

**MORMON HANDCART TREKS**  
**HANDBOOK FOR TREK LEADERS**



[www.handcarttreks.com](http://www.handcarttreks.com)

**FARMLAND RESERVE, INC.**  
**THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-**  
**DAY SAINTS**

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## **INFORMATION FOR PRIESTHOOD LEADERS**

*“I wish to remind everyone within my hearing that the comforts we have, the peace we have, and, most important, the faith and knowledge of the things of God that we have, were bought with a terrible price by those who have gone before us. Sacrifice has always been a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The crowning element of our faith is our conviction of our living God, the Father of us all, and of His Beloved Son, the Redeemer of the world.”*

*- Gordon B. Hinckley (October 1991 General Conference)*

### ***Purpose of a Handcart Trek***

*The purpose of a trek is to provide spiritual opportunities, under the leadership of the priesthood, where youth can gain a deeper appreciation of the principles of faith, obedience, and sacrifice.*

### ***Trek Handbook***

*This handbook was developed to provide essential information to priesthood leaders who plan to hold treks on church-owned property or who rent church-owned handcarts and hold their treks elsewhere. This handbook includes ranch/farm policies regarding treks as well as information and resources that can help priesthood leaders plan and execute a successful trek.*

### ***Pioneer Treks***

*From 1856 to 1860, handcarts were a means of helping Latter-day Saints gather in the West. These handcart pioneers faced many trials and hardships which required a great amount of faith, obedience, and sacrifice. By participating in handcart treks, today’s youth may begin to grasp the spirit of faith, obedience, and sacrifice these saints demonstrated. Some youth pull handcarts over the original trail; others reenact treks on land in their areas. The trek should help the youth appreciate some of the hardships of the early Church pioneers, particularly those of the handcart companies. Youth are able to feel the pioneers’ testimonies and their love for and faith in their Savior, Jesus Christ, as they heeded the call of their prophet to “Gather to Zion.”*

### ***Commitment to a Handcart Trek***

*Handcart treks are expensive and require a large time commitment. Therefore, it is necessary to have a commitment to the trek experience and have adequate planning and preparation to ensure that it is a meaningful experience. Uppermost, it should be a spiritual experience that builds the testimonies of the youth, not just a recreational activity.*

## ***Core Gospel Principles Taught on Treks***

**1. Faith:** *Faith in Jesus Christ and in His restored gospel motivated, sustained, and succored Latter-day Saints as they entered the waters of baptism, journeyed to America, endured adversities, and contributed to building Zion. This same faith, if possessed by today's youth, can enable them to withstand adversity, make sacred covenants, and contribute to the "building up of the Kingdom."*

**2. Obedience:** *"No obstacles are insurmountable when God commands." (Heber J. Grant, Teachings of President of the Church: Heber J. Grant). Motivated by their faith in Jesus Christ and their desire to be obedient to a prophet of God, Latter-day Saint converts gathered together in the American West where they could make temple covenants and help establish Zion. If the youth of the Church are to triumph over evil and obtain eternal life, they too must learn obedience to God's commands.*

**3. Sacrifice:** *Latter-day Saint immigrants left homelands, families, and friends behind, shared resources, endured the rigors of ocean and overland travel, and sometimes, as in the case of the 1856 tragedy, suffered illness, extreme hardship, and even death in order to gather to Zion. When tragedy struck in 1856, the Church, under the direction of Brigham Young, mounted a heroic and dangerous effort to rescue the emigrants, deliver them safely to the Salt Lake Valley, and to provide care and comfort. By following the example of the early Saints and applying the principle of sacrifice in their lives, the youth can obtain blessings from Heaven and acquire the "faith necessary unto life and salvation." (Joseph Smith)*

*As the youth of the church participate in treks, they can learn of the faith, obedience, and sacrifice exhibited by the handcart pioneers. Treks provide "teachable moments" in which the Spirit of the Lord can touch the hearts of the youth and instill within them these principles, which can guide them on their trek through life's wilderness.*

## ***Essential Elements of a Successful Trek***

- 1. Stake and Ward Leadership Guidance – Stake presidents and bishops are responsible for and oversee all aspects of the Trek. The involvement of stake presidencies and bishoprics in all trek activities deepens the spiritual experience and provides appropriate priesthood oversight. They may delegate specific responsibilities for planning the trek activities to qualified leaders who work under their direction.***
- 2. Planning – Stake presidencies and their designees are responsible for approval of all trek plans and for determining the themes and objectives of the trek. They assure that church polices are adhered to.***
- 3. Safety - Each group is required to have a minimum of one doctor, registered nurse, or EMT for every hundred participants. The medical staff must be prepared with all the necessary emergency medical equipment, medicine, shelter, transportation, release forms, and communication they will need to cover the needs of their group. They should provide training for the leaders on prevention methods. Design activities with safety in mind.***
- 4. Physical Preparation - Treks are physically demanding and require strength and stamina. Only trekkers fit enough to safely hike the distances involved should go on the trek.***
- 5. Training - Someone from each stake/ward must be trained by the Church-service Missionaries at the location of the trek before handcarts can be rented or a trek can take place.***
- 6. Church-service Missionaries – Agricultural Church-service Missionaries will be available to assist leaders in planning and execution of the trek at most of the sites.***

### ***Options That Can Enhance the Trek***

1. ***Women's Pull***– This exercise gives the young women an opportunity to experience the difficulties of the journey, should the priesthood not be available to assist. The use of the Mormon Battalion to symbolize this absence is to be discontinued, since the calling out of the Mormon Battalion occurred many years before the handcart travel. Instead, various dialogues could be used to illustrate what kinds of conditions might occur which would leave the sisters without the assistance of the priesthood. For example:

*“Brethren, the history of the Church is replete with examples of priesthood brethren leaving loved ones and sacrificing their comforts, and even their lives, as they respond to the call of a prophet in the service of the Lord. Many brethren were called to leave their families in the most meager of circumstances in order to respond to mission calls. To help you in some way grasp how this might have impacted the sisters of Zion, we are going to ask you to form in two single file lines (point in the direction) and we will leave the sisters to fare for themselves while you are responding to a call from a prophet. Please say your goodbyes.”*

*“Brethren, the history of the Church is replete with faithful sisters of the church pressing on without their husbands. Many brethren died on the journey west. To help you in some way grasp how this might have impacted the sisters of Zion, we are going to ask you to form in two single file lines (point in the direction) and we will leave the sisters to fare for themselves. Please say your goodbyes.”*

*The women's pull can be a valuable part of the trek and can be used to emphasize the principles of faith, obedience, and sacrifice. This pull humbles the young men as they observe it and helps the young women rely on their own strength and their faith in the Lord.*

2. ***Music*** - Music can be an important part of the experience. Hymns, learning new songs, and having people play different instruments during the trek helps add to the spirit.
3. ***Make Church History Come Alive*** - The youth could come with a name and story of a pioneer or personal ancestor. The group leaders can be ready to share stories that help the youth learn and appreciate the faith, obedience, and sacrifice of those who helped establish the restored gospel.

4. *Training Trek* – A short trek for the adult leaders several weeks before the actual trek can help in their spiritual and physical preparation.
5. *Clothing* – Some priesthood leaders have participants dress in pioneer clothing. This takes them out of the everyday world and levels the playing field. Standards of modesty must be maintained. Clothing should protect from the sun and footwear should be sturdy and well broken in.
6. *Solo Time and Letter* – some groups have letters from the participant's parents and priesthood leaders written ahead of time and ready to be given to the youth, so that they can read them during solo time. If this is done, ensure that all of the youth receive a letter, even if it is written by a priesthood or class leader. Give the youth good instructions on how they can best use their solo time, such as writing in journals and contemplation.
7. *Be Flexible* - Leaders should be flexible and realize that plans often have to change according to the weather and the group.

## ***Statement of Responsibility***

*Pioneer handcart treks are held in a wilderness setting. Each trek participant must act in accordance with church standards at all times and aid other members of the trek in behaving in accordance with church standards. There are inherent risks involved in all outdoor activities, including handcart treks, which are beyond the control of the land owner and stake leaders. Proper preparation reduces these risks and is the priesthood leaders' responsibility. All participants must act in such a way as to not endanger themselves or others, and should show charitable consideration to all other participants and leaders in the trek.*

## ***Rules and Restrictions***

*It is the responsibility of priesthood leaders to ensure that all of the following are adhered to by those who participate in treks held on church-owned property or use church-owned handcarts:*

- ***Priesthood Oversight:*** *Priesthood leaders are responsible for all training, activities, programs, food, and transportation necessary for their trek. Leaders should have emergency action plans for conditions like lightning or injury on the trail and these plans should be reviewed with everyone before starting the trek. All requests from missionaries or ranch personnel must be followed.*
- ***Medical Responsibility:*** *The landowner provides the location only. The units involved in trekking are responsible for medical staff, care and treatment, supplies, and transportation for trek participants.*
- ***Fasting:*** *Fasting should **not** be incorporated as part of the treks, as trekking activities are physically demanding and the lack of food, under such circumstances, would be unwise.*
- ***Physical Fitness:*** *Each participant should condition themselves physically for this experience. Specifically, each participant should be able to complete a minimum requirement of walking/running four (4) miles on level ground in 60 minutes or less without undue stress.*
- ***The wearing of white clothing*** *to represent the deceased, those from the other side of the veil, and other such “spiritual representations” are **not** to be included as*

*part of the treks. Please ensure that all who will participate understand this instruction.*

- ***Not Allowed:*** *Horses, mountain bikes, dogs, firearms, ammunition, fireworks, fishing equipment, or ATV's are not allowed on ranch/farm property. Digging is not allowed.*
- ***Participants and Vehicles:*** *The land owner desires to maintain the properties in pristine condition. Trek participants must stay on designated trails and vehicles on designated roads. Conservative driving speeds are essential due to blind corners, hills, groups using facilities, and road conditions. Please coordinate drop off and pick up to reduce the number of vehicles on the property. Groups are allowed to have only one traveling support vehicle, which is usually the medical vehicle. Moving water trailers, toilets, etc., may require a second vehicle. No eighteen wheelers and big rigs are allowed. Groups should not have visitors arriving during the week, except for stake presidents and bishops. Participants must be committed for the entire time of the trek.*
- ***No Trace Camping:*** *The “Pack it in, Pack it out” policy states that all garbage must be removed. Many groups reduce their garbage by using metal service—tin cups and plates. At each campsite, and along the trail, groups should make a final sweep before leaving the area and remove any leftover food, charcoal briquettes, signs, twine, papers, etc. Treks must provide a method for carrying trash along during the trek and then carrying it out with them when they leave.*
- ***Camp Fires:*** *Fires are allowed in certain campsites when conditions are safe. If there are no fire rings, all fires and charcoal briquettes must be at least 12 inches off the ground and in fireproof containers. Groups must provide their own firewood or briquettes. Fire restrictions may occur during dry seasons, so groups should be prepared to cook with propane/liquid fuels. Groups will be notified of any fire restriction.*
- ***Security:*** *Since Farmland Reserve properties are working farms and ranches, it is important to maintain the security of the property and livestock. Trek participants who need to open fence gates on their route must make certain that the gates are securely closed after the group has passed through the gates. Any machinery parked near the trek route must not be touched. Emergency entrance/exit needs will be accommodated through the missionaries.*

*Refer to the site-specific material that is provided along with this handbook for additional information. Please **DO NOT** ask for exceptions to these or other trekking rules.*

## ***PLANNING OF A HANDCART TREK***

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*Pioneer trek youth conferences vary in length, usually from three to five days. Some priesthood leaders elect to have youth dress in pioneer clothing and divide into trek groups of 8-12 people.*

*Priesthood leaders design treks to accomplish their own themes and objectives, but the themes of faith, obedience, and sacrifice can be very effectively taught on treks.*

### ***Establish Goals and Objectives***

*Pioneer Trek preparation usually begins a year in advance. Remember that each stake or ward will need to examine their needs and what they are trying to accomplish. As leaders begin the planning process for a pioneer trek, they may want to consider the following questions:*

- *Why are we doing it?*
- *Where can we go?*
- *Where can we get handcarts?*
- *What time of year shall we do it?*
- *Who is in charge?*
- *What is the theme?*
- *What is the budget?*
- *Who will be involved?*

*It is important that leaders prayerfully consider the needs of their own group and design their pioneer treks around their own objectives. What are you trying to teach your youth and leaders? What principles do you want to instill? What are the principles involved in the pioneer stories: faith, obedience, sacrifice, charity, courage, devotion, heeding the call of a prophet, service, commitment, etc., that your trek should be focused around? The main purpose of having a theme and objectives is to help the youth relate what they learn from the pioneer stories and hands-on experience to their own lives. If appropriate preparations are made and it is properly conducted, the trek can be a life changing experience for the youth—and for the leaders!*

### ***Trek Schedule***

*There is not a set pioneer trek outline. Each group should seek inspiration for their youth. Many follow the basic four-day trek, consisting of a 10-13 mile pull the first day, with a*

*“women’s pull” near the end of the afternoon. The second day is spent pulling 4-5 miles in the morning, with pioneer or challenge initiative games in the afternoon. That night, participants generally have a hoedown or square dance and family home evening. On the third day, the groups stay at their base camp and participate in spiritual activities, such as solo time and testimony meetings. On the last day, the groups finish their trek with a 3-6 mile pull to the pick-up point.*

*Other groups may want to only pull a few miles and set up camp the first day, where they have a square dance and a fireside speaker. The second day is more challenging and they have their “women’s pull” on the third day. Still others may feel their youth need to pull long distances every day. Remember, part of the unique experience of trekking is having the youth work together as a group to accomplish a goal they could not complete by themselves.*

### ***Examples of Trek Themes***

*Join Hands in Faith... “If we are faithful the day will come when those deserving pioneers and ancestors, whom we rightly praise for having overcome the adversities in their wilderness trek, will praise today’s faithful for having made their way successfully through a desert of despair and for having passed through a cultural wilderness, while still keeping the faith.” (Neal A Maxwell)*

*Obedience...the first law of Heaven. “Many think that the price of discipleship is too costly and too burdensome. For some, it involves giving up too much. But the cross is not as heavy as it appears to be. Through obedience we acquire much greater strength to carry it.” (James E. Faust, “Discipleship,” Ensign, Nov. 2006)*

*Sacrifice. “All...who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.” (Doctrine & Covenants 97:8)*

*Believe...Hope...Endure...2 Nephi 31:20. Remember, we know we will face storms of another kind, but learning to survive is a lesson that was taught by those who suffered before us. The handcart companies passed their tests. Now it’s our turn.*

*Press Forward With Faith. “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of all men.” (2 Nephi 31:20)*

*Remember.* “Seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him.” (Ether 12:41, Omni 1:26)

*Tried, Tested, and True.* “Oh, remember my son [and daughter], and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.” (Alma 37:35) *The focus of this conference would be on the faith, obedience, sacrifice, determination, and endurance which the early Saints possessed.*

*Walk with Me.* *The focus of this conference would be gaining a deeper testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and our relationship to them and our fellow men. The objectives could be listed as:*

- 1. Develop new relationships with our Father in Heaven and the Savior.*
- 2. Develop a renewed appreciation on a personal level for those who have preceded us and their contributions to establishing the gospel on the earth.*
- 3. Develop and gain new friends and relationships.*
- 4. Develop ourselves; understanding better who we are and what principles are really important in a culture where materialism and self-gratification are so predominant.*

### ***Reservations and Fees***

*A reservation is required in order to hold a pioneer trek at a Farmland Reserve location. Deposits are not required to hold your reservation, but if the need should arise to cancel your reservation, please do so ASAP. If damage occurs to any assets (handcarts, porta johns, campsites, etc.) we will send the stake, ward, or group, an additional bill after their trek is over. Refer to the site specific information that is provided for contact information to reserve your trek site.*

*A \$15.00 fee for each trek participant and staff member is required. This fee applies to everyone on the trek and helps offset the costs of the handcarts, portable toilets, etc. The fee remains the same, irrespective of the length of the trek. Trek leaders will provide the trekking missionaries with the number of anticipated participants. A church-issued check will be submitted at that time to pay for the trek fee (# participants x \$15).*

### ***Resources Provided by Trek Group***

*Trek leaders will need to organize and provide for the following:*

- *Leadership and training*
- *Itinerary of activities*
- *Food and provisions for camping*
- *Medical personnel*
- *Transportation to and from the site*
- *Radio communication (two-way radios and cell phones)*
- *Trash removal*
- *Two 5-gallon water containers for each handcart*

*For additional information on the resources and equipment that trek groups will need, visit the Mormon Handcart Trek website at [www.handcarttrek.com](http://www.handcarttrek.com).*

### ***Resources Provided by the Trek Site***

*At most Farmland Reserve sites, one or more missionary couples will serve as Pioneer Trek Coordinators. They will schedule the pioneer treks, establish trek routes, and coordinate trek activities with ranch activities. At MHHS, a full staff of missionaries is present to coordinate all trekking activities and routes and camp sites are already established. Additional resources provided by the Farmland Reserve trek locations vary from site to site. Refer to the site-specific information that is provided for a full listing of the resources that are available.*

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## **GENERAL ORGANIZATION OF A TREK**

*Some groups have the Young Men and Young Women Presidencies head the pioneer trek committee. However, many stake presidents call a special couple or individual to be the trek chairman because of the time, energy, and commitment required in planning the experience. This couple will need to work closely with the stake leaders to accomplish what is needed for the youth of their stake. Groups have frequently said that the key to the success of their trek was having the right people called to the right positions.*

*Find ways to involve the youth in the organization process. They can be involved in the publicity, activities, clothing, music, historical, and food committees by helping to plan and carry out firesides or by giving input toward the types of activities that are part of the experience.*

*Ward organization could be designed in a manner similar to the stake organization, with the bishopric and the Young Men's and Young Women's leaders over the individuals in the different committees, along with two youth representatives.*

### ***Common Pioneer Trek Positions***

#### **Chairman**

*The Chairman organizes the different committees and works with the stake president and the stake Young Men and Young Women presidencies to establish an appropriate itinerary. The chairman also gives assignments, maintains communication between all of the committees, and answers questions that might arise throughout the process.*

#### **Trail Boss**

*The Trail Boss speaks at the pre-trek fireside and leads meetings during the trek and at the post-trek fireside. He knows the trek route and determines the pace for the handcarts. He maintains communication between the trekkers and the support staff, must be in good physical condition, and feel comfortable leading a large group of people in the outdoors. It is also important that he have the ability to relate to the youth. Many times stakes will have a member of their stake presidency serve in this position.*

#### **Company Captains**

*Company Captains are used with large stakes to help with communication on and off the trail. These individuals are assigned to watch over their own company of 4 or 5 handcarts.*

*Company Captains also work closely with the Trail Boss to keep him informed about the condition of their company. They also relay information back and forth between the group leaders and the Trail Boss. The Company Captains can also help with activities on the second day. The Company Captains need to be in good physical condition, feel comfortable in the outdoors, and enjoy working with the youth.*

### *Trail Walkers*

*Many times the stake presidency or the stake Young Men's or Young Women's leaders want to be able to move about among the youth along the trail, so they go as Trail Walkers. Sometimes they join a family and help pull if the family is really struggling or walk with individual youth who are struggling with health or attitude problems.*

### *Support Staff*

*The support staff includes all the individuals who work behind the scenes to make sure that everyone on the trek has food, equipment, water, and portable toilets. They coordinate with the Trail Boss on breaks, at meals, and at the camp sites. The medical team, which is part of the support staff, generally has at least one or two people walking the trail and will have a vehicle following out of sight in case someone is injured. Those involved in carrying out the different activities along the trail and in camp are part of the staff. There is also generally someone who is the historian, who records and takes pictures or videos of different events along the trail.*

### *Group Leaders (sometimes called Ma's and Pa's)*

*Group leaders are usually married couples but can be single adults. They receive a great deal of training in food preparation, safety/first aid, procession events, and games or activities that will help the youth strengthen their testimony. Good group leaders do not do everything for the youth, but instruct the youth in a way that encourages the group to work together for a good experience.*

### *Trek Groups*

*The youth are divided into groups of 6-10 members, depending on the size and availability of handcarts. Generally, the youth are separated from their friends and family. Trek groups are assembled in a manner that provides a variety of ages and physical and spiritual strength. Including the group leaders, there are usually 10-12 people per trek group, with an equal number of boys and girls, if possible.*

## ***Other Possible Positions***

### ***Dance Instructor***

*This individual is called to teach the youth how to dance prior to the trek. The dance instructor is also in charge of the square dance during the trek, unless special arrangements have been made with the trekking missionaries to perform this function.*

### ***Family History Coordinator***

*This individual coordinates family history research and temple work for the youth prior to the pioneer trek. All trek participants are encouraged to do temple work for one of their ancestors. The trek participants are encouraged to have a story to share about their ancestor.*

### ***Music Leader***

*He or she prepares the songs for the firesides and the song books used on the trail. They work with the youth to prepare special numbers for firesides before and during trek.*

### ***Story Telling Coordinator***

*They research stories for the handcart companies or wagon trains that teach the principles around which the trek is focused. The coordinator can also assign each individual a handcart pioneer about whom he/she can learn along the trail. He or she also prepares stories and scripts for different vignettes during the trek.*

### ***Ward Coordinators***

*Many groups have a person in each ward that the trek committee keeps informed about the pre-trek activities, registration collection, and solo letter collection from parents.*

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## **GROUP LEADERS**

*The calling of leaders to trek with the youth should be considered very carefully by the priesthood leader(s), as directed by the Spirit. These adults will help set the tone of spirituality and group cohesiveness that will be essential in making the trek a successful experience. Couples should be called who are respected by the youth, have a deep sense of spirituality, have adequate stamina to fully participate in the trek, and who can schedule appropriate time for participation.*

### ***Group Leader Guidelines***

- 1. Each couple will be responsible for supervising on the trail and in camp, six to ten youth ranging in age from 14 to 18 years. These youth are assigned from wards throughout the stake. The size of each group will depend on the number of participating youth and the number of group leaders available. Group members may not know one another. One youth in each group should be a youth leader (ideally a young man or young woman serving on a youth conference or trek committee).*
- 2. All adult leaders must be present for the duration of the trek and walk the entire length of the trek each day. Each group will pull a handcart the entire way.*
- 3. All participants will be camping in fairly primitive circumstances. Female group leaders will stay with the girls and male group leaders will stay with the boys.*

### ***Role of Group Leaders***

- 1. **Help the youth leader** - Support the youth leader as he/she leads the group in activities and challenges, such as get acquainted games, devotionals, meal preparation, following rules, keeping the group together, problem solving, pioneer games, etc.*
- 2. **Keep things positive** - Encourage appropriate behavior by setting a good example and maintaining a positive and supportive approach throughout the trek. If you have concerns, speak directly to one of the trek leaders. Your group should be working together. Avoid doing all of the work. Help all members of your group to be responsible and to contribute.*
- 3. **Maintain hydration** - Keep yourself hydrated and make sure everyone in your group is carrying their water bottle and drinking at least as much as you.*

4. **Enhance the spiritual experience** - Prepare well and seek the Spirit in all you do and say. The manner in which challenges are handled will have as much of a lasting impact on the youth as any of the prepared activities or talks.
5. **Challenge the youth to participate wholeheartedly** - It is important for the youth to be engaged in the trek activity. Be firm, yet loving and humble, in helping the youth accept the trek experience. Establish and enforce group rules. While you must not force the youth to do anything against their will, encourage their participation and do not let them disrupt the experience of others.
6. **Be Flexible** - Some groups may appear to be more outgoing and lively, while others are more sedate and reserved. Guide your group's development according to the personalities of those in your group, with the assistance of the Spirit.
7. **Share** - Take opportunities throughout the trek experience to understand the thoughts, feelings, and personalities of each group member. Talk and spend time with the youth individually and collectively.
8. **Group Discussions** - Group discussions led by the leaders are an important part of the trek experience. They may be held anytime. They can help youth become mentally, spiritually, and physically involved. The discussions should help the youth to seriously ponder the gospel in their lives. The group discussions may be either formal or informal. The first discussion should be formal, as it will set the tone for the rest of the trek. In preparing for the discussions, consider the following suggestions:
  - After a meal, gather your group and sit in a circle with everyone facing toward the center. Share a pre-assigned pioneer ancestor story (either yours or someone else's in the group).
  - Ask the youth to look for parallels between their own lives and the experiences of the pioneers.
  - After the stories, ask some questions to get the discussion started.
    - Begin with concrete questions like, "Which part do you remember most?"
    - Next, ask questions about how they felt about these events.
      - § "How do you feel about the trek so far?"
      - § "Why do you feel that way?"
      - § "What are you learning from this experience?"
      - § "Can you think of similar situations in your life?"

§ *“We may all want to think and ponder how our trek through life is similar to the trek the pioneers made.”*

- *Have someone share scriptures that are relevant to the discussion. Close with your testimony.*

*Remember, this is a time for sharing and expressing feelings about the experience, life, and the gospel. Your responsibility is to initiate the sharing. If you do not know where to start, begin at a point in the circle and have each of the youth respond to a question. Then, ask them why they responded the way they did. Continue that process around the circle.*

*For many, this will be a new experience. Encourage everyone to share, but do not force anyone. Listen carefully to what each one says and give reinforcement. However, don't overdo the compliments; they will become forced and insincere. It is alright for the youth to express negative feelings. Make sure the youth know there are no wrong answers.*

## ***Leader Preparation***

### **Spiritual Preparation**

*Pioneer treks require spiritual preparation. This means additional effort by group leaders to bring their lives in tune with the Spirit. Here are some suggestions:*

- *Personal and family prayer each day. Listen to the Spirit - then follow the promptings.*
- *Regular study of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures.*
- *As you ponder the scriptures, think of gospel principles taught by trek.*
- *Attend the temple regularly.*
- *Learn about your ancestors and the handcart pioneers.*
- *Improve your listening skills.*

### **Physical Preparation**

*Pioneer treks require physical stamina. This can be obtained through obedience to the Word of Wisdom, eating wholesome foods, not overeating, eating a balanced diet, and regular exercise. Physical preparation cannot be completed in a short period of time. The following are some general guidelines that you might consider:*

- *Walk 4-5 times per week.*
- *For 2-3 times per week, walk 2-3 miles; for 2 times a week walk 4-5 miles.*
- *Walk uphill about 4 times, increasing the distance each time, before the trek.*



### **Basic Skills**

*The following are some basic skills you will need, which will be reviewed in training sessions:*

- *Fire building*
- *Knot tying*
- *Rain protection on the trail and in camp*
- *Preparing meals*
- *Survival skills*
- *No-trace camping*

### ***Additional Information***

#### ***Pioneer Clothing***

*The wearing of traditional pioneer clothing when participating in a trek can add to the spirit and authenticity of the experience. However, the spending of excess money and time on obtaining such clothing is strongly discouraged. Many, if not all, of the necessary articles of clothing can be found in one's existing wardrobe or at a local thrift store. Visit the Mormon Handcart Trek website at [www.handcarttreks.com](http://www.handcarttreks.com) for more information on trek clothing.*

#### ***History***

*The telling of pioneer stories and use of eye-witness accounts from handcart pioneers is very helpful in bringing to life in the minds of the youth the faith, obedience, and sacrifice exhibited by those early saints as they crossed the plains. It is important to only use historically accurate pioneer stories and accounts. Doing so will help maintain the veracity of handcart trekking and help to avoid the use of inaccurate or inappropriate practices.*

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## **TREK SAFETY HANDOUTS**

### ***On the Trail***

- 1. Stay behind the priesthood leader who is setting the pace.***
- 2. Stay with your group and help pull the handcart.***
- 3. The pace is slow so that everyone can keep up. Take your time, walk quietly, use common sense, feel the Spirit.***
- 4. Every 20-30 minutes groups should stop for a short water break, allowing time for everyone to drink.***
- 5. Occasionally, a halt may be called for a presentation in your group or company. Gather quickly and quietly to the designated place.***
- 6. Stay on the trails or in approved areas.***
- 7. Be environmentally aware and astute. Be mindful of historic preservation and sensitive to the historical landscape.***
- 8. Watch for cattle and wildlife along the trail or in the campgrounds and don't bother them.***
- 9. Leave no trace and help pick up the traces left by others. It helps to have a small garbage bag on the handcart. Each participant must avoid littering of any kind.***
- 10. No boom boxes, tape players, or CD/MP3 players on trek.***

## ***Handcart Safety***

- 1. Treat handcarts with care; pull or push them by hand. Do not pull handcarts behind vehicles. No one should ride in the cart, except in an emergency.***
- 2. Do not run with the handcart. Trek participants can easily trip and get run over by the wheels.***
- 3. When stopping the handcart, slowly lower the shaft until it rests on the ground. Never drop the shaft. Always set it onto the ground gently.***
- 4. Do not sit or stand on the shaft when it is resting on the ground.***
- 5. Stay away from the wheels. Some clothing, especially dresses, can get caught in the wheels.***
- 6. Handcarts should not be overloaded. They are designed to hold the gear for only 10 people, including clothing, sleeping bags, tarps, cooking equipment, and water. The total weight should not be over 400 pounds.***
- 7. Each handcart has a 20-25 foot rope that should remain attached to the cart during use. This rope allows more people to pull at once.***
- 8. When going down steep hills, attach the rope to the back of the handcart and have everyone help to slow down the cart or turn the handcart around and take it down the hill backwards. Always keep it under control.***
- 9. When stopping on a hill, place a rock or some other object behind the wheels so that the handcart does not roll.***
- 10. Do not pull a loaded handcart sideways on a steep incline (where one wheel is consistently lower than the other). If all the weight of the handcart is shifted to one wheel, it can break.***
- 11. Do not deface any surface of the handcarts (writing, carving, painting, etc).***

## ***Campgrounds***

- 1. Find out and follow the campground rules.***
- 2. Camp in your assigned area.***
- 3. Always keep your campsite clean and orderly. Don't let the wind blow papers or plastics away.***
- 4. Respect quiet hours and be considerate of your neighbors.***
- 5. Leave all gates as you find them. Don't climb on the fences.***
- 6. Know and follow the fire regulations in your area.***
- 7. Please keep all restroom facilities clean. Do not throw in debris as it will clog the cleaning hose of the vacuum truck.***
- 8. When leaving an area, make sure to do a garbage sweep and take all garbage with you. "No Trace Camping" is required. A "Pack it in, Pack it out" policy is expected.***

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## ***MEDICAL INFORMATION***

### ***Medical Officer***

*Each trek group is required to have a minimum of one doctor, registered nurse, or EMT for every hundred participants. The designated medical expert must be with the trek group at all times. Each ward or stake is responsible for the safety of all trek participants in their group at all times. The medical staff must be prepared with all the necessary emergency medical equipment, medicine, shelter, transportation, release forms, and communication equipment they will need to cover the needs of their group. Training should be provided to group leaders on prevention methods. Design activities with safety in mind. Please train all trek participants so they can encourage, strengthen, and remind each other regarding safety issues. Few things will be more detrimental to the success of a trek than sickness or injury.*

### ***Common Issues to Prepare For***

#### ***Proper Clothing***

*Pioneer style clothing is good for more than one reason - it helps set the mood and provides protection. First, make sure that the trek clothing is appropriate for the weather conditions that your group might face. Generally, groups are encouraged to wear cotton fabrics. Light-weight, long-sleeved blouses and mid-calf to boot-length skirts with bloomers underneath for modesty are suggested for the girls. Light-weight, long-sleeved shirts and pants that are comfortable and loose fitting are recommended for the boys. Shoes should be walking/hiking type shoes that are well broken in. It is suggested that trekkers wear 2 pairs of socks at a time (1 thin, 1 heavier). This can help to reduce the likelihood of blisters. Large brimmed hats and sunbonnets help protect from sun and insects.*

#### ***Weather***

*The weather can change rapidly, so jackets and rainwear should be kept handy. If the trek group anticipates wet conditions, participants should have water shoes or an extra pair of shoes and socks. Also, wet pants can cause chafing if considerable walking is done after getting wet. Chafing is more frequent in hot temperatures. Remember, the weather may be either hot or cold or, more likely, a combination. Plan for change!*

#### ***Sunscreen and Insect Repellent***

*Sunscreen and insect repellent are a must. For protection from insects, including disease-carrying ticks, use permethrin products to spray clothing, shoes, hats, etc., according to product instructions BEFORE packing for the trek. Use high percentage DEET products to*

*spray on skin as directed while on the trek. Sunscreen should be applied prior to sun exposure and repeated as directed during the day. Cover all exposed parts of the body. Chafing in underarm and 'diaper' areas can be a problem and may be prevented by keeping those areas dry with good air circulation. Products such as baby powder, Gold Bond powder, Zeasorb, etc., may be helpful.*

### **Physical Fitness**

*Trek participants (youth and leaders) should be able to walk the distances which will be traveled on the trek (unless they have a limiting disability). Specifically, each participant should be able to complete a minimum requirement of walking/running four (4) miles on level ground in 60 minutes or less without undue stress. This usually requires some conditioning/training prior to the trek. You need to make preparation and plans in advance for anyone in your group who needs special assistance.*

### **Water**

*Every handcart should have 10 gallons of water. Trek groups should stop every 20-25 minutes to drink water. Avoid carbonated and highly sweetened drinks. Adequate water should be provided to trek participants at points along the trail and in camping areas.*

### **Diet**

*The trek experience is physically challenging. Trek participants need nutritious, well-balanced meals and snacks to maintain strength. Fasting during the trek is not recommended.*

### **Communication**

*Medical personal should have two-way radios, cell phones, and a GPS unit if possible. They will need to keep in contact with the medical vehicle and trek leaders. Medical staff should wear something that makes them easy to identify. For example, they could wear a red cross on their hat or a red band on their arm.*

*Parents and leaders at home should have a way to contact the leaders on trek if there is an emergency.*

### **Transportation**

*During a trek, there must be medical personnel walking with the youth, while an out-of-sight medical vehicle follows behind. If someone is injured or cannot continue, the medical staff contacts the vehicle to pick up the individual. (Medical vehicles are not allowed to follow treks at Martin's Cove or Sixth Crossing. They may be called in case of an emergency).*

### **Medical Facilities/Life Flight and Ambulance Service**

*The medical support and group leaders should know the route to the nearest hospital and carry the telephone numbers for the local sheriff and Life Flight for their area. Life Flight helicopter service and ambulance service may be available. Depending upon locality, these services may be very expensive. To avoid unnecessary liability for payment for these services, only authorized medical personnel should call for these services upon request of the trek group's leader or medical advisor.*

### **Wildlife**

*Leave the wildlife alone! Trek participants should NOT hike alone or wander off from their group. A buddy system should be developed. Leaders should know where the youth are at all times. Every person should have a working flashlight. If someone is bitten by a snake, contact the trek medical expert immediately.*

### **Lost Participants**

*Frequent counts should be taken to keep track of trek participants. If a youth or adult is missing, conduct a sweep of the area. Work with the missionary couple and the group leadership to coordinate the search. If the individual is not found and the priesthood leader feels it is necessary, the ranch/farm employees will help in the search, along with the local emergency services.*

### **Range Fire**

*If the group is in immediate danger of a range fire, an evacuation plan to a safe zone will be put into action. Trek leadership will identify wind conditions, roads, terrain, and natural fire breaks. They will also work with the missionaries to move the group toward a safe area.*

### **Severe Storms/Lightning**

*Groups should be prepared for all kinds of inclement weather and also be familiar with what to do during lightning storms. If a severe storm occurs during the first day, groups should be prepared to change their itinerary and set up camp where they are or move directly to an all-weather road. The missionaries will help leaders determine the proper logistical itinerary changes. Storms may necessitate complete route changes.*

*The trek leaders and medical staff should know the flash-to-bang system of measuring lightning distance. Because light travels much faster than sound, the time between a lightning bolt and thunderclap will tell how far away the lightning is. Each 5-second count equals 1 mile. Before the count reaches 15 seconds or less (3 miles or closer) take precautions.*

*Sometimes an electric charge may be felt, the hair on the head or body may stand on end, or a tingling of the skin may be felt. If so, a lightning strike may be imminent.*

*Lightning typically strikes the tallest object in the area and is attracted to metal objects. Leaders should move their groups away from their handcarts towards the lowest spot in the area. Everyone should spread out at least 15 feet apart to minimize the chance of everyone getting hit.*

*Everyone should be taught (before the trek starts) the crouch position they should get into if lightning is a threat. Trek participants should crouch down on the balls of their feet and bend forward so that their head is low but no other part of their body touches the ground. Keep feet together to minimize body contact with the ground, which minimizes the risk of being hit. If someone is struck, get the medical staff immediately to treat and transport.*

### ***Medical Information/Release***

*Medical staff should receive a medical release form from every participant, including the group leaders and support staff. Essential information should include allergies, current medications, medical conditions, date of last tetanus booster, and any special needs. All minors should have a consent paper for medical treatment signed by a parent or legal guardian. The medical support staff and leaders should familiarize themselves with the different medical issues they might face along the trail and be prepared. The group leaders should be notified of the medical issues they face within their trek group. Sample medical and registration forms can be found at [www.handcarttreks.com](http://www.handcarttreks.com).*

### ***Emergency Action Plan***

*Trek groups are responsible for their own medical and support staff. Each group should have their own emergency action plan for injuries such as dehydration/hypothermia, asthma, blisters, cuts, sprains, insect/snake bites, allergic reactions, foreign body/irritation to eye, broken bones, vomiting/diarrhea, lost participants, fire, severe storms, and all other life threatening injuries. The main focus of these emergency action plans should be centered on prevention, communication, and proper action.*

### ***Sample Emergency Action Plan***

#### **Prevention**

- *Understand chain of command.*

- *Train leaders to look for the signs and symptoms of possible injuries.*
- *Ensure that everyone has the needed equipment.*
- *During the orientation at the trek site, review possible health hazards with the group.*
- *Trek leaders and medical staff should always be watching for possible problems.*
- *Maintain communication using radios and cell phones.*
- *Assess each situation.*

### *Procedure If Trek Participant Is Injured*

- *Stop trekking*
- *Group leader contacts the trail boss who will radio the medical support staff.*
- *Group leaders will temporarily treat the injured trek participant until the medical staff arrives.*
- *Medical personnel will evaluate the condition of the injured participant and give treatment.*
- *Medical staff will update the trail boss and group leaders on the participant's condition.*
- *If the situation involves evacuation, the medical staff will make the necessary arrangements and inform the participant's parents, bishop, and appropriate stake leaders.*

### ***First Aid Information***

*Each group should evaluate their situation and rely on their medical staff for opinions, diagnosis, and treatment of any illnesses or injuries incurred while trekking. The following are suggestions for dealing with medical issues on trek, and are not to be taken as all-inclusive or legally binding.*

### ***First Aid Kits***

#### *Sample Basic Kit*

*Each group leader should carry a basic first aid kit. The following items are some suggested items: antiseptic wipes, mole skin, band aids, Neosporin, hand wipes, scissors, baby powder, feminine products, sun screen, tweezers, etc.*

#### *Sample Major Kit*

*Medical personnel should have their own extensive first aid kit which could include extra of the items listed above, along with disinfectant, epinephrine kit, Tylenol, Advil, Benadryl,*

*Hydrocortisone cream, butterfly bandages, ace bandages, sterile gauze 3x3, 4x4 pads, tape, knee brace, wrist splint, triangle bandages, burn ointment, thermometer, penlight, steri-strips, non-adherent dressings, blood pressure cuff, IV, second skin, ice pack, eye wash pack, latex gloves, Aloe Vera Gel, Pepto Bismol, electrolyte tabs, safety pins, basins (soaking, emesis), coke, crackers, and other supplies or medications your medical personnel desire to have available.*

### ***Medical Concerns***

*The following are seven medical issues generally faced on trek:*

- 1. Dehydration/heat exhaustion*
- 2. Hypothermia*
- 3. Blisters*
- 4. Sprains (knees and ankles)*
- 5. Cuts*
- 6. Asthma and allergy attacks*
- 7. Sunburns and Chafing*

#### **Dehydration/Heat Exhaustion**

*Drink to prevent thirst, not to quench it. It is important to have plenty of water and powdered Gatorade, or the equivalent. Most groups carry 10 gallons of water on each of the handcarts. The trail boss should stop the group at least every 20-25 minutes for a water break. When it is really hot, groups may refill their water jugs two to three times during the day. Spray bottles are a good way to help participants cool off. Remember to have participants drink even when they are not pulling handcarts.*

#### ***Symptoms:***

- Pale face; whole body may feel cool and clammy*
- Shallow breathing*
- Nausea and vomiting*
- Dilated pupils, headache, and dizziness*
- Weak pulse*
- Heavy perspiration*
- Unconsciousness*

#### ***Treatment:***

- Place the person on their back and raise their feet.*
- Provide shade*

- *Loosen clothing or remove some of the patient's clothes, shoes and socks.*
- *Give patient water and Gatorade or equivalent powder; dilute it with water (half and half). Encourage patient to drink all possible.*
- *Fan and put cool, wet cloths to back of neck, face, armpits, and lower legs.*
- *Give sips of water*
- *Put into medical vehicle*

*The Medical support staff needs to be capable of providing treatment for moderate to severe dehydration, if required. Prevention of dehydration by ensuring adequate fluid intake is critical, but may not always be adequate without careful monitoring. Heat exhaustion can quickly progress to heat stroke without adequate medical care and supervision.*

### *Heat Stroke*

#### *Symptoms:*

- *Red, very hot face. Skin is often dry, but if a person has been exercising hard, they may be sweating.*
- *Very small pupils*
- *Slow, noisy breathing*
- *Rapid, strong pulse*
- *Possible unconsciousness*

#### *Treatment:*

- *Place person on his back with head and shoulders raised*
- *Get them into a cool medical vehicle.*
- *Undress the person down to the underwear.*
- *Cover the person - especially the head - with dripping wet towels, shirts, or cloths.*

### *Hypothermia*

*This can happen to anyone who is not dressed warmly enough in cold weather. Wind, rain, and exhaustion increase the risk. The temperature does not have to be freezing.*

#### *Symptoms:*

- *Feels chilly, tired, and irritable*
- *Begins to shiver and then shivering becomes violent*
- *Cannot think clearly, stumbles and falls*

***Treatment:***

- ***Prevention! Be prepared, eat plenty of food, and drink lots of fluids.***
- ***Take off wet clothes***
- ***Get into a sleeping bag***
- ***If in an advanced stage, the rescuer must also strip down to underwear and get into the sleeping bag so that body contact can warm the victim slowly.***

**Sprains and Strains**

***Treatment:***

- ***Apply cold to reduce swelling and pain***
- ***Elevate injured part and use compression (Ace wrap).***
- ***Then 72 hours later, apply heat to increase metabolism.***
- ***Rest the injured part.***

**Blisters**

***Prevention:***

- ***A pair of thin inner socks (nylon knee high) under thicker hiking socks will help decrease friction on the skin.***
- ***Wear shoes that are broken in.***
- ***If you feel a hot spot forming on your foot, stop right away and treat it before it becomes a blister.***
- ***Wash it with soap and water.***
- ***Cut a piece of moleskin in the shape of a doughnut and place it on your foot with the hole over the blister.***

***Treatment:***

- ***If you think a blister will break, sterilize a pin in the flame of a match.***
- ***Prick the blister near its edge and press out the liquid.***
- ***Protect the wound from pressure with a doughnut bandage and keep it clean with a sterile bandage.***

**Bleeding**

***Treatment:***

- ***Elevate injured limb above body level***
- ***Apply direct pressure***

- ***Cover with a pad. If the cloth becomes soaked, DO NOT REMOVE IT. Put another pad on top of the first one, and get medical help.***