

Lee's Ferry to Diamond Creek – Non-commercial Colorado River Trip Orientation Video

Chapter Seven: Accidents

Grand Canyon National Park and Round House Productions- <http://www.rhpmedia.com/>

One overall safety precaution each of us need to carry with us relates to our own egos. We need to consider our location when taking chances and realize that if we take personal risks, deep in the canyon, the outcome can affect everyone else in the group.

GC Ranger Pam Cox

"You know that running the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon has its risks. Some of those risks might surprise you. For instance: most injuries don't happen in thundering rapids like these. In fact 90% of all accidents happen off the river. For example: getting on or off the boats or hiking up one of the many side canyons. You need to be careful and plan ahead whenever you venture away from the river. We recommend hiking with a buddy or in a group. One of the leading contributors to injuries in the back country is hiking alone."

Statistically, given time...accidents do happen.

If for any reason you find yourself in an emergency situation you can't handle yourself the Park Service is here to lend a hand. But first you need to contact us. There are many different ways to do so. Hiking out is the least desirable method in that it subjects you to the rigors of the canyon.

If you are anywhere near Phantom Ranch, a ranger is usually on duty and there is a pay phone to contact 9-1-1.

All commercial river trips are required to carry satellite phones. So if you can find a commercial trip, or another private with a satellite phone, they might be able to help you with communications. SAT phones with fresh batteries are the best of all contact tools. Call the Park Service dispatch number that is in your permit packet.

However you communicate, what the Park Service needs to know is:

- Exact location of the incident including river mile and side of river.*
- Whether the patient is stable or critical.*
- If the problem is trauma or medical.*
- Whether the incident involves a: private river trip, commercial river trip, or a hiker.*

If the problem is serious it may require a helicopter evacuation. If this is the case there are certain things you'll need to do to keep yourself and the helicopter crew safe.

The orange panels you carry are used to mark a landing zone. First, wet the landing zone down with buckets of water, the more you wet the area, the less the sand blows. Place a landing marker on the beach so that the helicopter crew can find you. A safe landing area is 75 feet across. Before the pilot lands, remove the marker panels. Be sure to secure

anything that might blow away when the helicopter lands.. Keep your group together and at least 100 feet from the landing zone.

The pilot may or may not use your particular landing zone. That's up to the pilot's discretion.

When the helicopter lands, don't approach it. A crew member will come to you. They'll help you go through the next steps to get the situation in hand. In an emergency its always best to respond with aggressive self rescue first, but sometimes the circumstances become too great to deal with alone, and that's when we can try to assist.

Lists of rules won't really ensure a safe trip. Your good judgment will. Its one of the best tools you can bring along.