



New York-North Jersey Chapter Handbook for Officers & Committee Chairs



CHAPTER POLICIES

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

In what follows, "Committee" means any Activity or Service committee listed in the Chapter Schedule of Activities. It does not include the Chapter Executive Committee. Similarly, "Chair" means the Chair(s) of Activity or Service committees, not the Chapter Chair.

SELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

New committee chairs are nominated by the outgoing chair, subject to approval by the Executive Committee. If a retiring chair has been unable to find a successor, the selection falls to the Executive Committee.

The incoming chair decides the size of the committee and the job assignments of each committee position. Members are then selected to fill those positions. The chair may rescind a committee appointment at any time.

The Executive Committee may rescind its approval of a Committee Chair if in their judgement the Chair is not performing the job effectively. The decision to remove a Chair requires a two-thirds vote of the Executive Committee at a regularly scheduled meeting. "Two-thirds" is defined as: 5 of 7; 4 of 6; 3 of 5; or 3 of 4 (the minimum quorum)

TRIP LEADER SELECTION

The Chair, with the advice of the committee, is responsible for establishing leader-qualification procedures for the activity or activities sponsored by the committee. The procedures may include, but are not limited to: leader-training courses; an apprenticeship program; demonstration and/or documentation of skills acquired outside AMC. Refresher or re-certification procedures may be required if deemed necessary to keep leaders' skills up-to-date.

A written roster of currently qualified leaders is to be maintained.

The Chair and committee may also establish a separate roster of leaders deemed qualified to lead Instruction trips or courses. Further qualification procedures may be established for Instruction leaders. These may include, but are not limited to: committee sponsored training courses; leading a specified number of trips for the committee; obtaining certification from an outside agency such as the American Canoe Association or the Coast Guard.

The Chair, with the advice of the committee, is responsible for approving the appointment of leaders. The Chair, with the advice of the committee, may remove a leader from the roster if, in their judgement, the leader is not functioning effectively.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

To keep the record straight, it is recommended that committees require that any non-trivial complaint (i.e. one that cannot be resolved on the spot) be submitted in writing to the Chair. If informal efforts to negotiate a solution fail, the complaint should be brought to the next meeting of the committee, and all persons involved have the right to appear and offer additional input at this meeting.

The committee will decide on the appropriate action to take. It is recommended that all persons involved be notified of the committee's decision in writing as well as verbally.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the committee's decision, the decision may be appealed to the Chapter Executive Committee.

INFRACTIONS OF COMMITTEE RULES

If a committee finds that a member has failed to comply with the committee's published rules, policies or procedures, it is recommended that the following steps be taken:

1. Assume that the member did not fully understand the rule or policy in question. In a friendly and tactful manner, explain the rule, and why it is necessary.
2. If the member continues to offend, the Chair should issue a verbal reprimand.
3. If the offense still continues, the committee (through the Chair) should issue a written reprimand, and warn that continued misbehavior may result in loss of privileges.
4. If further offenses occur, the committee (through the Chair) should issue a written notice to the member suspending the member from the committee's trips and facilities. The suspension may be for a limited period, indefinite, or permanent.
5. If a reprimand is issued, a written summary of the events leading up to the reprimand should be prepared and any further offenses should also be promptly documented in writing.

GRIEVANCES WITHIN A COMMITTEE

Disputes between committee members, or between a committee member and the chair, should be resolved by the Chair. If good-faith efforts to negotiate a resolution fail, the Chair may ask one or more members to step down.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK

"AMC activities involve varying degrees of danger. When you participate in an activity, you should be both physically and mentally prepared and equipped with the appropriate gear. You should always be aware of the risks involved in outdoor activities and conduct yourself accordingly. The trip leader is not responsible for your safety. You are. Prior to registering for any activity, you are encouraged to discuss your capabilities with the trip leader."

If a trip has a "dope" sheet, a statement including the above information must appear. If not, such a statement must appear at the top of a sign-in sheet. A copy of the dope or sign-in sheet should be sent to the Activity Chair within two weeks.

ACCEPTANCE ON TRIPS

To make trips as safe as possible, a leader may refuse to accept a participant on a trip if:

1. The participant's clothing or equipment appears to the leader to be seriously inadequate for the expected conditions and activities.
2. The participant has previously shown disregard for established safety procedures; for instance, someone who habitually gets ahead of the leader or behind the sweep, or who leaves the group without obtaining the leader's permission.
3. The participant, in the leader's judgement, would be unable to keep up with the group's expected pace.

4. The participant's skills, in the leader's judgement, are not adequate to the expected demands of the trip, under the conditions prevailing at the time.

A leader may also require a participant to withdraw from a trip in progress, provided that withdrawal at that time is safe, should deficiencies in equipment, skills, or unsafe behavior become evident after the trip has started.

CONDUCT ON TRIPS

AMC trips sometimes require living in close quarters or in primitive conditions. Members are expected to voluntarily refrain from behavior that is inappropriate under these conditions. For example, assigned chores should be done when requested, not at the member's convenience.

On all trips, participants should recognize that the leader is a volunteer and refrain from behavior that adds to the leader's work (such as asking to register late) or behavior that makes the leader's job unpleasant (such as constantly challenging the leader's decisions). If the leader's style does not suit the member, the member should simply choose another leader the next time.

Leaders have the right to change a trip's route, duration or to cancel a trip, if, in their judgement, the conditions at the time of the trip require such change or cancellation.



TRIPS

- All trips must be approved by a sponsoring Committee.
- The Trip Leader must be an AMC member, but not necessarily a Chapter member.

- If a trip is co-sponsored by another organization, it must have an AMC member as a co-leader. For example, a Sierra Club outing cannot be listed in the AMC Chapter Schedule unless there is an AMC leader as well as a Sierra leader.
- All trips must be listed in an official Club, Chapter or Committee publication (schedule or newsletter) for the leader to be covered by Club liability insurance. To minimize any difficulty with the Club's insurers, make sure all trips conform to Club policy.
- Minors may not lead trips, but may be listed as an instructor or assistant.
- Participants need not be AMC members; but a Committee may limit how often a non-member may participate.
- Activities requiring technical skills may be limited to those whom the leader considers qualified.
- Activity leaders are often the first contact a new member has with AMC -- the front line of the Club's conservation and membership efforts. Leaders are requested to:
 1. Educate by example: litter pick-up, car-pooling, minimum-impact camping, refrain from using paper, styrofoam and other ecologically-harmful products.
 2. Inform participants of local protection, clean-up and maintenance efforts. If they show interest, steer them to an involved individual or group.
 3. Think of ways to make new members welcome.

TRIP FEES

- Fees for Chapter activities are to be established at cost or cost plus a committee fee. In general, **personal trip expenses of the leader may not be assessed to participants**. However, pursuant to a committee's

policy, such as when the leader acts as instructor, some expenses may be reimbursed.

- If the activity involves property owned by the leader or an organization with which the leader has an affiliation, this must be disclosed to the committee chair prior to approval and listed in the activity description. If a fee is charged for use of the property, the fee should be substantially less than the comparable commercial rate, thus minimizing the profit potential.
- If the leader collects any fees, the leader must prepare a report itemizing the income and expenses and mail a copy to the Activity Chair within two weeks.



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