



Denver Leader Safety

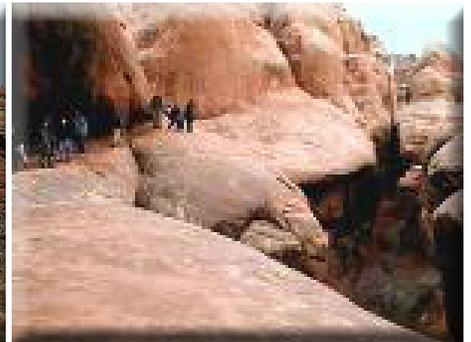
The Safety Letter for Denver Leaders of the Colorado Mountain Club

www.hikingdenver.net

www.cmc.org

April 2011

DISASTER IN THE DESERT



Back in the Olden Days... Back in the days when men were manly and the women were too. Back in the days when Giants walked the Earth.... These were the days when Our Hiking Club * was formed.

Its reputation was formidable. "Tough guys." "The finest hikers in the state of Utah." In short, a bunch of gnarly old cusses who could go anywhere, do anything, and above all, take care of themselves. Our hike in Arches, was being led by one of the original members, one of the toughest and gnarliest of them all, John.* Imagine our surprise when he told us that the brief foray into Fiery Furnace would be ranger guided. "What? Our Hiking Club following some ranger around, listening to nature talks? No way!" But it turned out to be a requirement, the only way to get into the Furnace. John assured us that the ranger who was to lead us in knew that we were experienced hikers, and had promised not to "bore us" with too many instructions and warnings. You see these hikers have the attention span of fruit flies.

We met our ranger, a delightful man named Steve*. Our group of 20 dutifully trouped after him, winding our way through the crenellated array of red rock fins that is the Furnace. We tried not to smile when he warned us that slick rock could be dangerous. At one point, he gathered us around a giant pothole to talk about water in the desert. Our leader got a little restless, and wandered off to explore a giant boulder, above a rock ledge. The ever patient ranger called him back. Standing on top of the 25 foot boulder, John turned to face us—and, with the grace of a Keystone Cop, slid right off of that boulder.

Oh No! The gnarliest of the gnarly, laid low by stumbling over his own feet. Very fortunately, he was able to arrest his fall. What could have been a fatal catastrophe resulted in a badly fractured right leg. My friend and I scrambled up the rock to help him. Despite our medical training, we quickly realized there was no way that we could get him out of there without a litter. We stabilized his leg with an ace wrap and gave him some ibuprofen. We eventually moved him down and out of the sun to await rescue.

Steve, the ranger, had to hike out to get reception on his radio. While we were waiting, as I filled him full of pain pills, I remember saying to him, "John, I have to hand it to you. The only hike that I have ever taken with this Club that had a ranger on it was the one you chose to get yourself injured on. That was pretty darn clever of you." He meekly agreed.

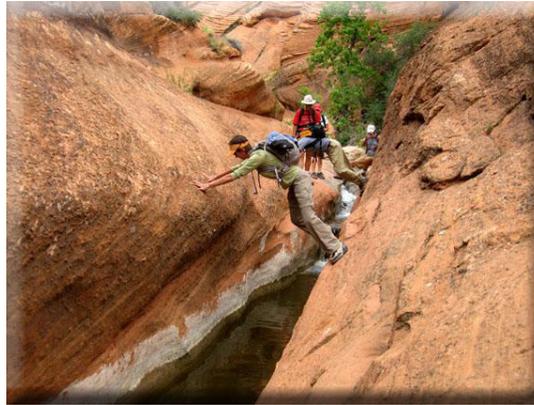
About ten search and rescuers, with a litter, materialized about 1 ½ hours after the accident to undertake the very arduous job of transporting John back over those fins and out to a road. The litter had one balloon tire on it. It could be detached in the tight sections so the litter could be lifted up, over, and around obstacles. It was quite a process, taking well over an hour and involving the help of all the hikers as we all passed the litter from one person to the next.

What lessons should we have all learned from this? How about the obvious—"Never think you are too cool or experienced to need help. You almost certainly will eventually."? How about "Be nice to your fellow hikers, you never know if they will be the ones involved in your rescue."? How about "Listen to the ranger."? And, oh yes, how about "Slick rock can be dangerous."?

*Name changed to protect the innocent.

Lessons Learned:

- Be respectful of slick rock. They call it that for a reason
- Be prepared with your own emergency supplies. The ranger could not give out medication and his air splint did not work.
- The ranger wisely advised us to transport John to the hospital. The rescue within park boundaries is free, but not the ride to the hospital.
- Hydrate the victim. The Fiery Furnace is well deserving of its name. With serious injuries, you may need to withhold solid food in case surgery is imminent.
- Stabilize leg and do not try to straighten out a displaced fracture.
- As soon as victim is stabilized, move to a safer area if needed.



How to safely ascend / descend slick rock:

- Place your weight squarely over your feet. Take small steps.
- If the terrain is very steep, avoid sitting down. It may be too hard to regain your grip to stand.
- When hiking in slick rock country, carry a rope or strap as backup.
- Avoid steep areas when wet, esp. the black areas which are actually moss.
- Be especially careful for about 24 hrs after rainfall. Sandstone is fragile when wet and can break off.
- Be sure your route is safe, allowing for return if necessary to bail. Don't get trapped.
- Proper boots with good grip are a must. YOUR SOLES MAY BE ALL THAT IS KEEPING YOU ON THAT ROCK!! IT MAY BE ALL THAT IS KEEPING YOU ALIVE!

Ultralight First-Aid Kit Recipe (weighs 3 oz.):

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 adhesive bandages | 2 – 2 pk. Ibuprofen | ½ roll medical tape |
| 2 knuckle adhesive bandages | 4 pks gauze (various sizes) | 3 antiseptic wipes |
| 4 butterfly bandages | 2 pack antihistamine | 2 packs antibiotic salve |
| Tweezers | 4 safety pins | sheet of moleskin |
| Surgical gloves | | |
| 2 water treatment tabs (like aquamira) | | |
| Waterproof heavy duty ziplock bag (can act as a syringe/irrigator) | | |

For Leaders who take great pride in carrying heavy packs add:

| | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sam splint & finger splint | Elastic wrap | Blister pads/New Skin |
| Aspirin (heart attacks) | triangular cloth/bandana | rolled gauze |
| Hand sanitizer | eye drops (re-wetting/rinsing) | Loperamide (anti diarrheal med) |
| Emergency blanket | Rehydration salts (Ceralyte) | Energy packet |
| Emergency checklist form | | |
| Emergency numbers | | |
| 1st aide manual / cheat sheet & pencil | | |

For an expanded checklist visit REI <http://www.rei.com/pdf/expertadvice/Checklists/first+aid.pdf>