

## **RATC Hike Leader Guidelines**

*RATC recruits only those who are experienced hikers and member of the RATC to be hike leaders. If you have not paid your dues you will not be allowed to lead hikes.*

### ***1. We have a Responsibility:***

Hiking is a healthful and pleasant activity. Club members and guests enjoy meeting and conversing with their fellow hikers on hikes. The Club and its hike leaders have a duty to the hikers to act responsibly and with care in leading hikes.

Hike leaders need to be prepared. They should have a first aid kit, map, compass, whistle and a flashlight or headlamp. Occasionally a hike will return after dark even though it was not planned. A cell phone should also be taken, though not depend on as many times hikes take us out of cell coverage area.

Hike leaders need to know the hike, how to get there, where to park cars, how to do the shuttle and think about emergency situations that might arise. If it has been lengthy period since the hike leader last hiked the hike route, the hike leader should scout the route to determine trail accessibility and condition.

Hike leaders have the authority and responsibility to limit the number of hikers to a manageable group size. Hikes in officially designated wilderness areas should be limited to ten hikers.

### ***2. Hike posting/scheduling:***

Hikes should be posted to the RATC Meetup group by the hike leader. For instructions on how to post a hike on Meetup, contact the Hikemaster for a step by step instruction sheet. If a hike leader is not on Meetup, they should contact the Hikemaster and ask that they post the hikes on Meetup.

### ***3. The hike goes on, if at all possible:***

If a leader cannot make the hike, it is his/her responsibility to obtain a qualified substitute. The Hikemaster can assist if needed. The hike leader(s), in case of bad weather, may cancel a hike. In addition, the hike leader can change the hike from the printed description if trail conditions have changed (e.g. high water), particularly if hiker safety will be jeopardized.

### ***4. The hike meeting place:***

The hike leader(s) select the meeting place for a hike, and location will be used to calculate the carpool fee. Please make sure this is posted on Meetup, as well as emailed out to all Yes rsvpers at least 24 hours in advance of the hike.

### *5. Hiker readiness:*

Please take some time to talk/email with prospective hikers and gather some information. Ask leading questions; be interested in their hiking activities. This is the best time to help the prospective hikers decide if this hike is for them and make sure they know how to be properly prepared (water, food, clothing, footwear, etc.). With members signing up through Meetup, it may not be possible to gain this information in advance. In this case it is even more vital to qualify hikers at the trailhead. It is also a good idea, when sending out the email the day before the hike, to include a reminder about what hikers should bring especially for extreme weather conditions (in example: extra water for the heat or extra layers for the cold). The email should also include the hike leader(s) cell phone number in case they are running late, get lost, are cancelling at the last minute or are needed to be contacted for any other reason.

### *6. Greet, brief, count, and qualify the hikers:*

Leaders (who will identify themselves as such) will greet all hikers, members and guests alike, and make sure everyone is introduced to each other. **Get everyone going on the hike to sign the official sign-up sheet (name, phone number, and emergency contact).** The sign up sheet can be found on the RATC website. If you cannot find it or would like it emailed to you please contact the Hikemaster. It is of the utmost importance to know how many hikers are present.

The leader needs to observe the equipment and advise or reject poorly prepared persons (high heels, flip flops, insufficient clothing for cold weather, no water/food). Also check whether there are any medical problems (bee sting allergies, leg or foot problems/injuries) among the members of the group. The leader has the authority to exclude someone from the hike if, in the opinion of the leader, the prospective hiker is not physically capable of completing the hike or is not properly clothed and equipped for the hike.

Leaders will give an overview of the hike route (possibly supplemented with maps or trail description handouts), mention unusual or significant features, and indicate generally the rest stops and lunch break. Now is the time to state that this is a group activity and that the group is expected to follow the leaders' directions and stick together.

### *7. Organize the carpool:*

When cars are required, the leader will explain car pool trip cost sharing to the group, give clear instructions to all drivers, including exact route and destination. Verify that everyone has a ride. Cars should try to stay together and behind the leader. A designated regrouping place should be agreed upon for long or complicated drives. Any special arrangements must be discussed at this time. For example, if there are faster hikers who wish to complete the hike and drive away before the rest of the group, the hike

leader may allow them to do so only after determining there will be enough cars to transport everyone back to the beginning trailhead or meeting place.

### ***8. Maintain one group with NO lost “souls”:***

The leader and assistant leader will decide who will lead and who will sweep (the person stationed at the end of the group). All hikers must stay behind the lead hiker and the sweep will bring up the rear. The hiking pace should be controlled by the leader to keep all hikers within a reasonable distance behind the leader.

The lead hiker should stop at prudent intervals for rest, trail breaks, and water stops. The hike leader will stop and wait for everyone to arrive when the sweep is too far in the rear or at points where the group could become separated (intersections, hazards, or confusing places). It must also be made very clear to each person electing to go ahead that they are no longer considered a part of the RATC hike and RATC and the hike leaders no longer have any responsibility for their safety, well-being or transportation.

### ***9. RATC wants New Members and Hike Leaders:***

Are there any prospective members or hike leaders in the group? Talk to the guests and let them know the important work the RATC does and how paid memberships contribute to that. Encourage them to join online and give them an RATC brochure. If you need brochures please contact the Hikemaster. Look for prospective hike leaders and let the Hikemaster know your recommendation.

### ***10. Do the paper work***

The hike leaders need to email a hike report to the Blazer Editor & Hikemaster describing the hike and listing the people that attended the hike. It is best to do this while it is fresh in your mind. For examples of Hike reports hike leaders can refer to previous editions of the Blazer. After the hike is over also logon to Meetup and mark any hikers that did not attend as “No Shows.” All sign in sheets should then be emailed or mailed to the Hikemaster.

### ***11. Follow Up***

It would be a friendly gesture if the leaders contacted some of the guests to make sure they enjoyed the hike, to invite them back to join future hikes and to invite reoccurring guests to join the RATC. This can be done by telephone or email (both of which can be found on the sign in sheet).