

**Sierra Peaks Section Safety Policy**

**July 2016**

**Approved by the Management Committee of the Sierra Peaks Section, Angeles Chapter**



**Tina Bowman, Chair  
August 16, 2016**

**Approved by the Safety Committee, Angeles Chapter**



**Ron Campbell, Chair  
October 25, 2016**

## **Sierra Peaks Section Safety Policy**

### **July 2016**

#### **GSC Organization**

- A1 Indicate the GSC name and highest level of outings the GSC is authorized to conduct;  
The Sierra Peaks Section (SPS) is authorized to conduct E-level outings.
- A2 Indicate the title of the person(s) responsible to write and approve the GSCSP;  
The SPS chair, safety chair, and outings chair Are responsible to write the SPS Safety Policy to be approved by the SPS management committee.
- A3 Indicate the outings chair selection criteria;  
The SPS outings chair must be an SPS member, typically an M- or E-rated leader who has led outings for the SPS and is very familiar with the types of outings offered by the SPS and the technical difficulties involved with climbing the peaks on the SPS list. He or she is approved by the SPS management committee.
- A4 If applicable, if the outings chair does not use the listserv, indicate the person responsible for forwarding listserv messages to the outings chair;  
The outings chair does use the listerv.
- A5 If applicable, indicate whether the GSC has any special approvals on file for one-leader outings;  
None. All SPS outings require two leaders.
- A6 If applicable, indicate whether the GSC has any special approvals on file for outings that involve special difficulties or special skills and equipment;  
The SPS is approved to lead restricted mountaineering outings, which require the approval not only of the SPS outings chair but also of the Mountaineering Oversight Committee (MOC) of the National Club.

#### **GSC Outings**

- B1 Describe the types of outings conducted by the GSC;  
The SPS primarily offers mountaineering outings to climb peaks in the Sierra Nevada, especially peaks on the SPS list but occasionally non-listed peaks and more rarely peaks outside the Sierra. These outings may involve snow climbing and rock climbing up to class 4 and minimal class 5. The SPS also is a regular co-sponsor for the Leadership Training Committee's rock, snow, and navigation practices and checkouts.
- B2 If applicable, describe how waivers and sign-in sheets are handled before, during, and after the outing;  
Waivers are signed by each participant prior to the outing or at the meeting point. After the outing, the leader sends the waivers and sign-in sheets, as well as participant medical forms when required, to the SPS outings chair. The outings chair sends the waiver/sign-in sheets and medical forms for restricted mountaineering trips to the Local Outings Manager in Oakland, keeping a copy on file for seven years.
- B3 If applicable, describe any large group events that require more than two leaders;  
Occasionally the SPS offers large group outings, almost always day hikes because of overnight permit group size limits and entry quotas, which have more than two leaders so that the group may break into smaller, more manageable groups. These smaller groups, each with two appropriately rated leaders, may take different routes in order to minimize damage to off-trail terrain.
- B4 If applicable, describe any one-leader outings;  
All SPS outings have two or more leaders.
- B5 If applicable, describe any outings that involve special difficulties, skills, or equipment;

Restricted SPS snow outings may require helmets, ice axes, and crampons and sometimes harnesses and related equipment. Restricted rock outings may require helmets, harnesses, locking carabiners, slings, and other related equipment. The leader screens participants on such outings for the appropriate level and amount of experience to climb safely and confidently on these and all SPS outings.

B6 If applicable, describe procedures used for any restricted trips, including MOC coordination; Restricted outings require approval of the leaders and the outing by the SPS outings chair and the MOC.

B7 If applicable, describe any criteria for upgrading the level of an outing due to adverse conditions; In practice, leaders generally overestimate the difficulty of an outing, e.g., planning for snow that is gone by the time of the outing. Upgrading an outing requires the approval of the SPS outings chair and, if applicable, the MOC. If conditions change on an outing, thus raising the level of it and reducing safety, the outing will be modified to the appropriate level of difficulty or aborted.

B8 If applicable, detail any T-rated outings including leader selection, participant screening, and any special grading systems used;

The SPS does not offer T-rated outings.

B9 If applicable, describe any outdoor training conducted by the GSC, including qualifications of leaders, instructors, and participants and how risks to students are controlled;

Besides co-sponsoring LTC rock, snow, and navigation practices and checkouts, the SPS occasionally offers practice sessions as part of climbing outings. For example, on a snow outing, the leaders may hold an ice axe arrest practice if there is a safe area in which to do this (soft snow, long run out, sufficient snow cover); prior to a rock climb that will involve rappelling, a practice rappelling session may be held (the participants will be belayed from above or below [fireman's belay], typically with a prussik or autoblock backup as well). These are practice and review sessions modeled on LTC training events—no beginners are trained. The leaders/instructors are often also LTC examiners or assistants, very familiar with the ways in which LTC practices and checkouts are run. No leader will instruct at a level higher than his or her rating.

B10 If applicable, describe any outdoor proficiency demonstrations conducted by the GSC, including qualifications of leaders, examiners, and participants;

The SPS co-sponsors LTC rock, snow, and navigation practices and checkouts but does not conduct its own.

B11 If applicable, describe any arrangements whereby a leader of a particular rating may lead a route at a higher level.

A leader, usually the assistant, may be granted a one-time approval by the chapter's Safety Committee to lead a route at a higher level than that leader's rating.

### **Announcement Processing**

C1 Describe the method(s) used by the GSC to satisfy the publishing and archiving requirements, especially if electronic publications are used;

The SPS outings chair uses OARS, which archives outings; outings are also published and archived in the section's newsletter, *The Sierra Echo*.

C2 If applicable, describe any procedures for quick-turnaround approval of outings;

After the outings chair approves an outing it is published in OARS, and then submitted to the Chapter Safety Committee for review.

C3 If applicable, detail any special rating systems, other than mileage and altitude gain, used in the publication of outings to indicate strenuousness or technical demands;

The SPS rates outings using the COIMET designations, primarily I, M, and E. Trip announcements include the level of climbing, such as class 3, so that participants may self-screen based on their skills.

C4 If applicable, describe procedures for any jointly-sponsored outings;

Once approved by the outings chair of the primary sponsor, the SPS outings chair may approve and publish the jointly-sponsored outing. These outings are also submitted to the Chapter Safety Committee for review.

C5 If applicable, list any outings-related books, manuals, or newsletters published by the GSC, and frequency of publication.

The SPS publishes a quarterly newsletter, *The Sierra Echo* and maintains a website at [sierrapeaks.org](http://sierrapeaks.org)

### **Leader Qualifications**

D1 Describe the GSC criteria for approving a leader (especially one with previous accidents, complaints, or disciplinary action) to conduct a particular outing;

The SPS outings chair checks each leader's rating and currency for OLT 101 and first aid/wilderness first aid in LEADERS. The leader's rating must be at or above the level of the outing, and he or she must be current in OLT 101 and first aid/wilderness first aid at the time of the trip.

D2 If applicable, describe any GSC-specific directives that elaborate upon the chapter's Rules of Conduct and how leaders become aware of any such GSC specific directives;

The SPS uses the chapter's Rules of Conduct and does not have any elaborations on them. As a matter of policy, at least one of the leaders on an outing must be an SPS member.

D3 If applicable, explain how any T-rated leaders receive technical training and certification.

The SPS does not offer T-rated outings or leaders.

### **Leader Responsibilities**

E1 Describe or provide representative example(s) of trip sheets provided to participants before the outing to help them assemble their equipment and prepare for the outing;

Trip sheets typically give the following information: when and where to meet; how to get there; any special equipment needed, such as a bear barrel, helmet, harness, ice axe, etc.; daily plan for the outing, usually including mileage, gain, climbing difficulty, and camping spot; maps of the area; list of participants with an encouragement to carpool.

E2 Indicate how trip participants are screened to assure that they have the skills required for the trip and to identify those with medical conditions or a previous history of complaints or disciplinary action;

Typically, a leader will ask for a climbing resume in order to evaluate the suitability of a participant for a particular outing. For restricted outings, a medical form must also be submitted to the leaders for each person on the outing. Leaders are encouraged to ask for references from other leaders for potential participants whom they do not know.

E3 If applicable, describe any special procedures used to assure the technical skills of participants (e.g., the mountaineers list).

Although the Mountaineer's List still exists, it is now rarely used. Instead, leaders rely on climbing resumes, personal experience of the participant, or references from other leaders.

### **Accident/Incident Procedures**

F1 Describe how the entity is set up to handle emergencies, reports, and follow up activities and how these procedures are coordinated with leaders before an outing;

In accordance with Angeles Chapter Safety Policy, the SPS typically files accident/incident reports and cooperates with incident investigation as needed.

F2 If applicable, explain any special emergency procedures employed by the GSC for the scope of its

outings.

During an emergency, all participants are asked to assist, even if it means missing a day of work. Self-rescues are coordinated among the leaders and other qualified individuals, and participants are utilized to carry messages, gather water, construct and carry litters, and to perform other tasks as needed. Assisted rescues are coordinated with the sheriff, Forest Service, NPS, or other authority, depending on jurisdiction.