

You are Responsible for Your Safety

Natural areas present hazards. Icy or uneven ground, wild animals, and changing weather pose dangers. Rocks roll, trees topple, and limbs drop without warning. People create other hazards with campfires, traffic, snowplay, and poor decisions.

Water is the main cause of death in national parks across the country. Many drowning victims unexpectedly fell in when walking or climbing near rivers.

The National Park Service works to reduce risks, but your safety is in your own hands. Keep alert. Read warnings and ask a ranger for advice.

DROWNING

The #1 cause of death here! Be extra careful around water. Falling in can be as dangerous as swimming. Once you are in a river, getting out can be nearly impossible: Rocks are smooth and slippery; swift, cold water rapidly saps your strength. Currents are always stronger than they appear.

DISEASE CAUTIONS

Do not feed or touch ANY wild animals. Avoid areas of rodent activity as fleas on rodents can carry plague and deer mice feces can carry hantavirus.

TICKS are common in foothill and Kings Canyon grasses. Check yourself after a walk. Their bite is painless, but a small percentage carry Lyme disease. Remove ticks carefully with tweezers and seek a doctor's advice.



WEST NILE VIRUS is passed by bites from infected mosquitos. Human illness is not common, but take steps to avoid mosquito bites.

UNTREATED WATER / GIARDIA

This protozoan in lakes and streams causes intestinal upset. Boil drinking water from waterways for at least 3 minutes. Iodine and other chemicals may not be as reliable as heat in killing bacteria and Giardia, but can be effective if used properly.

POISON OAK

A common shrub up to 5000' in elevation. In fall it shows red leaves and whitish berries; bare stems in winter; shiny green leaves in groups of three in spring. If you touch any part of it, wash skin and clothes right away. Leaves of three, let it be!



HYPOTHERMIA

This life-threatening condition can occur year-round. Stay dry; snack often. If someone doesn't respond to the need for warmer clothes or is stumbling, forgetful, or extremely tired and drowsy, get warm sugary drinks into them immediately. Warm them with dry clothing, sleeping bags, and shelter.

RATTLESNAKES

Watch where you put your hands and feet! They live in much of these parks and are especially common in the foothills and near water. Do not harass or kill snakes; this is when most bites occur. Bites are rarely lethal, but tissue damage can be severe. If bitten, avoid panic; call a ranger or 911.



LIGHTNING

See dark clouds or lightning? Hear thunder? Get inside a large building or a vehicle (not convertible), if possible. Do not stand under trees or in shallow caves. Avoid projecting above your surroundings, such as standing on a ridge, on Moro Rock, or in open meadows. Stay away from open water, wire fences, and metal railings, which can carry lightning from a distance.

CARBON MONOXIDE

This odorless, colorless gas can be fatal. Never burn charcoal in closed spaces, e.g., a tent or RV.

OZONE POLLUTION

See air-quality forecasts in visitor centers. Most ozone rises into the Sierra on warm winds. Levels of this colorless gas are highest May to October, peaking in late afternoon. The peaks sometimes reach "unhealthy" state/federal standards, and can affect respiratory systems. Ozone forms from gases in car and factory exhaust. To help reduce ozone, don't let your vehicle idle more than 20 seconds.

WEAK CELL PHONE SIGNALS

Cell phones rarely work here; don't rely on them. Note location of pay telephones (pages 8 & 9).

MOUNTAIN LIONS

Cougars roam throughout the parks, but you are unlikely to see one. Attacks are rare, but be aware. Watch children closely; never let them run ahead. Cautiously move away if you find a partially buried animal carcass. If you see a cougar, convince it that you are not prey:

- Don't run; that may trigger pursuit.
- Pick up children.
- Try to appear as large as possible. Don't crouch or try to hide.
- Hold your ground or back away slowly while facing the cougar.
- If the cougar seems aggressive, wave your hands, shout, and throw stones or sticks at it.
- If attacked, fight back! Report any sightings.



DRINKING WATER

The 13 park water systems are tested to ensure that they meet federal and state standards. Annual Consumer Confidence Reports are available.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

Keep parks safe, natural, and free from illegal activities! Prevent illegal marijuana growing. Report any suspicious activities: 1-888-NPS-CRIME.

KEEP ANIMALS SAFE

Pets are vulnerable to wildlife, ticks, and overheating in vehicles. Keep wildlife safe from pets, too.

TREE HAZARDS

Branches may fall, whether or not they appear dead. When under trees, stay aware. Run if you hear cracks or snapping overhead. Don't linger under dead, cracked, or broken branches. Report falling branches or trees to a ranger.

Explore Safely

- Avoid going alone, and tell someone your plans and return time.
- Take a map, a jacket, and water.
- Watch and listen for potential hazards above, around, and on the ground.
- Beware of trails and sidewalks slippery with sand, water, ice, or leaves.
- Slow down. Share the road with people and wildlife.