

October 24, 1996

To all Outings Chairs, Section, Group, and Committee Chairs:

Enclosed are the new **“Guidelines for Provisional Trip Leaders.”** This document does not break new ground or change the rules. It only expands on the intent and spirit of the LTC Program and the Leaders Reference Book. This was distributed to the participants at the LTP lectures this past week. The Safety Committee and LTC will be attempting to get this into the hands of all existing LTP candidates working on their check-offs and provisional leads.

The Safety Committee and the LTC would appreciate your input and assistance in making sure that provisional leads are conducted in a safe manner that they are a learning experience for the new leader. Provisional Leaders are often lacking knowledge about the hikes, peaks, routes, and the outing’s procedures of the various groups, sections and committees for which they might wish to lead.

It is our sincere hope that the outings and G/S/C chairs will guide these new provisional leaders in their growth. Your knowledge about the locations your Groups, Sections, and Committees normally lead trips can help guide these leaders in provisional leads that are appropriate for your group, and for the difficulty level desired. We are stressing that provisional leaders must lead trips that are a solid example of the difficulty level they are trying to achieve. Marginal trips at the lower end of a rating spectrum will not be accepted for I, M, E provisional leads. Do not plan the trip for the provisional leader, but offer a critique of his/her proposed trip. Does it meet your G/S/C’s requirements? Does it meet the LTP requirements for a trip that provides a solid example of the difficulty level of the trip?

In addition to screening the trips, please also assist in guiding the Provisional Leaders to select high quality leaders to act as their check out leader. Old hands who can offer advice and counseling to help the developing leaders are ideal.

When screening trips for the upcoming schedule, please make sure that any scheduled provisional leads comply with these guidelines. Please verify that the provisional leader has seen these guidelines. If we have missed getting them to someone, could you get them a copy?

Please help ensure that our new leaders will meet our requirements for leadership skills and safety by providing direction and advice as needed.

Sincerely,

LARRY TIDBALL

Guidelines for Provisional Trip Leaders

This information is intended to supplement the information contained in the Leader Reference Book (LRB). Please use this information in conjunction with the LRB when planning and conducting your provisional trips.

Trip Selection: Trips proposed for provisional leads must meet the criteria for the classification (O, I M, E). To quote the LRB “Enrollees are urged to lead experience trips other than certain well known, easy and over-used routes. “The LTC believes that high quality trips produce high quality experiences which contribute to high quality leaders.” Provisional trips should be selected that provided a challenge to the leader and represent a solid example of the trip classification. Trips that minimally meet the rating classification will not be accepted.

Going “off-route” to make a peak slightly harder to get it to a harder rating is not acceptable. (Scrambling on 3rd class next to a scree slope does not make a peak 3rd class and qualify it as an “M”) The trip rating assumes that the leader will be using his/her skills as a route finder and leader to pick the best route to the peak. Lack of good skills would result in harder ground “off-route.” The climb selected must require route finding and navigation. M level provisional leads on snow are encouraged in addition to class 3 rock trips.

For “I” and “M” the trips must include a “significant amount of off trail wilderness travel and be of a nature that requires significant navigation capability.” (LRB). This means that hiking a trail to within a few hundred feet of a peak, looking up and seeing summit, and walking up to the peak does not meet this test. You must navigate and routefind. Navigation is a large scale activity involving map & compass as well as terrain inspection to stay “on route.” Route finding involves (especially at the M & E levels) making small scale judgments as to the best route over specific terrain. You will be judged on both your navigation and your route finding ability. Good route finding skills are honed by experience in the type of terrain experienced on the particular trip. On harder trips excellent route finding is essential to complete the objective and get the group safely back to camp before dark. A less than ideal route selection may mean a bivouac or a late night out.

Trips must be selected, planned and lead by the provisional leader. This includes doing a proper write-up for publication in the chapter schedule. Do not copy standard trips to overused places. Research and plan your own trip. If you need help, consult with the outings chair of the Group, Section, or Committee that will be sponsoring the outing for help in evaluating your suggested trip. Early contact with the Outings Chair is essential for making things go easily. Let Him/Her know that you are planning a provisional lead, and that you want their experience in evaluating if your proposed trip is well timed and meets the rating standards for the trip classification. If after talking to the G/S/C Outings Chair, you still have doubts about if your trip will meet the criteria for provisional trips, send a copy of the trip announcement to the Safety Chair for approval prior to the schedule deadline. The Outings Chair can also assist in selecting an evaluating leader for your assistant (see below).

If you plan to climb a peak on one of the climbing section “peak lists” as a provisional lead, please coordinate with the appropriate climbing section. If you plan on having your trip sponsored by a different group or committee, consider joint sponsorship with the climbing section (HPS, DPS, SPS.) The Outing Chair of the climbing section is likely to be the most knowledgeable about the peak and route planned and can be most helpful.

A significant body of experience on trips of the “M” and “E” level as a participant with many different leaders is essential for developing your own sense of leadership as well as honing your mountain skills at that difficulty level. New aspiring leaders should seek out and participate on as many trips at the desired difficulty level (or higher) as possible prior to leading their own provisional trips. (WTC NOTE: experience on non-WTC trips is highly encouraged. WTC outings are by nature a student / instructor event, and the normal participant / leader relationship does not exist in the same style as on other outings.)

Selecting a Check Out Leader: The outing chair can assist in selecting a good evaluating leader for your trip. You should not choose someone with whom you are closely associated (i.e., spouse, significant other, longtime hiking companion, etc.) Rather choose a leader of experience who will give an impartial evaluation of your leadership, and will provide helpful comments for your growth as a leader. Provisional leaders are not expected to exhibit the same leadership maturity, poise, group management skills that one expects from seasoned leaders. Commentary offered by the evaluating leader is an important part of the provisional trip experience. Growth in these leadership areas also comes from observing other experienced leaders while a participant on their trips and applying these observations to your own trips.

Someone who has just received a leader rating is inappropriate to use as an evaluating leader. The leader should be someone who has led a significant number of trips at the difficulty level, and has a body of experience as a leader that will help support your decisions, and finally act as a safety back up if needed.

On The Trip: Follow the outings rules for the Group, Section, or Committee sponsoring the outing. Use their sign in sheet and follow their format. Check with the sponsoring G/S/C Outing Chair for the appropriate forms and procedures. Do not use generic forms if the sponsor has special forms. Trips must have participants to count as a trip. You, the assistant and a close friend do not make a trip. You need to advertise the trip to make it attractive, to then screen the participants (most of whom you do not know) to determine if they are suitable for the trip. On the trip, you must deal with the situations that arise with people you do not know.

After the Trip: Fill out the Self Evaluation Form immediately after the trip (be honest and objective) and send it to Don Creighton (LTP records.) Have the evaluating leader send in his or her form. You should receive a copy of this form from the evaluating leader so that you can benefit from their comments.

Notes on WTC Experience Trips: WTC students are not trained for trips at the “M” level, and thus “M” level provisional trips should not be led as WTC experience trips. In addition, the group leader/ student relationship carries over into the experience trip making this not a true evaluation for the provisional leader. WTC leaders should pay special attention to the note regarding avoiding repeating the same over-used locations for trips.

Restricted Outings: All “E” level provisional outings and many “M” level provisional outings fall into the category of “Sierra Club Restricted Outings.” Any outing requiring the use of ice axe, crampons, or the use of a rope is by definition a “restricted” outing. These outings are open to Sierra Club members only, and have special approval requirements. At this time only the SPS and DPS have received authorization to lead restricted outings. Contact the Outings Chair of the appropriate section to get the current details if you plan on leading a restricted outing for your provisional lead.