

Click on the link to watch the 3500 Club's January 2021 virtual Winter Hiking Preparedness Class: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7_COHcznZA

Things we did not cover, or bear explanation:

I mentioned not giving times right before Laurie gave times! But she was giving estimates of times from her own abilities, not giving estimates to others of her times for their use.

I mentioned not being the slowest hiker. It's ok to be the slowest hiker, as long as you are not gasping for breath when everyone is going slowly and are fine. Try to get in better shape if this is you.

Laurie and I are Club hike leaders. Once in a while we will turn someone away if we feel they are not adequately prepared for a hike, w.r.t. gear, or preparedness. Other hike leaders may do the same.

Speaking of the Club, we vet and mentor new hike leaders. They can be trusted to make sound decisions when leading people in the mountains. (Other clubs/groups may or may not train leaders as well as we do).

The Club does a lot more than just give out patches. We recommend you check out our web page, to see the resources and activities we provide.

Always sign in at trail registers. Even in COVID times. Bring hand sanitizer, and use it before and after handling the register. Alcohol based sanitizers will probably not freeze. Knowing where you started can help DEC locate you much more quickly. It also provides 2 other benefits. The first is that DEC may call you and ask if you saw a lost/distressed hiker. The other is DEC uses sign-in information for planning purposes.

Keep alcohol intake to a minimum.

We recommend group size from 3-8, more or less can lead to problems.

Never trust a rope in the back country and pack them out if you find them.

Constantly be aware of conditions and be ready to turn around if necessary. We do not set a strict turnaround time for this reason. But do not exceed what you have told others you will be doing. Better to plan to do 2 mountains and only do 1, than the other way around, if someone is going to worry about you.

Do not rely on others to break trail for you. Even your own trail can get obscured on a windy day. We've seen broken trails just end in the middle of the woods. Also, hunters may break a trail, but have no intention of going to a summit. Don't trust any trail condition report older than 2 or 3 days.

LNT - <http://lnt.org>

hikeSafe - <http://hikesafe.com>

Backcountry navigator - GPS phone app - allows maps to be downloaded at home for use in the field, many other functions. Free trial version.

DEC Emergency number **518-408-5850**

<https://www.mountain-forecast.com/>

List of what gets plowed and how often - <http://catskill-3500-club.org/archive/catskill-peaks/location-type/winter35parkingH.shtml>

USB hand warmers - good to have, but remember to keep them charged.

Article about All Trails: <https://serialphotog.com/blog/the-problem-with-alltrails/>

Adirondack Mt Rescue Facebook page: Great educational resource. Though Adirondack specific, most of the information applies in the Catskills as well – see the January 11th Facebook live winter prep from NYSDEC Forest Rangers1

Glissading: one option for the spoons we carry -

<https://www.llbean.com/llb/shop/90697?page=llbean-spoon-slider-sled>

Sun exposure in winter: bright sunny days, particularly with snow all around you will cause sun burn – carry and use sunscreen, sun glasses and lipbalm

Fanny pack – I use a fanny pack for my glasses, extra gloves, lipbalm, snacks, a few small things. It is quicker than taking off my pack each time.

Care of Waste – We did not cover this, but you should Leave No Trace at all times! Many people think “natural products” such as orange peels, pistachio shells, egg shells, banana peels, dog waste, tp and human waste will just disappear in the snow as it is “biodegradable”. NOT TRUE!!!

Food products should always be pre-peeled and packaged at home. If you do not do that and do have to peel an orange on the trail, pack out the peels. It takes Years for these items to break down and nothing begins to break down in sub freezing temperature, making it even longer!

Human waste - This means carrying a bag for used tp (you cannot dig a hole and bury it in the winter), planning ahead and using the bathroom at a convenience store or rest stop (port a johns are generally not able to be serviced in the winter so do not expect to find them at trailheads), pack out used feminine hygiene products and wrappers as well. Care of pet waste means the same thing – pack it out! Do Not leave a doggie bag of pet waste, pack it out.

The Umbles – We did not discuss hypothermia, but you should make yourself aware of the symptoms of same. Often called the “umbles” because a person has gotten so cold that they begin to stumble, fumble with routine tasks, mumble to themselves, perhaps even remove clothing as though they feel very warm in a cold situation. Be aware if you or another hiker exhibits these symptoms and warm the person as quickly as possible – better yet – take a first aid class!

Sticky snow – we did not discuss sticky snow, snow that balls up and builds up on traction devices and snowshoes. Some prevention techniques you may wish to try are using ski wax on the metal, we have heard PAM cooking spray may help. And you can try to hike on colder days when it is below freezing or earlier in the day when temps are cooler.

Ten Essentials – should be enhanced during winter so that if you need to spend an unplanned night in the woods you can do so safely, perhaps not real comfortable, but safely! In addition to the usual, some people carry a sleeping bag or bivy bag. You would need not only the stove we mentioned, but a vessel for boiling water to purify it.

Even though campfires are not permitted in some areas, if the fire is for survival purposes you can make one. Practice at home with several fire starting methods in cold conditions.

Remember redundancy is very important in starting fires.

Practice with all of the traction devices several times in a flat area such as a golf course, local park, or rail trail before attempting to use them in mountainous terrain.

<http://sectionhiker.com/reader-poll-winter-leave-no-trace-and-human-waste-disposal/>

<https://lnt.org/teach/winter-recreation>

<https://sectionhiker.com/advanced-layering-temperature-regulation-hacks-for-cold-weather-and-winter-hiking/>

<https://skyaboveus.com/climbing-hiking/Why-Cotton-Will-Kill-You>

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/watch-and-learn-new-winter-skills-video-series>