



2026 ADDENDUM to Angeles Chapter Leader's Reference Book (LRB)

All Angeles Chapter outings leaders should be familiar with both National Sierra Club and Angeles Chapter policies. This Addendum is based on policies issued by the National Outings Safety Team in early 2026 and serves as a supplement to the [2022 Leaders Reference Book \(LRB\)](#). It highlights the more significant changes that impact the Chapter outings program. It should be read in conjunction with the LRB for anyone seeking a rating and for those refreshing their rating. For brand new leader candidates, you'll first want to get familiar with our processes, our O/I/M/E outings rating system as well as oversight. See the LRB as well as our [website](#), which has more information and is updated more often.

The updated policies affect every current and prospective Sierra Club outings leader. Most of the policies are effective immediately. Mandates that require first aid training will take effect on Jan. 1, 2027.

FRONT COUNTRY – BACKCOUNTRY

The new policies set stricter requirements for leaders of outings in the backcountry than their counterparts in the front country, so the distinction is important.

(Policy) Definition

- Frontcountry is defined as any location where a professional, state-regulated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) can reach the group within one to two hours via vehicle/foot/helicopter.
- Backcountry is defined as any location where a professional, state-regulated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) cannot reach the group within one - two hours by vehicle/foot/helicopter.

In simple terms, you are in the front country if emergency medical services can reach your group in less than 1 to 2 hours. If emergency medical services need more than 1 to 2 hours to reach your group, you are in the backcountry.

We asked the Outings Safety Team for clarification. Here's their answer:

"The time for EMS to reach your group includes the time EMS leaves their home base and travels to meet your group. This can mean them hiking, flying, or driving in to meet the group. It can also be the group hiking out to meet an ambulance at a trailhead. This leaves wiggle room for Leaders to interpret it the most appropriate way when bringing into consideration your population, the difficulty of the Outing, and the ease of EMS arriving. We want Leaders to be able to use their judgment because Leaders are more familiar with their Outings than we are, and some flexibility is appropriate....And to provide additional flexibility for Leader judgment, we have clarified that frontcountry is defined as any location where a professional, state-regulated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) can reach the group within one to two hours via vehicle/foot/helicopter."

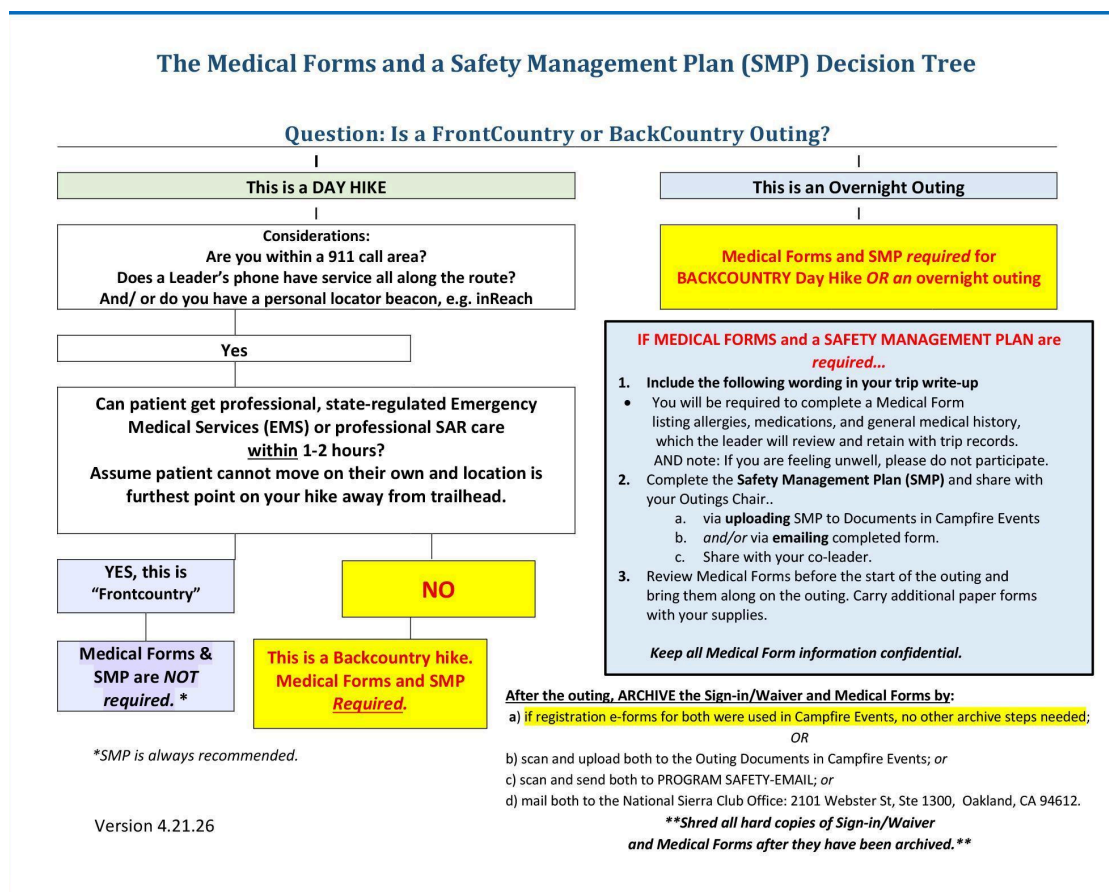
Still not sure? Ask your Group, Section or Committee's outings chair. They are probably familiar with the area where you plan to hike and can say whether it is the front country or backcountry.

Venturing into the backcountry triggers some requirements. Among them:

- All the leaders and participants must submit a medical form.
- The leader must prepare a Safety Management Plan (SMP). (Provisional leaders must always complete an SMP.)

- Starting Jan. 1, 2027, one of the leaders must have current Wilderness First Aid. See also First Aid / WFA below. Both leaders must be current in CPR.

A Decision Tree: to help determine if your trip is backcountry and will require Medical forms and Safety Management Plans, etc. Other impacts include WFA for at least one leader (by January 2027) and recommended “Remote” FA kit items and emergency considerations.



FIRST AID / WILDERNESS FIRST AID (WFA)

For leaders of front country outings: Both leaders must be current in Basic First Aid (BFA). Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, at least one leader on all front country outings must be current in CPR. This includes *front country* car camps rated O-2.

All leader candidates must take CPR and be current at the time of their Provisional.

For leaders of backcountry outings: Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, at least one leader must be current in Wilderness First Aid (WFA), and the other leader must be current in Basic First Aid or higher. Both leaders must be current in CPR.

> Angeles Chapter requires **new leaders** seeking the I, M and E ratings to complete a qualifying **24-hour WFA** course before conducting a Provisional. See [I Rating](#) page and [Advanced Ratings](#).

For RATED LEADERS

Leaders at any level who need to renew WFA may recertify through a qualifying 16-hour course. This course must include a hands-on skills assessment which may be conducted in person or through a live-online or recorded format. When renewing, the next recertification and each alternating recertification may be virtual. Groups, sections and committees can increase the requirement for their leaders but cannot diminish it.

Leaders at the O level who wish to lead backcountry on-trail hikes and have never taken WFA must complete a qualifying 16-hour WFA course that includes a “hands-on” skills assessment that may be conducted in person or through a live-online or recorded format. After the first certification, the next recertification and each alternating one may be conducted by a hybrid or virtual course.

We recommend that currently licensed and practicing medical professionals take WFA or Wilderness First Responder (WFA/WFR) if they are leading outings in the backcountry.

All leaders of youth trips with participants under 5 years of age must be trained in pediatric CPR. There are more requirements for leading trips with minors. See this section on Minors in the approved [2026 Outings Safety Policies](#).

The Leadership Training Committee maintains a list of qualifying WFA providers on its [website](#).

For LEADER CANDIDATES who are working towards a rating

- O level “frontcountry” only | First time: Basic FA + CPR (hybrid ok). We do encourage WFA as the better choice.
- O level backcountry | First time: 16-hour WFA + CPR (hybrid ok)
- I/M/E (defined as backcountry) | First time: 24-hour WFA or higher (hybrid ok - Wilderness First Aid Course, for example).
 - I/M/E trips entail cross-country travel, climbing and more difficult terrain, therefore 24-hour course and higher is required.
 - I/M/E must be current in 24-hour WFA for their Provisional; but may refresh with 16-hour.

****All must be current to be granted Provisional status and when leading a provisional.**

Examples / Questions to Ask Yourself

- Are you only going to lead conditioning hikes? Or urban walks? If so, you will only need Basic FA & CPR.

- If you are going to do longer day hikes in local mountains, for example, one of the two leaders will need at least 16-hour WFA. The other leader will need at least Basic FA. Both need current CPR.
- Cross-country is rated I, and 24-hour WFA is required for new leader candidates.
- Although the “second leader” isn’t required to have CPR on front country outings, chances are that you’ll be the primary leader occasionally. Get CPR and keep it current.

FIRST AID KITS

Two types of leader kits are recommended: Basic FA kit for frontcountry and a “Remote” kit for backcountry. The details and recommended contents are in the [First Aid Section Guidelines](#). These are recommendations; we expect leaders to take a look at the listed items for the kits and evaluate what they will need for their trips.

Leaders should encourage participants to bring an [Individual First Aid Kit](#).

In addition, leaders should always carry a first aid kit appropriate for their outings.

MEDICAL FORMS

Leaders and participants on all backcountry outings must complete a medical form. See the [MEDICAL FORMS](#) section of the Outings Safety Policy doc. See also this bookmarked section [Guidelines for Medical Forms](#). The Local Outings form is the one we use. A simpler Medical form is embedded in Campfire Events, with three basic questions. **By using the Registration Option function in Campfire Events, participants can sign up, fill out the form in a few clicks and sign the waiver with another click.** Otherwise, a paper form is available on our [Forms](#) page.

We strongly encourage using the Medical form in Campfire Events.
See About Campfire below.

DOCUMENT ARCHIVING (RETENTION)

The Sierra Club requires storing key documents from all outings, including waivers and medical forms, for 10 years. There’s an easy way to do this and a hard way.

The easy way is by posting your outing in Campfire Events and requiring participants to register there. If the outing is in the backcountry, you can, with a simple check mark, require them to complete an online medical form. All the documentation automatically goes to the Sierra Club. You as the leader can download a sign-in sheet and a summary of the medical forms for your review prior to the outing. We have a simple training doc (see below link) . In any case, a leader needs to bring paper forms to have available at the trailhead.

If you like doing things yourself, we’re here to help. First download the sign-in/waiver and some extra Local Outings Medical Forms from our [Forms](#) page. In your trip writeup, ask your

participants to download and complete the Medical form and bring it to the trailhead. Bring blank medical forms with you to the trailhead because some participants inevitably will forget. Collect and review the forms at the start of the trip. Once the trip is over, you'll do one of these things:

- Scan the waiver and medical forms, then email them to program.safety@sierraclub.org with the subject line "Post-Outings Documents" [Chapter/Section and Outing Name] and then shred the documents; or
- Scan and upload the documents into your outing in Campfire Events and then shred the documents; or
- Mail the paper documents to the Sierra Club, 2101 Webster St., Ste 1300, Oakland, CA 94612.
- And the **easy way, by using the Registration Option** when you set up your trip in Campfire Events and select Medical Forms Required. Forms are stored in the system. Voilà!

Need help? Ask your Outings Chair, or [LTC Admins](#) or Safety and [Outings Management](#) .

About Campfire Events

Our training on using Campfire is [here](#) and more detail on using Campfire and registration is accessed on this [CAMPFIRE EVENTS STEP-by-STEP doc.](#)

SAFETY MANAGEMENT PLANS

Leaders must prepare Safety Management Plans (SMPs) for all backcountry and overnight outings. The SMP lists resources the group can use in an emergency such as communication devices and nearby hospitals. Prior to the outing, the leader will submit the SMP to the appropriate outings chair for review. The leader will also take the SMP on the outing and review relevant points with co-leader and participants. Blank SMPs are available for download on the [Forms](#) page. A few Angeles Chapter groups, sections and committees maintain archives of SMPs from past outings; these can be helpful.

> **Leaders should also carry the [Emergency Response Card](#) on every outing along with paper forms applicable to the outing.**

SAFETY BRIEFINGS

Begin every outing by giving all participants a **safety briefing** as part of your typical [Safety / Trailhead Talk](#). Here's what to include along with your welcoming message:

- Describe the planned trip and schedule
- Review the terrain, environment or special conditions
- Identify potential risks (weather, wildlife, uneven ground, water hazards)
- How to minimize and respond to risks
- Emergency procedures including location of first aid kits and Safety Management Plan, instructions on what to do if someone becomes lost, separated or injured
- For multiday outings, the leader should conduct a daily briefing.

EARLY DEPARTURE

If someone departs early from a multiday outing (backpack, car camp, mule pack, etc.), file an incident report. The incident report should include the participant's stated reason for leaving, the steps the leader took to assess and mitigate risk, confirmation that the participant left voluntarily and understood the risks. If possible, have the participant sign an acknowledgement of voluntary departure and get others to witness it.

No incident report is required if a participant leaves voluntarily from a day trip. However, if a participant leaves early from a day trip because of an illness or injury, the leader must file an incident report.

FIELD COMMUNICATIONS

At least one leader on every outing must carry a reliable means of contacting emergency response agencies. Leaders can use any satellite device (iPhone 14 or newer, Zoleo, ACR Bivy Stick Mesh, T-Mobile T-Satellite service). If you have other cell services with occasional dead zones, that's okay provided there are nearby live zones.

INCIDENTS & EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergencies are events that threaten the life or limb of outings participants. Examples include fatalities, serious injuries requiring evacuation and hospitalization, or wildfire.

Incidents are less serious events that require modification of the outing such as injuries that require later referral to a doctor, lost participant, violation of law, and near misses (injury was narrowly avoided).

In the event of an emergency, provide first aid to the level of your training and certification.

- Obtain consent to treat unless the patient is nonresponsive.
- Manage the need for an evacuation unless taken over by emergency services or relieved by a higher authority.
- Contact the proper local authorities or emergency services (911) for assistance as soon as possible.
- Report all outings incidents and emergencies to Program Safety within 48 hours whenever possible at:
 - 1-888-OUTINGS (888-688-4647) or 001-303-281-9914 (international)
 - InReach or Zoleo, send it to EVERYONE listed here:
 - Nancy Crane 314-610-4099
 - Amberleigh Hammond 303-717-4296
 - Doug Sandok 415-212-9203

The 888-OUTINGS Emergency Line is the primary way to reach the Outings Safety Team during non-office hours and weekends as the Outings Safety Team is not guaranteed to answer their personal and work phones after hours.

Incident Reporting

All Sierra Club leaders report incidents online using the Outings Incident Form. Choose Outings from the menu. Link: <https://sierraclub.tfaforms.net/f/incident-type>

For Angeles Chapter incidents only: Complete the online form and then send / forward the email confirmation ("Thank you for your submission" or Response email) to the Angeles Chapter Safety Committee investigator at angeleschaptersafety@gmail.com and to your Outings Chair and Chair.

> **For a more complete list of incidents**, please look at the [Incident Reporting](#) Web Page.

> **Carry this [Emergency Response](#) card information with you.**

ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR CANDIDATES

- GET YOUR [FORMS](#) HERE
- USE ONLY THE MOST CURRENT SIGN-IN SHEETS AND FORMS.
- WAIVER DATES 2026 OR LATER
- EVALUATION FORMS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

As always, check out the LRB and our [Steps to Leadership](#) website pages about our ratings for what else we require. These pages will be updated soon with newer policies, but contain basics. You can always contact [LTC Admins](#) or our [LTP Seminar Registrar](#).

PRIOR EXPERIENCE within the last 10 years

Candidates continue to need to provide LTC Admins with their experience. Usually, this is requested as part of registering for the Seminar and providing some details on a Candidate Information Form, a webform shared by the [LTP Seminar Registrar](#).

WTC people. Here's a note of clarification on what we can accept • Candidates with WTC experience. Students and Grads: we count ONE of your Course Outings towards the experience requirement: either Snow Camp (I rated backpack) or Rock Day (M-rock rated depending on destination), plus your non-Course WTC experience backpacks and other hikes. We do not count the other course outings because they are conducted differently than regular Chapter outings. We do count a year on WTC Staff as one I level trip.

Format for sending us your trips. Send us any Sierra Club hikes / walks, backpacks, etc that you do/have done in the last 10 years (they have to be "official" meaning sponsored by a Sierra Club

entity) - in this format: *Rating (O-1, etc), date, Sponsoring entity, destination or name of trip, approx mileage, backpack yes or no.*

> LTC may grant exceptions. If you'd like to discuss your outdoor experience please get in touch with us.

NOte that outside of the Safety Policies is a new requirement for all leaders and staff to take the Campfire Community EOP training e-learning modules. This is rolling out during 2026 separately.