

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter Guidelines for Fast Hikes & Trail Running

Issue #1.0 – September 2019

This guideline is intended to provide AMC-DV hike leaders with recommended best practices when leading Extremely Fast hikes (“5” rated) or Trail Runs. The increased pace of Fast Hikes and Trail Running adds an element of risk that should be actively considered, and minimized, when planning and holding a fast-moving event.

This guideline should be considered a supplement to AMC-DV’s established policies & best practices.

- The event should clearly define distance(s). If the total distance can be broken down into shorter segments, these segments, along with any bailout points, should be identified for people that want to join the group but not go the full distance.
- The Leader should provide clear instructions as to the route, any turn-around points, the terrain, hydration support (if any).
- The Leader should have a clearly defined route (avoid bushwhacks or exploratory events).
- Routes should be chosen with an eye toward safety (not too remote, in case of injury).
- Fast hikes and runs at night should not be scheduled. If the event hasn’t concluded before dark, the pace should be reduced to a walk.
- If the event is on a multi-use trail where a permit may be required, check with your local authorities before listing the event.
- The Leader should provide the “rules of the road.” Remember you are leading and assuming responsibility for the group’s well-being. Any goals established for the event, such as a specific distance or time, should not be prioritized over the safety and wellbeing of all participants.
- Stick to the designated route.
- No headphones allowed.
- No dogs.
- Limit group size to 10.
- New and unknown participants should to be screened for experience, fitness level etc.
- Avoid running more than two abreast. The goal is to share the trails.
- The Leader should recruit a sweep who carries a cell phone (fully charged).
- It may be desirable to designate a Pace Leader for the activity - someone on point who knows the route and can establish the appropriate speed for the group.
- Ideally, the Leader, Pace Leader (if any), and Sweep should wear high visibility clothing.
- The group or Sweep should leave no one behind for any reason (bathroom breaks, “need to walk”, twisted ankle, etc.).
- Everyone in the group should heed all traffic signs, especially at road crossings. The group should never run through a stop sign. (Mid-sections of a group tend to ignore traffic signs while following the front of a group. This has been the number one reason why people get hit by cars on group runs. Stress the importance of paying attention to surroundings).

- Use trails and avoid roads as much as possible. If you need to run on a road, face traffic and run no more than two abreast.
- The Leader, or a designated individual, would ideally have current CPR and First Aid certifications. This person should also have access to a first aid kit.
- The Leader should engage people in conversation—especially if they seem to be in distress. Watch for signs of leaning, slurred speech and spontaneous stumbling.
- The Leader should be the last one to leave the trailhead post-event.
- Consider a post event brunch or lunch at a nearby restaurant.
- Greater attention to adverse weather conditions is essential. Rain, wet rocks, wet leaf cover, and snow & ice, all reduce traction. If conditions are unfavorable for a fast event, the pace should be reduced, converted to a slower-paced hike, or cancelled.