

## The liability risk Policy of the Saratoga Sport and Social Club

Our policy is every person who leads a trip, and I sometimes refer to these people as “organizers”, because “leader” is actually a very misleading term for a group like this, is welcome to lead in his or her own way. I do ask that folks take the time to make it clear, beforehand, but also on the trail, what the rules are. I also encourage all organizers of any inherently dangerous event, whether that be whitewater, rock climbing or roller skating, use the Club’s waiver form. This is mandatory if you wish to use the resources of the Club’s message board to advertise a trip.

When I list a trip, I am sure to say what the difficulty is, what equipment I feel should be brought, what the weather report says and that I expect everyone to **stay together**. We strive to have a commonly understood language. For example, how I sometimes put it for a “moderate trip” is “those who are ahead may be asked to wait up, while those in the rear may be asked to keep up.” If you ever have a question, it is your duty to ask me.

Now every assistant has a different style. I personally think it is unacceptable for a group in the backcountry to split up without having a good reason and a plan known to all. I think it is unacceptable, for example, to show up for whitewater kayaking (which I am a beginner at, mind you) without a helmet and PFD. I am cool if you don’t want to wear anything but your shorts when you rollerblade with me. By this I mean there are some sports where getting hurt is part of the process. **You are welcome to join me in accepting the risks I myself take.** People who do join me do so with that understanding.

I know some leaders will cancel for bad weather ahead of time. That’s their prerogative and I support that. I personally think of weather as just another part of our environment that I want to experience first hand. It’s up to each trip leader to make it clear what he or she expects of their group.

Everything in the Saratoga Sport and Social Club is voluntary. Organizers (or “catalysts”) should be clear about what wilderness etiquette is expected and are assumed to leave it to group dynamics to make that happen. Organizers and catalysts can not enforce anything. In the end, we are each responsible for ourselves.

I do believe with every fiber that when a group understands these principals, amazing things happen. Life-long friendships can be made and, at the very least, we become something larger when we act as a team.

Everyone is assumed to acknowledge their full agreement with these principals anytime they show up to accept any invitation.

-Bob Lippman

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