

Reducing Lightning Risk

If you can't get back to your vehicle (metal-topped), follow the actions below to reduce lightning risk. These behaviors are listed in order, and each is roughly twice as important as the next.

Timing You must set turnaround times that will get you off of exposed terrain before storms arrive. Observe the changing weather—if you have logistical delays, you may need to change your plan. Begin your turnaround if you hear thunder (which means lightning is less than 10 miles away).

Find Safer Terrain if You Hear Thunder Avoid peaks, ridges, and significantly higher ground. If you have a choice, descend a mountain on the side that has no clouds over it. Move to safer terrain as soon as you hear thunder, not when the storm is upon you.

Avoid Trees and Overhangs Avoid trees and bushes that rise above others. Look for an obvious ravine or depression before the storm hits, then spread out your group at 20 foot (7m) intervals to reduce the risk of multiple injuries. Assume the lightning position. Avoid cave entrances and small overhangs.

The Lightning Position is for waiting out storms in stationary situations when it is impractical to move to a safer location. It is important to reduce your overall footprint on the ground.



Fig. 4 Lightning positions: Put your feet together to significantly reduce the effects of ground current. If you have a foam pad to stand on or a pack to sit on, get on it. Crouch or sit to slightly reduce the effects of side flash and upward leaders.

If You Become Lost or Injured

If you have cell reception, call 911.

DO NOT SEPARATE YOUR GROUP.

Remember rescues can take hours if not days—prepare to spend a night.

Stay warm.

Hydrate and fuel.

STAY IN ONE PLACE!

Get CORSAR Card

Colorado residents and visitors are well served by dedicated volunteer search and rescue teams. By purchasing a Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue (CORSAR) card you are contributing to the Search and Rescue Fund, which will reimburse teams for costs incurred in search and rescues across the State of Colorado. Please note the CORSAR card is not insurance and does not reimburse individuals nor does it pay for medical transport. You can purchase the card at the Ouray Mountain Sports, Visitor Center and San Juan Mountain Guides or online: dola.colorado.gov/sar/cardPurchase.jsf

Ouray Mountain Rescue Team
PO Box 220
Ouray, CO 81427
ouraymountainrescue.com

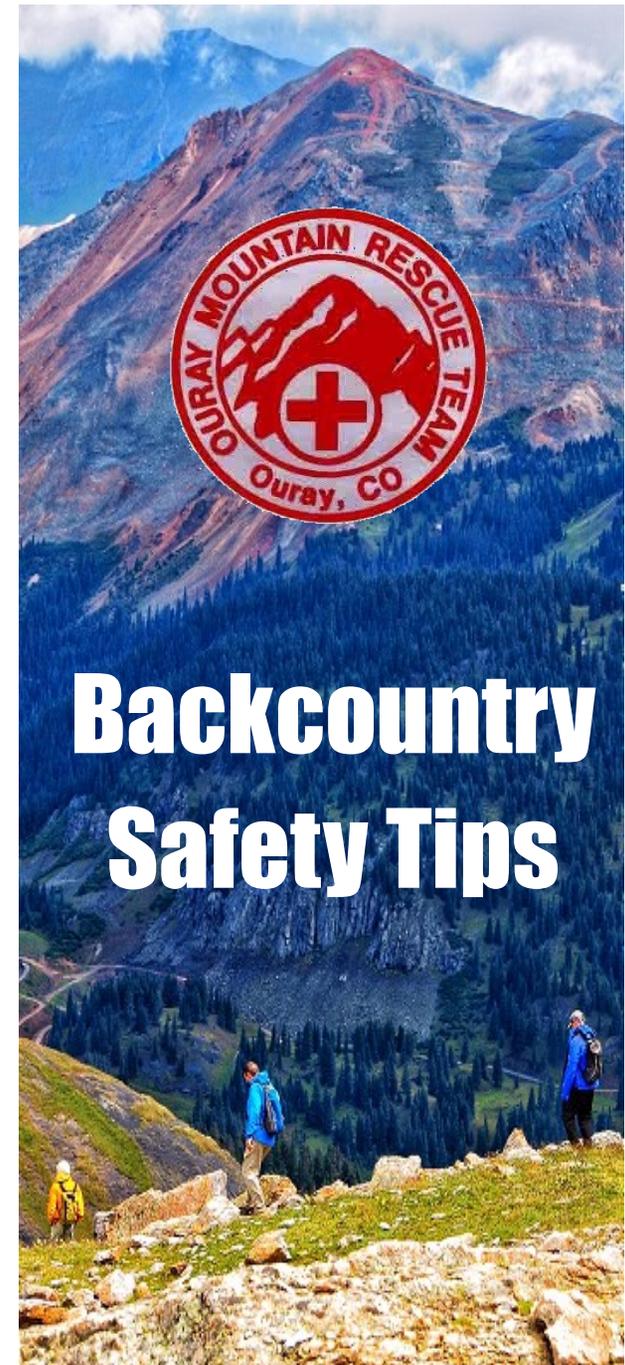


Photo by Angela Donini

Backcountry Tips

Before You Go

Do Your Research Do you now exactly where the trailhead is? Can your vehicle make it there? Do you need to arrange for a shuttle?

Check Weather Make sure to check not only the day highs but also overnight lows. Use pinpoint weather to see what the highs/lows and chance of precipitation are going to be at the highest point of your trip.

Plan a Turnaround Time Before starting your hike decide what time you want to turn around and head back even if you don't summit. This helps avoid getting being caught by lightning and/or dark.

Let Others Know Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. Sign in at trailhead registers.

While You Are Out

Stay on the Trail You may need to overcome the need to travel downhill. Often shortest way is not always the easiest way—there may be terrain barriers such as cliffs, creeks or thick timber.

Start Early In the summer, regular mountain thunderstorms create significant risk of being struck by lightning. Plan to be to treeline by noon.

Hike with a Group It is best to hike with a group... but only if you stick together! Do not split up your group even if it means no one summits.

Be Aware of Your Surroundings Pay attention to trail markers and cairns. Sometimes trails take hard left or right while there maybe a herd path straight ahead wrong way. Memorize the route. Don't forget to look back once in a while. Pay attention to weather.

Be Aware of Your Physical and Mental Condition If you're dehydrated, hungry or tired, you're apt to make poor decisions. Altitude makes you lose appetite—make sure to snack often. Hike slowly and take frequent rests. Assess your companions' condition — and yours — frequently during your time on the trail.

Prevent Accidental False Alerts If you have a personal locator beacon (PLB) such as inReach or SPOT, please make sure they are not sending false SOS alerts. Best to carry your PLB in a hard protective case while you are hiking.

Take With You

Map and compass Make sure you know how to use them. At the very least learn how to find north to orient the map.

Food Carbohydrates are the best to fuel high-output exercise. Bring extra in case of delays. Bring plenty salty snacks to replenish your electrolytes.

Water Bring AT LEAST 2 LITRES PER PERSON PER DAY. If the weather is hot bring extra. Do not forget to eat salty snacks if you drink a lot of water.

Extra Clothes Be prepared for sudden drastic drops in temperature or to hike after sun goes down. Pack fleece or puffy, long pants and underwear, wool gloves and wool hat even if it's 80 degrees in the valley. ALWAYS BRING A RAIN JACKET.

Emergency Bivy Be prepared to spend a night.

First Aid kit

Sun Protection Brimmed hat, sunscreen, lip balm and sunglasses.

Signaling device Such as mirror and/or whistle.

Flashlight or Headlamp

Cell Phone Don't expect it to work everywhere. Often there is a signal on summits and ridges. Don't forget to turn off or put it on airplane mode when not in use to preserve the battery. Make sure you know how to use built-in GPS and/or compass.



Ouray Mountain Rescue Team
www.ouraymountainrescue.com