

## **Mason County Sheriff Offers Safety Tips For Hikers**

### **Local News**

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SHELTON, Wash. - The forest trails in Mason County attract many hikers of various skill levels each year. These trails offer some of the finest hiking and scenery in the world. Each year however, Sheriff's Deputies and Emergency Search and Rescue workers are called upon to search for lost hikers, and rescue hikers that have been injured. Accordingly the Mason County Sheriff's Office offers a few basic tips that will assist hikers if an emergency should befall them while enjoying the scenic beauty of our mountains and forests.

#### Do Not Hike Alone

Many of Mason County's trails are in remote locations and have varied degrees of difficulty. If one hiker becomes injured, his or her partner can walk out to get help as well as render first aid.

#### Know the Trail and Stay on It

Before departing on you hike, conduct some research on the trail you are planning to use. Check the degree of difficulty and ensure that you have the skill level necessary for the trail you have selected. Obtain a map if possible. Stay on the trail. Many tragedies have occurred in Mason County when hikers have decided to depart from an established trail. Hikers have lost their way, and have become injured sometimes resulting in death if rescuers cannot reach them in time.

#### Basic Gear and Provisions

When going even on a short day hike it is essential the hiker is properly prepared. Because weather conditions can change rapidly in Mason County, especially in the mountains, having the proper clothing to stay warm is a must. Hikers should utilize layers of clothing so they can adjust for any weather conditions they might encounter. Weather conditions in the mountains can rapidly change from hot sun to cold rain or snow. Be Prepared. Hiking shoes are recommended to help a hiker maintain proper footing and to prevent sprained ankles.

Hikers should always take enough food and drink to finish the hike. Eat and drink often to keep your energy up and to remain properly hydrated. It is also prudent to take along matches or a lighter to start a warming fire if it becomes necessary. A pocket knife with lots of useful gadgets can be a real lifesaver if you have to spend an unplanned night in the forest. A flashlight and whistle are also considered essential. Toilet paper is also a handy item to include. Many hikers have found cell phones and GPS devices useful items to take along. Finally hikers are encouraged to take some basic first aid supplies such as bandages, antiseptic, sunburn, and anti itch cream. Aspirin is also a recommended part of your first aid kit.

### Use Common Sense

Let family members or friends know where you are going and when you expect to return. When you return from your hike let them know you are back. If the trail you are using has a registration box, use it. If you do get in trouble on the trail these steps will assist rescuers in finding you and getting the help you need.

Hiking is a fun activity enjoyed by many people in the region. Don't get carried away with your enthusiasm and a belief in your invincibility. Remember, hiking is not inherently dangerous, but Mother Nature is quite indifferent to hurting you and is very unforgiving if you make a mistake out there.