



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mark A. Hartwig
Fire Chief/
Fire Warden

4410 Cathedral Oaks Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93110

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- Hiking Safety Tips -

SANTA BARBARA, Ca. August 26th, 2019 – With summer in full swing and the weather being warm, many of us head out to the many trails Santa Barbara County has to offer. Hiking isn't typically dangerous, although accidents can happen. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department reminds people that when you're outside, sometimes far from civilization, you can get injured. Planning ahead and using some hiking safety common sense will help you have an enjoyable safe hike.

- **Pay attention to weather forecasts.** Sites like Weather.com let you check forecasts by location and ZIP code. The site offers hourly temperature predictions for the current day and for the following day.
- **Don't be overly ambitious.** A hot day isn't the best time to finally do that 10-miler with 2,000 feet of climbing. If you're intent on getting out, scale back your expectations and save the tough trails for another day.
- **Choose the right hike.** There are many trails to pick from in Santa Barbara County from very easy to very difficult and strenuous. To help you decide which hike is best for you, check out the web site santabarbarahikes.com. It has a description and maps of all the trails in the County.
- **Hike early in the day.** Temperatures can easily be 20-25 degrees cooler in the morning than in the afternoon.
- **Avoid the most intense sun.** Direct sun will increase heat-related stresses and the risk of sunburn. Try to find shaded trails and avoid hiking between 10 and 4.
- **Keep it loose and light.** When it comes to clothing, remember "The Three L's": Lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored.
- **Wear a hat.** A lightweight, light-colored hat with a broad brim to keep the sun off your face and neck will help you stay cool.
- **Use (and pack) sunscreen.** Exposed, sunburned skin will only make it more difficult for your body to stay cool.
- **Don't travel alone.** If you're just going for a hike in a nearby, well-traveled area, you're as safe there as anywhere. But if you travel through heavily forested areas, with steep

canyons and winding trails, you can easily get lost or injured. Traveling with a partner will help you in many ways, especially if he or she is an experienced hiker. People in pairs are much less likely to panic. They can assist one another up steep grades and apply first-aid when needed.

- **Know where you're going.** Stay on clearly marked or well-traveled trails. A map, a compass and/or a GPS unit is a must for any kind of serious hike. A cell phone can also be very useful. Naturally it has to be usable in the area you hike. Not all units will continue to function in every area. Get the details of where you plan to go and ask someone who knows.
- **Take some basic gear.** A simple first aid kit can also be a lifesaver. Gauze and bandages, anti-bacterial cream and other standard items are essential. All these things are small and lightweight. No need to take a miniature doctor's office, just the basics.
- **Hydration.** On hot days, your body can lose large amounts of water through perspiration. The general rule is that you can sweat roughly a quart of water every hour—and even more when hiking uphill or in direct sunlight. Proper hydration is essential to the health of the body's organs, including the brain. Dehydration can lead to impaired brain functioning, which then results in confusion and impaired judgment. Blood can also thicken, forcing the heart to work harder. Start the hydration process before you go out. Begin to hydrate a couple of hours before you hit the trail. Drink frequently, instead of guzzling a bunch of water all at once, take smaller and more frequent drinks of water.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department reminds people that an unexpected injury, a change in the weather or early darkness can turn a hike into an extended crisis. By being prepared and safe, you can enjoy everything that hiking has to offer.

Contact Information:

Captain Daniel Bertucelli
Information Officer
Office 805- 681-5531
Cell 805-689-0599
News Line 805-681-5546
Email Daniel.bertucelli@sbcfire.com
Twitter @SBCFireInfo

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