential for leaders to be prepared for potential decision-making.

Planning and decision making sometimes go hand in hand. For example, by researching the terrain of a hike, one can decide whether to wear hiking boots or trail shoes.

Steps in decision-making.

1. Identify that a decision needs to be made
2. STOP
 - Stop
 - Think
 - Observe
 - Plan
3. Communicate your plan with the group members

People who have made decisions in the backcountry have identified a procedure to aid in the process.

Effective
Decision-making
is a result of
experience, reflection,
and common sense.

It is the ability to
evaluate the
probability and
severity of potential
events and to act in
the best interest of
the group.

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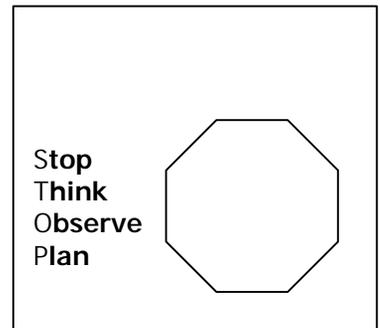
The standard formula for decision-making

Probability (how likely is the event?) X Consequences (how will the event affect individuals and/or the group)

For example, if a storm is building in the west as you approach the final ridge to Dyer Mountain, you realize you must make a decision about whether the group should continue toward the summit or turn back.

You can make an estimate of how fast the storm is heading toward you and what the probability is that it will cross your path at an exposed area along the ridge.

Weigh that with the consequences. E.g. Severe: someone might be struck by lightning, might fall on the wet rocks (2,000-foot exposure), or panic because of the conditions.



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SAMPLE COMPONENTS TO CONSIDER IN DECISION MAKING

Event that sparks decision making process	Potential Group actions	Probability of Mishap	Potential Consequence(s)
Thunderstorm is building	Keep hiking toward summit	High probability the storm will cross the group path on an exposed portion of the ridge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lightning strikes a person (Severe consequence) 2. Person slips on wet rocks coming down (moderate to severe consequence, depending on the fall) 3. Person panics because of severe weather (moderate to severe consequence, depending on the person)
	Wait in sheltered area where they are protected	50%/50% probability that the storm will pass, leaving time to still summit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turn around time missed; return to cars later than planned 2. Potential for person to slip on wet rocks
	Turn around and head back to trailhead	High probability that the group would experience showers after they reach timberline and are hiking down.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach the trailhead ahead of time without incident. 2. Two people in the group are unhappy because they have tried to climb Dyer Mountain before without summiting.

Using a facilitative style, the leader would share this information with the group and make a recommendation for the final decision. With an authoritative style, the leader would let that group know he or she has made the decision.

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Most people have experienced conflict during group situations on outdoor trips. However, communicating effectively throughout the trip and establishing a caring ethic among group members can prevent many conflicts.

If conflict arises, the leader often must take action:

1. Face the conflict. Generally, avoiding conflict does not make it go away and often causes escalation.
2. Identify the underlying causes of the conflict. Often the key causes are not on the surface.
3. Try to understand all of the sides of the conflict and the needs or desires of the people involved.
4. Identify possible actions to resolve the conflict to the agreement of the parties involved.

HOW TO AVOID GROUP CONFLICTS!

- **Build trust in the group.**
- **Demonstrate caring.**
- **Try to understand what the other person (or both "sides") want.**

STEWARDSHIP

Trip leaders of the Colorado Mountain Club must be leaders in stewardship of our mountain resources, as well as effective leaders of groups on their trips.

Trip leaders should practice *Leave No Trace* principles on all CMC trips:

1. Plan and prepare ahead
2. Travel and Camp on durable surfaces
3. Pack out what you pack in
4. Properly dispose of what you can't pack out
5. Reduce the impact of fire
6. Leave what you find

The Safety and Leadership Committee recommends that CMC trip leaders seek out additional training in *Leave No Trace* practices.

In addition, trip leaders are required to follow all of the established regulations when using public lands (USDA Forest Service, BLM, etc.) Because different areas have different regulations, it is essential that the trip leader take personal responsibility to understand and practice the regulations specific to his or her trips. These include group size, permits needed, et cetera.

LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CMC TRIPS

TRIP PREPARATION

CMC TRIP SCHEDULE (*Trail and Timberline*)

Write out the trip description and call it in or send it to the Group Trip Scheduler who will submit it into the Club schedule.

- Keep the information as accurate and concise as possible.
- Consider including expected pace (slow, moderate, fast) and any special training or equipment requirements.
- Determine if you will allow qualified guests on your trip, and follow your Group's guest policy. Be certain to take liability waiver forms to be signed by any guests at the parking lot.

As the trip date approaches:

- Consider making a **scouting trip** to check trailhead conditions, recent snow, road detours or closures. Changes in conditions are better discovered before the trip, than as a surprise with participants.
- **Consider contacting the participants before the trip** to establish a connection with them and share information:
 - Introduce yourself and welcome them to your trip. You may casually remind them that it will be a group experience.
 - Ask about any health concerns
 - Remind about equipment/clothing needed - especially revisions you may have made after scouting the trip.
 - Answer any questions (especially for new members)
 - Clarify meeting time and place.

Trip preparation is leader preparation:

- **Know the trailhead**
- **Know the route**
- **Establish the goal**
- **Know the terrain**
- **Measure the distance and elevation gain**
- **Identify the skill level of participants you want on your trip**

DAY OF THE TRIP

AT THE MEETING PLACE

The meeting place is a convenient parking area for the trip participants to meet for carpooling to the trailhead.

Suggestions for successful beginnings:

- Be there 5-10 minutes before the designated time
- Use this time to check attendance roster and arrange car-pooling.

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As participants arrive:

- Greet them individually
- Introduce yourself
- Have guests sign the liability waiver form.
- Check that they have required equipment and clothing. It may be helpful to let them know that you ask everyone to check their packs, since it is easy to forget essential items such as sunglasses.
- Ask each person to let you know if they have any special needs or want to leave the group for any reason.

TRIP SIZE

The CMC policy states that the minimum trip size is four people. The rationale is that in case of injury or accident, one person can stay with the victim and two people can seek assistance.

- **If your trip has cancellations or “no-shows” with a result of less than four total people (including you, the leader) the trip is not recognized as a CMC sponsored trip.**
- If the group of 3 or fewer people decide to conduct the trip, **you are responsible to inform the participants** that it is considered a “wildcat trip” and the Colorado Mountain Club is not liable for any injury or mishap that may occur.

TRAVEL TO THE TRAILHEAD

- Check to ensure each carpool driver knows the directions to the trailhead.
- To prevent mix-ups and loss of time, the Safety and Leadership Committee suggests providing each carpool driver with a simple map of the driving route to the trailhead.

AT THE TRAILHEAD

- Check that everyone arrived safely
- Check vehicles for locked doors, lights off, etc.
- Gather the group
- Ask people to introduce themselves, possibly including any special skills/interests or background.
- Present the trip overview
- Discuss the weather conditions, if appropriate
- Discuss the trip goal and emphasize that the goal may change due to weather or safety factors.
- Review group safety rules:
 - Group pace
 - Lead and Rear Leaders for group cohesion

Effective leaders use “modeling” techniques:

As the group is gathering, and throughout the trip, put on sunscreen, drink water, eat a snack, and casually let people know what you are doing. Your actions “model” for the trip participants that you are taking care of yourself and they should do the same!

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- Stay within sight and hearing distance of each other; ask people to communicate if they need to stop, or have any special needs.
- Communicate expected stops, such as a planned clothing adjustment stop in 20 minutes.
- Observe each person's preparedness: check boots, packs, clothing, and pertinent equipment.

DESIGNATE A REAR LEADER

Appoint a rear leader and communicate their responsibilities:

- They will be the last person at all times.
- Communicate clearly with the trip leader if anyone is having difficulties.

The trip leader may change the designated rear leader as it suits the safety and needs of the group. Sometimes the trip leader may appoint an experienced person to set the pace, and the leader may bring up the rear. Because of fatigue, this may be important on the return hike, when people may be more prone to accidents.

EN ROUTE

- Begin the trip at a reasonable, steady pace. Research shows that a slower pace at the beginning helps to facilitate positive group dynamics, allowing participants to talk and to feel a part of the group.
- Plan to take regular, short breaks, and communicate your plan to participants. At breaks, model outdoor "skills" such as drinking, eating a snack, adjusting your clothing, and applying sunscreen.
- Take a headcount of your group regularly. If separation of your group occurs, it will require forming a second group with an assigned leader and the responsibilities of club rules.
- Breaks offer you opportunities to share interesting tidbits such as names of visible peaks, signs of wildlife, et cetera, as well as important route information and/or instructions. (For example, "We are approaching an exposed ridge, please put on your wind gear now.")
- If a participant refuses to follow your direction that affects group safety, practice conflict resolution techniques. Make every effort to include the individual as long as it does not compromise group safety. If all your efforts fail, let the person know, in front of the group, that the person is now choosing to not be a part of the group and the person is responsible for their own actions.

OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage time during the trip
- Anticipate physical dangers
- Stay on course
- Check-in with participants well-being and make frequent head counts
- Help the group achieve its goal (which may change throughout the course of the trip)
- Help create a quality experience on the trip
- If separation occurs, discuss scenarios, alternatives, and responsibilities with your assigned leader of the other formed group

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TIME FRAME

Throughout the trip, communication about the time frame is important. Each person in the group should know how long they would have to eat, go to the toilet, rest or explore. This is especially critical at the trip destination, such as a lake or peak, where people may be tempted to explore.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!

No matter how many times you have led a CMC trip, even to the same destination, something unexpected is bound to happen! Communication, decision making and group dynamics are some of the topics discussed in this manual. Other key skills to develop and practice are mountain-oriented first aid and knowledge of mountain weather systems.

TRIP PAPERWORK

- **ACTIVITY REPORT**

Complete and mail this report to the CMC office. This report is kept on file and contains important information for CMC liability purposes. Submit any liability waiver forms from guests with your trip report. For Group information, list “no shows.”

- **INCIDENT DOCUMENTATION**

Write the details of any incidents or accidents that occur on your trip. Include date, time, persons involved and description of events leading to incident. Send a copy of the documentation to CMC office with your activity report. It will be forwarded to the Safety and Leadership Committee.

Examples of situations needing documentation:

- Health emergency needing more than basic first aid
- Lost person
- “Near miss” such as a close call where safety was compromised but that did not result in a reportable injury.
- Motivation or behavioral incident such as a person leaving the group, unwillingness to participate, combative behavior, drug or alcohol abuse, etc.

NOTE: A serious accident must be reported to the Group and State CMC officers as soon as feasible.

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CMC STATE RULES FOR TRIPS

- A. A minimum of four people is required for each trip.
- B. Each person, including guests, must sign a liability waiver before he/she may participate in any trip.
- C. Each CMC group shall schedule a minimum of one Leadership/Safety Seminar each year.
- D. Before leading a trip, regardless of previous experience:
 - 1. members must co-lead a trip with an experienced leader
 - 2. demonstrate leadership qualities
 - 3. be approved as a trip leader by his/her group
- E. Each Group Chair and/or the Group Outings Committee shall approve all trips and leaders before submission for the trip schedules.
- F. A leader may be suspended temporarily from leading trips in any Group, under the following conditions:
 - 1. There is a written, legitimate complaint against the leader that documents dangerous leadership, poor judgment, or unsafe conduct resulting in an accident or potential accident.
 - 2. The Group and/or the State Safety and Leadership Committee will conduct an investigation into the conduct of the leader within 45 days of the reported incident.
 - 3. The State Safety and Leadership Committee will be advised of the action recommended by the investigative parties.
- G. A leader may be permanently suspended from leading trips in all CMC Groups.
 - The Group Chair will notify all Groups of any leader suspension within that Group.
- H. Each trip must have a designated rear leader who is appointed by the leader.
- I. Members are ultimately responsible for ensuring their own safety on any CMC trip by wearing and using appropriate and reliable equipment. Members should always consider bringing and wearing their climbing helmets for class 3 climbing trips. Members should always bring and wear their climbing helmets for class 4 or class 5 climbing trips.

*Excerpted
From the
CMC
State
Safety and
Leadership
Committee
Policies*

CMC LEADERSHIP REFERENCES

The following books are recommended. They are available for sale through the CMC bookstore.

LEADERSHIP

Graham, John, 1997. *Outdoor Leadership*, Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books, 173 pp.

OUTDOOR SKILLS

Carlene, J. D., M.J. Lentz, S.C. Macdonald, 1996, revised edition. *Mountaineering First Aid*, Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books. 141 pp.

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