



## **Tips From The Trails**



Photo by Neal Summerton Photography

## **A Guide to Safe Hiking in the White Tank Mountains**

# Desert Safety and Managing Emergencies

*“Nothing prepares you for desert hiking . . . like desert hiking!” Dan Gruber*

For those of you who love to hike outdoors, the warmer months can be challenging, even for the experienced hiker. Hiking the park trails in the White Tank Mountains, or any other of the region’s parks, is one of the pleasures of living here year-round. Unfortunately during the warmer months, all too often the news is filled with alarming stories of hikers who failed to heed weather warnings and were ill-prepared for the effects of excessive heat or pop-up monsoon storms.

Regardless of the time of year, when it comes to hiking in the mountains, there is no substitute for overall fitness. This doesn’t mean that you need to be a triathlete, but nothing will prepare you for desert hiking better than – desert hiking! Start slow and easy, then build up over time. Don’t tackle a moderate hike until you’ve done some easy hiking, and don’t do a strenuous hike until you have done some moderate ones. Trying to do too much too soon will result in an uncomfortable and possibly unsafe hike.

Assuming you are generally fit and have acclimatized to the heat as much as possible, your personal performance depends primarily on food, water, and speed.

- If you have adequately pre-hydrated (1+ liters in the hour or two before hiking) and had at least a few hundred calories of food during that same period, then start eating after an hour or so on the trail and continue eating something (about 100 calories) roughly every 30 minutes. Drink some water every time you eat something and more in between if it is hot, etc. Obviously, if you did not adequately pre-hydrate and eat, you will need to start eating and drinking sooner and you will probably need more food and especially more water.
- Food not only provides the calories your body needs when you hike, it also provides necessary electrolytes like sodium and potassium that are lost as you perspire.
- Most of our hikes (moderate loads, moderate speeds, moderate trails, moderate temperature) you will need 100 – 200 calories per hour of food and ½ - 1 liter per hour of water.

## ***Every 30 minutes, Eat a Little, Drink a LOT!!!***

- The single most important piece of “equipment” everyone needs is somebody who knows where you are going and when you should be back, even if it is on a trail you hike every morning. You also should hike with a companion. Hike alone only on trails where you know there are plenty of other people around. Even then, somebody who is not along should know your whereabouts.

## Key Safety Gear:

- Common sense
- Somebody who knows where you are
- A working cell phone

Carry a fully-charged cell phone, turn it on and ensure it registers your GPS coordinates. It is your single most important piece of emergency gear. *Please be aware that cell phone signal can be spotty in the White Tank Mountains, especially in many sections of the backcountry and down in the canyons, so you may have to hike to find a signal.* On all day hikes put the cell phone in airplane mode when not in use to save the battery.

***If you have to stop to catch your breath,  
you are going too fast—slow down!***

Most people can do almost anything if they do it at the right speed. Successful hiking involves maintaining a reasonably steady pace while adjusting your stride length to fit trail conditions.

## Suggested Gear:

- The Essentials: Sturdy hiking shoes, hat, hiking shoes, water, food, sunscreen, list of emergency contacts
- Extra food and water
- Communication: fully-charged cell phone, mirror
- Back Pack: holds more and is less restrictive than a fanny pack
- Navigation: maps, compass, GPS device
- Hiking Poles: wrap a little duct tape on them
- Cactus Gear: comb, small pliers, disposable tweezers, antibacterial
- First Aid Gear: gloves, bandages, tape, sanitizer, bandana
- Emergency Gear: rain poncho, space blanket, flashlight
- Work Gear: knife/multi-tool, clippers, work gloves, bags
- Writing Gear: notepad, pen

**PLEASE NOTE:** Whenever it rains in any part of a mountain range there is the danger of flash floods in washes even miles away. The parks close when there are moderate to hard rainfalls for a reason. If you are out and there is rain anywhere in the area avoid washes!

# Handling Emergencies

## Make Good Choices

- Don't be reluctant to call 911 if the situation warrants. It's better to err on the side of caution.

## Be Aware of your Surroundings:

- Know where you are by access area address, trail name, emergency marker, and GPS coordinates. You need to be able to tell a 911 operator your exact location.

## Do No Harm:

- Do not administer drugs or antibiotics nor use alcohol wipes
- Nothing beyond water, bandana, or sharing a tool they can use like a tweezer.

## Protect Yourself:

- Use common sense and wear gloves if you are around any bleeding.

## Report Your Observations:

- Call or email the appropriate staff and advise those in charge of any park or trail situations they should be aware of.
- **At Maricopa County's White Tank Mountain Regional Park, contact the Park Supervisor, Dove Luidhardt, at (602) 506-2930 Ext 5 or [dove.luidhardt@maricopa.gov](mailto:dove.luidhardt@maricopa.gov)**
- **The WTMRP Park Ranger is Justin Williams: (602) 506-2930 Ext 5 or [justin.williams@maricopa.gov](mailto:justin.williams@maricopa.gov)**
- **At Skyline Regional Park, contact Parks Manager DiAnna Lipe: (623) 349-6301 or [dlipe@buckeyeaz.gov](mailto:dlipe@buckeyeaz.gov)**
- **On the Verrado Trails contact Kathryn Prusinski, Community Engagement Director for DMB: (623) 466-7076 or [kprusinski@dmbcommunitylife.com](mailto:kprusinski@dmbcommunitylife.com)**
- **For the City of Buckeye Police Department Non-Emergency situations: (623) 349-6400.**
- **For the Maricopa Sheriff's Office Non-Emergency situations: (602) 876-1011**



Image 1: Emergency Trail Marker in Skyline Regional Park



For maintenance related concerns that will not impact the safety of visitors, please take cell phone pictures of the concerns and email them to addresses above.

## How the Good Samaritan Law applies to you

- Do not provide any care beyond one's level of training (e.g., trying to performing a tracheotomy after watching the procedure on television) or doing something that a reasonable person would not do, that is, acting with serious carelessness or near total disregard for the welfare of others, and being unaware of the consequences of an act.
- Following instructions of a 911 operator is a good way to keep out of trouble. It is useful to repeat aloud any instructions you receive to check your understanding and for others to hear. Then carry out the instructions.

## Useful Information

- **No motorized vehicles allowed in the White Tank Mountains, except designated roads**

It is illegal to drive any motorized vehicles within these parks, according to local, state and federal rules.

- **Smoking May Be Permitted in the Parks; Littering is Not**

Maricopa County and the City of Buckeye do not have any restrictions on cigarettes in the parks. Cigarettes should be fully extinguished and littering of cigarette butts is prohibited.

During extreme fire bans, Maricopa County may prohibit lit cigarettes in the parks.

- **Alcohol in the Parks**

Beer and liquor are permitted in the White Tank Mountain Regional Park, however glass beverage containers are not allowed.

In Skyline Regional Park, beer (no liquor) is only permitted in conjunction with a ramada or campsite reservation and an additional \$25 fee must be paid. Glass beverage containers are not permitted.

- **Picking Vegetation or Removing Artifacts**

It is against park policy (and in most instances State Law) to remove plants, rocks or any other items from the park. We want to ensure all visitors are able to enjoy the beauty of the desert. When you pick a flower, others are not able to enjoy its beauty.

- **Dogs must be on physical leashes**

It is illegal to have unleashed dogs in the Parks. This is for the safety of the dog and other visitors. Pet owners must clean up their pet's waste.

- **Visitors must stay on trails**

This is a sensitive environment, and we want to keep it a SAFE environment for you along with the plants and animals that live here.

- **Everything is protected—Visitors must not remove anything from the mountains.**

These parks are part of a Conservancy. Please understand that it is the law. Everything here is protected and must be left where it is!

- **No animal life can be harassed, molested or harmed by visitors**

It is illegal to injure or harass any of our wildlife except under strict regulation during legal hunting seasons. The White Tank Mountains Conservancy protects the plant and animal life of the Sonoran Desert.

## **Hunting (and weapons) in the White Tank Mountains**

Most of this mountain range is closed to rifle hunting due to the presence of the Maricopa County Park system. Archery hunting is allowed during January but you must declare your intention to hunt upon entering the County's White Tank Mountain Regional Park and you must pay a user fee at the entrance to the park located on Olive Avenue. There are a couple of areas in the White Tank Mountains that are not within the confines of the park that are privately held. These areas require written permission to enter and hunt from the owner of the property. There are very limited areas in the White Tank Mountains that are public lands that are open to rifle hunting, but the bulk of the deer population is concentrated in the less severe habitat contained within the park system. It's important to remember that it is the hunter's responsibility to make sure that he/she is in a legal area while hunting. A good topographic map of the area including land status is recommended. Hunters need to be one quarter mile from a recreation area. See AZ Game and Fish Department hunting regulations for more information or contact the White Tank Park Supervisor.

Source: <http://azgfdportal.az.gov/hunting/units/yuma/42>

In Skyline Regional Park, hunting is closed in the southern half of the park where the trails and amenities are located. Similar to hunting regulations in White Tank Mountain Regional Park, archery hunting is allowed in the northern portion of the park for deer, javelina and mountain lion during the appropriate season. Limited weapon shotgun shooting is allowed for small game. Before hunting in the park, the City of Buckeye requests the hunter to declare their intentions via <http://www.buckeyeaz.gov/residents/police/hunting-and-shooting>, which will provide information to both the City and Arizona Game and Fish Department on hunter participation.

### **Are firearms permitted in the Conservancy?**

Yes. In 2010, the state legislature enacted legislation permitting open and concealed carrying of firearms in public. There are restrictions, but the bottom line is an individual can possess a firearm in both the White Tank Mountain Regional Park and Skyline Regional Park.

### **Is target shooting allowed in the White Tank Mountains?**

No. Target shooting is not allowed in Skyline Regional Park, White Tank Mountain Regional Park, Verrado DMB or Arizona State Trust Land. If you see target shooting occurring, please alert the land manager.

### **What should I do if I see a visitor entering the Conservancy or biking in the Conservancy carrying a firearm?**

Nothing. The visitor's actions are legal unless he or she is violating one of the park rules as specified by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation or the City of Buckeye.

### **What about hunting on state trust land?**

Hunting on state trust land is legal unless the State Land Department or Arizona Game and Fish Department post the land as "no hunting." Hunters on state trust land may use a variety of means, including firearms for specific species, to hunt. Target shooting is not allowed on State Trust Land. The Arizona State Trust Land located south of Skyline Regional Park is closed to motorized vehicles.

### **Is there anything else I should know with regard to firearms and hunting?**

- Most firearms owners and hunters are responsible individuals. They understand the risks and responsibilities attendant to carrying firearms and in hunting. While it may be unusual to encounter armed individuals or hunters in the parks or on state trust land, it should not be a cause for alarm as long as they are in compliance with park regulations.
- **Do not confront armed individuals or hunters in the White Tank Mountains.**
- Do not assume that you are an expert on firearms and hunting regulations. Report suspected violations through the prescribed methods by contacting Parks Staff.
- Promptly report any actions or discharge of firearms that appear to place park visitors in danger. If you find yourself in an area where careless discharge of firearms is underway, leave the area and inform visitors approaching the area of unsafe conditions.

