

From

White Mountain National Forest

This is the time of year that catches many outdoor enthusiasts by surprise. ^{15912 NH}

You think, "One last trip before the snow flies — just a day trip that will be fun. We'll be back at the car before dark." Then the worst happens. A storm that wasn't supposed to arrive until the next day hits a few hours early. You are just turning back from the summit when the wind hits, then icy pellets are peppering your face. Temperatures plummet as the sun disappears behind fast-moving clouds. The trail is soon wet, and a snow/sleet mixture is accumulating. Footing is suddenly treacherous and the tree line seems far away.

Are you prepared for this change in weather? What are your contingency plans if a member of the group slips and injures an ankle? Do you have the proper gear, not only for the wet, cold conditions, but to spend hours or a night in a safe location?

This scenario faces many hikers visiting the White Mountain National Forest at this time of year. Conditions in the mountains can change quickly, and if you haven't prepared for those conditions you may be in trouble.

Take the time to plan ahead. Check the projected weather conditions and think about recent weather events that may affect stream crossings or trail conditions. Is your gear

in good shape, are your batteries fresh, and do you have high-energy snacks? Visit the hikeSafe Web page for checklists and safety tips: www.hikesafe.com/.

Plan ahead

Select a route that is appropriate for you, and the weakest member of your party — consider everyone's level of experience and stamina; let someone know where you will be and when you'll return; be aware of your surroundings, and alert to changing conditions, turn back if they deteriorate.

For more information or to report any unusual situations, contact any White Mountain National Forest visitor center or go to: www.fs.fed.us/r9/white.

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