

The 10 directives for dealing with emergency situations

Based on the "10 Standard Fire Orders" <http://www.angelfire.com/nv/blm/safety.html>

10 emergency situation directives

1. Self, Others, Casualty, equipment

- Look after number 1. Don't make a situation worse by getting in trouble yourself.
- If you are in trouble take an active role in getting out of trouble.
- Avoid adding extra casualties to a situation
- Equipment can be replaced. However if you will need it before it can be replaced it will affect one of the above.
- Deal with the situation aggressively but not to the exclusion of the above.

2. Initiate all actions based on current situation and expected development

- Every situation is unique make sure your actions are relevant to THIS situation.
- Pay attention to the obvious but take-in the whole picture.
- Experience and observation may allow you to predict how the situation will develop. Be sure to consider this prediction when planning your action.
- If in doubt remember, decisive action of any kind is generally better than indecision and second guessing. Do something "real time" and 100% and do it long enough to know if it was right or wrong. Try and ensure you can get back to start point if wrong.

3. Recognize current weather conditions and obtain forecasts.

Be informed about weather factors that affect environmental conditions. You can use any number of ways to stay informed about these factors, but the chief thing is to remember that weather can make a critical difference in your strategy.

4. Ensure instructions are given and understood.

- Instructions must be clear, precise and understood.
- Demand confirmation of understanding.
- Demand specific direction.

5. Obtain current information on the situation.

- Identify the primary incident? Is it drifting? Get a fix on your location.
- How fast is the situation changing? Is it becoming more or less dangerous?
- Are there other situations, potential situations, dangers?
- Are there other sources of information you should investigate?

6. Remain in communication with team members, casualties, passers by and emergency services.

- They can provide critical information and resources.
- Initiate communication before the environment or the situation makes it impossible.

7. Determine safety zones and escape routes.

Look for places to “hide” or protect from the dangers. The ways you get to it are your escape routes. They should be the fastest and easiest routes, identified and if possible/necessary cleared in advance.

8. Establish lookouts.

Ideally your lookouts should be experienced, alert and reliable, able to recognize dangers such as changes in the environment, developments within the team, outside interference. The purpose of the lookout is to keep you in touch with the big picture when you're preoccupied with tasks that keep you from seeing and hearing it yourself.

9. Retain control at all times.

That means assuring that instructions and assignments are understood... establishing and maintaining a communication link... and knowing the locations of all team members at all times.

10. Stay alert, keep calm, think clearly, act decisively.

In short, think before you make a move, no matter how tired you feel- or how much adrenaline is pumping. This final directive may seem the most obvious of all, until you experience the stress of a real emergency. Exhaustion, fatigue, or panic may strike when you least expect it, even for a few critical moments. These things have happened to the best and most experienced adventurers, guides and emergency personnel and cost many lives.

Directive 11 (of 10)

Train Hard, Play Easy, Plan for the Worst. Prevent emergencies from happening. Be ready to deal with the trouble that comes your way.

- Incidents and emergencies are generally bad publicity, expensive, bad for the environment and endanger many more people than the immediate casualty (including the rescuers, sometimes more-so than the casualty).
- Know YOU should never allow it to happen but prepare with the mindset that it is just around the corner.
- Make sure someone is watching your back; overdue procedure including responsible base camp contact with clear protocol and reliable route plan, communication with emergency services.
- Have the ability and know how and when to call for help before it becomes a body recovery.

Steven Maynard 2009