

# ROCKHOUNDS WEST

## SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR FIELD TRIPS

Participation in a field trip carries with it a potential risk of serious injury. In order to attempt to minimize these risks a set of guidelines have been adopted by the Board of Rockhounds West. These guidelines are in accordance with the mandates of the Recreation Centers of Sun City West and will help members and guests have a safe and rewarding experiences on field trips.

Rockhounds West organizes field trips to museums, industrial facilities such as mines, and rock and mineral hunting excursions. Most of these trips are “day-trips”, some may be overnight. A condition for participating in these field trips is for anyone attending the event to sign an accident waiver and release of liability form. While Rockhounds West organizes and leads these trips and tries its best to minimize the risks involved, the Club, it’s Officers, and Trip Leaders cannot accept liability for accidents and the actions of the participants.

### Trip Planning and Trip Leader Responsibilities

- Announce the trip – at the monthly general membership meeting inform the club of the:
  - Destination for the upcoming trip.
  - Date of the trip.
  - Time the group will leave.
  - Expected road conditions and if specific types of vehicles are required (i.e., high-clearance or 4X4 vehicles).
  - Any special equipment needed for the trip (tools, equipment, suitable clothes).
- The trip details will be available via email and/or phone prior to the trip
  - Travel Route - Usually a “rest stop” will be indicated along the route. This will allow the group to gather and partake in club supplied donuts before heading to the collection site. This will be the last chance to use the restroom (most destinations do not have facilities).
- Day of the trip
  - Supply each car with phone number for emergencies
  - Gather the group. Most trips will leave from the parking lot at the RH Johnson Rec Center (in between the bowling alley and the library).
  - Gather waiver signatures.
  - Organize any carpooling (if available) and suggest an appropriate amount to donate to the driver to compensate for wear and tear and gas.
  - Cars will be marked (usually by a tape) to help with keeping the group together.

- Departure from collection site
  - At the appointed time for the conclusion of the field trip the leader will announce departure and will remain at the collection site until the last vehicle has departed.
  - Anyone departing before the schedule departure should confirm with the leader.
  - Anyone remaining after departure does so at their own risk (staying after is strongly discouraged as traveling alone can be hazardous).

The following items form a general guide to safe travel and rockhounding on field trips.

**Drive an appropriate vehicle.** Drivers on field trips should make sure their vehicle is able to negotiate the road conditions likely to be encountered. *Drivers must make the ultimate decision as to the suitability of their vehicle.* Make sure your vehicle is in good condition, full tank of gas, and has the necessary tools and gear to deal with typical road hazard situations. The club is not responsible for any damage.

- Carpooling is encouraged

**Carry communication gear.** The Trip Leader will have a cell phone and provide that number to the group. Each vehicle should have a cell phone in order to communicate with the Trip Leader should a situation arise.

**Know your capabilities.** We all have certain physical limitations. Field trips vary in degree of difficulty as related to walking distance, roughness of the terrain and weather conditions. Don't attempt to exceed your limitations by trying to negotiate terrain that is too difficult. It is your responsibility to determine what trips are within your capabilities and on the trip to stay within your comfort zone. Incidents caused by any factor, whether by accident or by going beyond one's capabilities, may be hard to treat and remedy when out in the desert.

**Come properly prepared.** Most of our field trips are in the desert and come with issues.

- **Bring and drink plenty of water.** Dehydration can lead to problems in the desert.
- Wear comfortable hiking boots or walking shoes
- Wear appropriate clothing. Much of the desert vegetations has thorns so be protected.
- Use leather gloves to handle rocks
- Bring safety glasses, rock hammer, plastic pail or canvas bag for carrying rock specimen
- Wear a hat and sunscreen
- Layered clothing as appropriate for wind, rain, heat and cold
- Energy bars or trail mix, lunch, and chair can be helpful.

**Avoid desert hazards.** Use common sense when it comes to where to explore on a field trip. It is a good idea to carry a first-aid kit and other safety gear for desert hiking.

- Be alert for snakes, scorpions and other desert life. They are not commonly seen, but bites can be painful and difficult to treat in a remote location. Watch where you put your hands and feet.
- Be alert for abandoned mine shafts and pits. Vertical shafts may be unfenced and unmarked. **DO NOT ENTER MINES!**
- Avoid contact with spines on cacti and other vegetation. Carry a comb to use to remove spines
- Never go alone.

**Observe good rockhound etiquette.** Rockhounding trips are intended for the recreational and hobby collecting of reasonable amounts of rocks, minerals, and fossils. These trips are not to be used to collect commercial quantities of specimen. The BLM sets the “reasonable” limit as up to 25 pounds per day plus one piece with a total limit of 250 pounds per year. This same limit applies to and includes petrified wood and invertebrate fossils. Regulation of State Trust Land, Indian Land, and Federal Land differ and rockhounders should be aware of these regulations by contacting the appropriate agency. Keep disturbance to the collecting area to a minimum.

- **DON'T LITTER.** Leave nothing but your footprints.

**GOOD LUCK, GOOD HUNTING, & ABOVE ALL – BE SAFE!**