

First Aid Standards

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Introduction

The First Aid Standards establish a collection of First Aid qualifications and courses for Activity Councils and Committees. These standards guide the specification of first aid requirements for various leaders, participants, and students across their programs.

Objectives

First Aid supports other Mountaineers activities and the overall Mountaineers organization. In order to provide that support, the First Aid Standards have the following objectives:

- 1. Minimize First Aid as a barrier for Activity Councils and Activity Committees:**
These groups are tasked with implementing their own activity-specific standards, including courses and leadership demands. While they are experts in their respective fields, they may lack the resources or experience to develop and administer first aid training and certification independently. The First Aid standards support this objective by defining a small collection of pre-vetted First Aid courses and credentials that can be easily adopted by Activity Councils and Activity Committees as they choose.
- 2. Minimize First Aid as a barrier for members who participate in multiple activities:**
We want to avoid situations where members must repeat redundant training in order to participate in or lead trips for multiple activities. The First Aid standards support this objective by defining credentials that focus solely on first aid and are independent of any specific activity.
- 3. Minimize First Aid as a barrier for new members with prior first aid training:** By adopting common industry standard classes and certifications, we make it easy for new members with previous first aid experience to qualify for the equivalent Mountaineers credentials.
- 4. Reduce institutional risk to The Mountaineers organization:** These standards aim to mitigate risks associated with inadequate first aid preparation by endorsing first aid training through recognized, widely accepted industry standards and mandating instruction by certified instructors.

These objectives strive to not only enhance safety but also to streamline the process for defining activity-specific first aid standards, thereby supporting the broader goals of the Mountaineers organization.

First Aid versus Accident Response

The First Aid Standards differentiate between *First Aid* and *Accident Response*, recognizing that while both may occur simultaneously during incidents or injury or illness, they serve distinct roles.

First Aid focuses on evaluating and managing injuries and illnesses directly affecting the human body. First Aid is activity-agnostic. It's a universal medical practice, applicable regardless of the activity during which the injury or illness occurred.

Accident Response, on the other hand, deals with the non-medical aspects of managing incidents that may include injuries and illnesses. It addresses aspects such as how to rescue individuals and move them to safety, how to prevent further harm, how to ensure group safety, how to make emergency communication decisions, and how to coordinate evacuations. The Mountaineers refer to this as “The Seven Steps in Accident Response,” a concept detailed in the *Freedom Of the Hills*. While Accident Response is crucial, it is activity-specific and therefore falls outside the scope of the First Aid Standards. Activity Councils and Committees are encouraged to include Accident Response in their activity-specific training.

Core First Aid Courses

Adult First Aid Course

Adult First Aid (AFA) is a one day non-wilderness first aid course that trains participants in first aid basics for the most common first aid emergencies, including how to recognize them, how to call for help, and how to perform lifesaving skills. It is intended for activities where emergency services are available within minutes to about an hour. The Mountaineers Adult First Aid badge requires only adult first aid training, and does not include CPR.

Within the United States the definitive standard is *AHA/Red Cross Guidelines for First Aid*, which is jointly owned by the American Heart Association and the American Red Cross. The home page for the guidelines can be found on the American Heart Association website under [First Aid Guidelines](#), which includes past, current, and in-progress future versions of the guidelines in multiple languages. The specific subjects for the current English version of can be found on the AHA website under [Part 8: First Aid](#).

Examples of classes that teach this standard include the American Heart Association’s *Heartsaver First Aid Training* course, and the American Red Cross *Adult First Aid* course.

Wilderness First Aid Course

Wilderness First Aid (WFA) is a 16-hour (minimum) course that follows the Wilderness First Aid standard defined by the Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative (WMEC) (www.wildmededucationcollaborative.org). It extends Adult First Aid by incorporating “wilderness protocols,” or specialized techniques for managing injuries and illnesses in remote environments until definitive care can be reached.

The WFA standard recommends but does not require adult and child CPR and AED training. The Mountaineers WFA Course certification does not include CPR/AED. WFA classes that include CPR should award both the WFA and CPR course badges.

WFA certifications must be renewed every two to three years by repeating the course per WMEC standards.

Wilderness First Responder Course

Wilderness First Responder (WFR) is a 70-hour (minimum) course that follows the Wilderness First Responder standard defined by the Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative (www.wildmededucationcollaborative.org). It covers advanced “wilderness protocols,” for prolonged care in remote environments until definitive care can be reached.

The WFR standard recommends but does not require adult and child CPR and AED training. The Mountaineers WFR Course certification does not include CPR/AED. WFR classes that include CPR should award both the WFR and CPR course badges.

It is recommended that all Mountaineers-sponsored WFR courses include CPR.

WFR certifications must be renewed every two to three years depending on the provider via an in-person or hybrid renewal/recertification course containing a minimum of 16 in-person hours focusing on practical skills, case studies, and simulations per WMEC standards.

CPR Courses

Mountaineers CPR certifications are based on standards defined by the [International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation](#) (ILCOR), which is the canonical international standards body for CPR. Within the United States the ILCOR standards are documented and advocated by the [American Heart Association](#), which is a member organization of ILCOR.

CPR Course

The CPR Course certification represents adult CPR with rescue breathing. It is suitable for relevant wilderness emergencies such as drowning, snow burial, hypothermia, lightning strike, etc., where emergency services are not available.

The CPR Course badge expires after two years, which matches the expiration period of industry-standard CPR certifications.

Hands-Only CPR Course

The Hands-Only CPR Course is adult CPR without rescue breathing, a.k.a. “compression-only CPR”. It is appropriate only in situations where emergency services are minutes away, and is intended as a way to temporarily provide life support before transferring the patient to definitive care.

The Hands-Only CPR Course badge expires after two years, which matches the expiration period of industry-standard CPR certifications.

Course Instruction

All courses are to be taught by certified instructors. The specific certifications vary by course. The First Aid Council maintains a list of required certifications and approved certification providers.

Recommended Course Substitutions

It is recommended that Activity Councils and Committees accept larger scope courses as alternatives for smaller scope courses. Specifically:

- If a course or program requires Adult First Aid (AFA), it is recommended that it accept Wilderness First Aid (WFA) and Wilderness First Responder (WFR) as alternatives
- If a course or program requires Wilderness First Aid (WFA), it is recommended that it accept Wilderness First Responder (WFR) as an alternative.
- If a course or program requires Hands-Only CPR, it is recommended that it also accept CPR as an alternative.

Reciprocity and Equivalency

The First Aid Standards differentiate between reciprocity and equivalency.

Reciprocity involves awarding a Mountaineers badge to a candidate who has the identical credential from a trusted external source. Reciprocity is objective: if the candidate's credential is current and is from a credible source, then the Mountaineers badge is automatically awarded.

Equivalency is the evaluation of prior experience or credentials that are not identical to what the Mountaineers require. Equivalency is subjective. In general, members of the various branch First Aid Committees are not medical professionals and are not qualified to evaluate skills or interpret medical job descriptions. If they were to do so then the Mountaineers could become vulnerable to various kinds of liability risk. However, it is possible to make some kinds of determinations based on credentials. The First Aid Council maintains a list of common industry credentials that can be used to qualify for Mountaineers First Aid badges.

Reciprocity Criteria for Course Badges

Adult First Aid (AFA)

The canonical AFA classes are the American Heart Association's *Heartsaver First Aid Training* course and the American Red Cross *Adult First Aid* course.

Wilderness First Aid (WFA)

Non-recertification WFA classes ("Full WFA") must include a minimum of 16 hours of training. The class format can be fully in-person or a mix of 8 hours of online self study and 8 hours of in-person training with an instructor ("hybrid"). Fully remote classes may also be accepted if they include at least 8 hours of real time interaction with a live remote instructor who observes and evaluates student competencies. Classes that are fully automated without any real time interaction with a human instructor are not accepted.

WFA Recertification classes ("WFA Recert") may consist of any mix of in-person and online training. Fully automated WFA Recert classes can be accepted if they are provided by a recognized training organization.

In order to meet the equivalency requirement, any certification that has a limited time period must be valid for at least 6 additional months at the time of the request.

Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

The WFR standard recommends a minimum of 70 hours of training for in-person classes, or a minimum of 45 hours if in-person class time for hybrid courses. The standard also requires adult and child CPR and AED training per AHA or ILCOR guidelines. WFR classes that meet these criteria are acceptable. The WFR standard does not allow for fully remote WFR classes.

WFR Recertification courses are also accepted. The WFR standard requires a minimum of 16 hours of in-person training for recertification.

The WFR course badge can also be awarded to those who possess equivalent or greater wilderness medical training. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Wilderness or Remote – EMT,
- NSP Outdoor Emergency Care
- Remote First Responder
- Remote Medicine for Advanced Provider
- [Fellow in the Academy of Wilderness Medicine \(FAWM\)](#)
- [Diploma in Mountain Medicine \(DiMM\)](#)
- [Advanced Wilderness Life Support \(AWLS\)](#)

In order to meet the equivalency requirement, any certification that has a limited time period must be valid for at least 6 additional months at the time of the request.

CPR

The CPR Course badge is for adult CPR with rescue breaths. Classes that combine this material with other topics such as AED, infant CPR, and Adult First Aid are also accepted.

Classes that adequately teach CPR typically last 3 - 4 hours. Classes may be entirely in person, or may be split between online and in-person components. CPR classes that are taught entirely online are not accepted.

Examples of accepted CPR classes include:

- American Heart Association “Heartsaver CPR”
- American Red Cross “Adult CPR”

The CPR Course badge can also be awarded for first aid classes that include CPR with rescue breaths. For example, most WFR and some WFA classes include CPR.

Hands-Only CPR

The Hands-Only CPR badge is for adult CPR without rescue breaths. Classes that combine this material with other topics such as AED, infant CPR, and Adult First Aid are also accepted.

Classes that adequately teach Hands-Only CPR typically last 45 minutes to 1 hour. Classes may be entirely in person, entirely online, or a combination of the two.

Examples of accepted CPR classes include:

- American Heart Association “Family and Friends CPR”
- American Red Cross “Hands-Only CPR for Adults”

References

- [Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative WFA and WFR Standards](#)
- [American Heart Association/American Red Cross joint standard for Adult First Aid](#)
- [International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation \(ILCOR\)](#)
- [American Heart Association CPR Guidelines](#)

Appendix: Approved Training Providers

The following lists of approved training providers and classes are those with which the Mountaineers are familiar. They are included as a convenience for use when granting Mountaineers credentials via reciprocity. Unless noted otherwise, classes that appear below are those that are known to satisfy Mountaineers standards for reciprocity.

The lists are not comprehensive. Other providers and classes that do not appear below may also meet Mountaineers standards.

The lists below will be periodically reviewed and updated by the First Aid Council. The list was last reviewed in June, 2024.

Adult First Aid

- [The American Heart Association](#) - Adult “Heartsaver First Aid”
- [The American Red Cross](#) - “Adult First Aid”
- [CPR Seattle](#) - “Adult First Aid”
- [Medic One](#) - “First Aid”

WFA and WFR

All in-person and hybrid WFA and WFR courses are accepted from the following providers.

- [Remote Medical Training](#)
- [Base Medical](#) - The Base Medical fully online WFA Recertification class is also accepted.
- [National Outdoor Leadership School \(NOLS\)](#)
- [REI](#)
- [Wilderness Medicine Training Center](#)

The WFA provider Survival Med offers a self-student WFA class that they claim is a 16-hour class, but which allows students to scroll through the entire online class in a few minutes. This class is not accepted.

CPR

- [The American Heart Association](#) - “Heartsaver CPR” Course
- [The American Red Cross](#) - “Adult CPR” Course

Hands-Only CPR

- [The American Heart Association](#) - Family & Friends CPR Course