

Ouray Canyon Festival 2021

Safety Briefing

**Presented by
Greg Foy**

Safety Tips – Please Read

- Safety Tips extracted from Ouray Canyoning, Second Edition, Rev B by Michael Dallin with Ira Lewis
- A copy of this presentation is available on the Ouray Canyon Festival web site

Mountain/Alpine environment

Special challenges related to the alpine canyon environment:

- weather (chance of rain as of **Aug 7, 2021**) sample
wed 0% 0.00"; Thu 50% 0.28"; Fri 60%
0.48"; Sat 50% 0.08"; Sun 30% 0.04
- altitude (% oxygen - 0ft/20.9; 7800ft/15.4, 10,000ft/14.3)
- environment, rock types, inaccessibility, time to rescue
- sun exposure,
- etc.

Weather

- Afternoon storms – start early and check weather before going in to canyons later
- Flashes – **USUALLY** not as intense as other canyon locations, but the bigger problem is even a small amount of water increase can start moving rocks (i.e. dangerous at rappels)
- Only a few canyons have good exits, but many have safe places to wait out a flash.
- Pull ropes from rappel if waiting out a flash, as falling rocks can damage ropes.
- Hypothermia – Have adequate cold protection
- What if you have to wait for rescue help
- Silverton is bigger water, etc.







Water

- Water levels are *mostly moderate* but...beware
- Flowing Water is extremely powerful
 - Packs on your back can flip you upside down
 - If you do have a pack on, can you shed it quickly
 - Water flowing on your head can be very disorientating
- When the water is high and/or if people are inexperienced w/water then ... usual caveats, be conservative, be careful, have a contingency plan.
- Are you and/or the team prepared for problems?
- What is the level of rescue training/experience on the team?

Crowding

- This will likely be the highest number of people in Ouray canyons during one week.
- Safety issues associated with lots of people in the same canyon.
- Loose rock/rock fall. Crowding/bottle necks at anchors (suggest staggered morning starts particularly in canyons like Angel and Oak, Cascade w/ its multiple bail out points).
- Willingness to assist parties having difficulties etc.
- A few mitigations could be meat anchors to get people down (if they are familiar/comfortable), or setting another temporary anchor and removing it before the last man down... (for a second line to get people through quicker, as many places have more than one anchor option...)

The Canyons

- The canyons *change*,
- *beta may be very inaccurate, especially this year*
- sometimes a lot,
- avalanche action and spring runoff were extreme, and every storm brings potential change!!!
- Loose, slick, SHARP rock edges. Natural/bolt anchors. Down-climbing (slick rock).
- Slick rock. Crumbly rock.
- Moss and algae.
- Logs, log jams
- Dead animals (spring)
- Long rappels



Practice ... Practice ... Practice

- Canyoning is a team sport. Ask yourself, what do I bring to the team?
- ACA, ACE, ICOpro all have defined skill lists in the progression of canyoneers from beginner to expert. (expedition qualified)
- There is a big difference from Portland or Lower Angel to Lower Oak to Middle Oak to Bear (with massive avalanche debris and ice (caves/fields)).
- If you are not an expert(+), Don't fall into the trap- "but I did that one already" or I came here to do as many canyons as possible in the limited time I have.
- You can do Portland or Lower Angel using the bolts at each rappel station and never get wet ...
- Or, if you are new to flowing water rig off a natural feature that places you in the water as a preparation to middle and lower Oak
- Etc.

Start and End of Trip

- **Important:** At the meeting point and upon completion of each trip one member of the trip should call 970-318-0989 and leave a message. At the start: Please identify the name of the trip, the departure time scheduled, identify how many are participating and identify any missing individuals who signed up).
- At the completion: Please identify the name of the trip, the departure time scheduled, and the status of the trip (for example, all participants safely exited the canyon, or identify any missing participants or identify any injuries and identify any actions taken).

Canyon Skills Self Assessment

Suggested Skills Associated with Skill Levels

- **Beginner** – little to no experience canyoning, canyoneering, rappelling or rock climbing,
- **Novice** -have completed 1 to 10 canyons trips;
taken 1 or more formal canyon skills class(es) and;
have mastered the skills like: ACA level 1, or ICOPro level 1, or ACE level 1
- **Intermediate** - have completed 25 canyons trips;
5 of those canyons with flowing water;
taken 1 or 2 formal canyon skills class(es) including self rescue techniques and;
have mastered the skills like: ACA level 2, or ICOPro level 2, or ACE level 2
- **Advanced** - have completed 50 canyons trips;
have lead 25 to those canyon trips;
15 of those canyons with flowing water;
taken 2 or 3 formal canyon skills class(es) including rescue techniques and swift water rescue;
possess a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) certificate;
have mastered the skills like: ACA Level canyon Lead 1, or ICOPro level 3, or ACE level 3
- **Expert** - have completed 100 canyons;
have lead 75 of those canyon trips;
35 of those canyons with flowing water;
taken 3 or more formal canyon skills class(es)
taken advanced rescue techniques and swift water rescue;
possess a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certificate.

Recommended Team Composition

Based on team of 6 to 8 members

Ideal team size 4-6, Maximum team size 8

| Ouray Canyoning 2 nd Edition Rev B | Minimum Recommended Skill Level for at least 2 members of the team | Minimum Recommended Skill Level for other members of the team | Canyons by Name |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moderate | Intermediate | Novice | Lower Angel Creek, Ivans Trail (Portland Creek) |
| Difficult | Advanced | Novice | Lower Oak Creek |
| Very Difficult | Advanced | Intermediate | Upper Oak Creek, Middle Oak Creek, Poughkeepsie Gulch, Lower Oben Creek |
| Advanced | Advanced | Intermediate | Bear Creek (Quartzite Corridor), Cascade Creek, Ice Lake, |
| Expert | Expert | Advanced | Main/North Fork of Corbett Creek, Upper Uncompahgre, Weehawken Creek (Blue Moon Canyon), Middle Angel Creek Canyon of the Clouds |
| Extreme | Expert | Expert | Upper South Fork of Mineral Creek |

Like Minded Individuals

- Please remember all participants and canyon ambassadors are acting in a non professional capacity.
- They are sharing their personal accumulated experience with the group.
- Members of your team may not have any certifications, rescue training or experience, or special training
- There is no guide-client, instructor-client, or teacher-student relationship stated or implied.
- All canyon trips at the festival are groups of like minded canyoneers.
- Any “leads” are just "experienced" equal members of the like minded group.

Important Reminder

Start and End of Trip

- At the meeting point and upon completion of each trip one member of the trip should call 970-318-0989 and leave a message.
- At the start: Please identify the name of the trip, the departure time scheduled, identify how many are participating and identify any missing individuals who signed up).
- At the completion: Please identify the name of the trip, the departure time scheduled, and the status of the trip (for example, all participants safely exited the canyon, or identify any missing participants or identify any injuries and identify any actions taken).

Announcements

Please wear your name tag during the social hours. There is no beer or liquor served at the Festival in the Community Center.

You should purchase a Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue card. Buy online at

<https://dola.colorado.gov/sar/cardPurchase.jsf>