

Updated August 4, 2014

## **Almost Heaven Star Party (AHSP) Emergency Preparedness Plan at TMI**

**1. Scope.** This plan addresses responses to various types of fires, medical needs, and other types of emergencies that may threaten AHSP participants while they are at The Mountain Institute (TMI). This plan includes site evacuation in the event of a major fire and evacuation of any injured or ill who need medical attention. It is for use in planning prior to AHSP and in responding during the time this event is being held. Emergency planning poses special problems due to the remote nature of TMI. In almost all emergencies, prompt action by AHSP staff is required. The plan calls for a Medical Response Coordinator, a Fire Response Coordinator, and a Weather Warning Coordinator. These positions will be appointed in advance by the AHSP Event Director.

**2. TMI Facilities and AHSP.** TMI facilities used by AHSP include the Main Yurt for presentations and meals, two dorm buildings, and the shower building. Also AHSP uses two large observing fields, where participants stay in tents, campers, and RVs. One field permits vehicles to park at the observing area, while the other does not. During AHSP, we can expect around 125 vehicles and 200 participants. Vehicles, tents, and equipment are quite close together.

### **3. Possible Types of Fires.**

a. Fire in a TMI building, such as Main Yurt, dorm building, or shower room. Each building has fire extinguishers. People should be warned of the fire so the buildings can be evacuated. We can assist TMI personnel as necessary.

b. Grass Fires and forest fires. Such fires could be started by lightning or people. We have limited ability to fight a small fire threatening the property or AHSP observing areas until fire equipment can arrive. Observing fields have been mowed, with the grass cut short and hay removed. Nearby roads provide potential firebreaks. A rapid response to a fire starting on the property will have the best potential to bring under control. Any local response will be made in coordination with TMI personnel.

c. Vehicle and cooking fires. Vehicles are parked close together in the observing areas and outside cooking is allowed. No open fires are permitted. Participants should warn AHSP staff and immediately use fire extinguishers positioned in each area. If necessary other vehicles should be moved to avoid the fire spreading to them.

d. An early decision to call 911 and ask for fire department help should be done if there is any doubt about our ability to deal with a fire.

**4. Water For Firefighting.** There are no water mains or fire hydrants at TMI. Water from taps and spigots are found in buildings, about a quarter mile from the AHSP observing fields. There are no water lines to the observing fields. For the event, there will be a waterline with a spigot near the registration tent. A small pond near the Main Yurt could provide limited water. Five gallon buckets will be filled with water and placed at each field location where there is fire fighting equipment.

**5. Nearby Fire Departments.** There are no nearby fire departments. The nearest units are volunteer fire departments in Whitmer and Circleville. The 911 operator will likely dispatch one of these units. In the past, the Whitmer VFD has been assigned to calls from TMI.

- Whitmer VFD has two trucks, a 1,000 gallon pumper and a smaller 500 gallon truck. These units can be expected to arrive at TMI about 45 minutes after being notified. Distance is 17 miles via gravel and paved mountain roads.

- Circleville VFD. This is the closest fire department to TMI and is 11.6 miles away. They have two or three fire trucks. Their units must climb the 6 miles up the steep Saw Mill Rd.

**6. On Site Fire Fighting Equipment.** TMI possesses very limited firefighting equipment, which is limited to fire extinguishers in buildings and tools (shovels, rakes, mowers). Hand tools are kept in the tool shed behind the main Yurt and outside the Shower building. AHSP has acquired 4 upright fire extinguishers, shovels, 5 gallon water pails, and two backpack fire pumps to be kept at the observing fields and the welcome tent. Low tech means such as wet towels, shovels, and rakes can be effective in certain situations when used by a group of people working together.

**7. Fire Response Coordinator (FRC).** Appointed by the AHSP Event Director, the FRC acquires necessary equipment, insures it is deployed to appropriate sites, maintains a list of volunteers who agree to respond in the event of a fire emergency, briefs participants on fire safety, and is the point of contact for any fire response effort.

**8. Lightning and High Winds.** Lightning poses a serious threat for AHSP participants in the observing areas as these areas are on high ground and in the open. AHSP staff should monitor severe weather conditions and warn participants. Daily severe weather updates can be provided at meals, presentations, and on the activity board. People can take shelter in the Main Yurt or in their vehicles. Hard top vehicles offer protection, providing one does not come in contact with metal surfaces. People should avoid taking shelter under tall trees and not remain in tents.

**9. Getting and Disseminating Dangerous Weather Forecast Information.** The NOAA office in Sterling, VA prepares forecasts for the TMI area. Information can be obtained by weather radio, radio stations, and the Internet. NOAA also disseminates information on fires and fire conditions. AHSP should monitor weather conditions every 4-6 hours or more often if bad weather is being forecast.

**10. Weather Warning Coordinator (WWC).** Appointed by the AHSP Event Director, the WWC monitors weather conditions, posts hazardous weather information at the Main Yurt, disseminates such information by radio and other methods to AHSP participants, and briefs participants on weather precautions while at the event.

## **11. Communications Limitations.**

- Requesting Help. Due to the remote location of TMI, most cell phones will not work. This means any request for emergency assistance will have to be made by landline from a telephone in the Main Yurt or from the TMI office at the entrance to the property. If phones are not working, someone would have to be sent to look for a phone to report an emergency. The Campground resident volunteer who lives at Spruce Knob Lake has a phone and may also have a radio that communicates on emergency fire and ambulance frequencies. TMI staff can advise in these circumstances.

- Getting Warnings to Participants Onsite. AHSP staff will be using 10-15 handheld FRS walkie talkie radios, which can be used to disseminate emergency information. One FRS radio will be placed in each first aid kit. Also, the TMI dinner bell and the bull horn can be used to alert people quickly. Weather information should be posted on bulletin boards.

**12. Site Evacuation Plan.** If there is a major fire threatening the area, local police and fire officials will warn all residents of the area by personal visits and also by phone calls. In that event, AHSP will need to specify to participants which evacuation routes should be used. Large RVs and vehicles pulling trailers will likely substantially slow any evacuation, due to the narrow one lane routes out of TMI. AHSP should contact the Pendleton County Sheriff's Office to help direct traffic on Sawmill Road between TMI and Route 28. During an evacuation, Sawmill Road should only be used for one way traffic to Route 28.

**13. Area Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Units.** There are no nearby EMS units. Neither Circleville VFD nor Whitmer VFD have ambulances. These VFD units are small and are mainly for responding to fires. Whitmer has one trained EMT with the department. The nearest EMS Unit is at North Fork/Riverton, which is a volunteer unit and has one ambulance. The distance to TMI is 18 miles, with estimated response time of 45-60 minutes. After that, the nearest EMS Unit is at Franklin, more than one hour away. The 911 operator will determine which unit is tasked to respond to an emergency at TMI. Unlike VFDs in the Washington area, these units are never manned. There are no crews standing by with their vehicles. Also, unlike larger cities, the 911 operator will not automatically dispatch both a fire truck and an ambulance. It is possible only a fire truck would be dispatched to deal with some types of medical emergency.

**14. Area Medical Facilities.** There are no nearby medical facilities. Hospitals are all more than one hour drive from TMI. Grant Memorial hospital (Petersburg) and Davis Memorial Hospital (Elkins) have 24 hour Emergency Rooms and are the closest to TMI. They will not send ambulances to TMI. Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg is a two hour drive. Anyone needing medical attention of a non-life threatening nature should drive or be driven to one of these hospitals. Due to the time for travel to a hospital, participants should be urged not to wait until a medical condition worsens.

- **Grant Memorial Hospital.** Route 28/55, Petersburg, WV 26847. Tel: 304-257-1026. Distance 48 miles. 1 ¼ hours driving time. Small, regional hospital in Grant County with 65 beds. Web page: <http://www.grantmemorial.com>
- **Davis Memorial Hospital,** Reed St & Gorman Ave, Elkins, WV 26241. Tel: 304-636-3300. Distance 40 miles. Driving time: 1 ½ hours. Ninety bed hospital in Randolph County. Web page: <http://www.davishealthsystem.org>
- **Rockingham Memorial Hospital,** 235 Cantrell Ave, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Tel: 540-433-4100. Distance: 69 miles. Driving time: 2 hours. Large medical facility in Rockingham County with 238 beds. Web page: <http://www.rmhonline.com>

**15. Medical Evacuation of Injured or Ill Persons.** Serious accidents or illnesses should be handled by calling 911. The 911 Call Center for Pendleton County is in Franklin. They will dispatch an ambulance only if it is absolutely necessary and after conversations to determine the precise condition of the individual. If the person can be moved safely, it may be faster to get a friend or AHSP staff person to transport the person requiring medical treatment to Petersburg or Elkins. Petersburg is the easiest hospital to reach as it is on Route 28, on the south side of town.

- Any ambulance from Riverton/North Fork will take about 45-60 minutes. A vehicle from Franklin will take at least an hour and probably much longer.

- In extremely serious injury or illness, where time is of the essence, a medical evacuation helicopter might be called. TMI has advised that two companies provide this service. Possible landing zones include areas near the welcome tent, rear of the larger observing lot, the road junction to the observatory, and the area near the pond and the Main Yurt. TMI staff and the 911 operator have experience in assisting with making a determination of how to best get the person to a hospital.

**16. Medical Response Coordinator (MRC).** Appointed by the AHSP Event Director, the MRC will insure the first aid kits are kept up to date, prepare a list of first aid qualified members and other qualified medical personnel attending the event. He will also coordinate any onsite medical response and medical evacuations. A FRS radio will be kept with each first aid kit.

**17. First Responders.** Due to the time required for medical personnel to arrive at TMI, the AHSP and TMI staffs are in fact the first responders. AHSP should identify staff and attendees who are first aid qualified as well as any medical personnel. Their names should be posted on a bulletin board at the Main Yurt, and kept by the MRC and the Event Director.

- On Site Medical Response Team. In the event of a medical emergency, the MRC will form a medical response team with at least three AHSP staff who are first aid qualified. These people should have FRS radios kept on 24/7. In serious cases, one person should communicate with the 911 call center, while the others tend to the ill or injured person. The principal point of contact with TMI is Dave Martin. After hours, contact the TMI Staff representative whose name and living quarters location are left in the Main Yurt Office each day.

- At the first general meeting on site, the MRC should inform participants to contact any AHSP staff member in case of a medical emergency and remind participants of the list of hospitals that is in the welcome kit. Participants should be told where first aid kits can be found.

**18. First Aid Kits.** AHSP should have three first aid kits in the field, and the one first aid kit and the AED at the Main Yurt. Contents will be examined annually for completeness and to replace outdated items. Before arrival, AHSP planning group members will become familiar with the contents of the first aid kits.

**19. CPR/AED Training.** Both TMI and AHSP have Automated External Defibrillators (AED). AHSP staff must be trained on the use of the AED prior to arrival at TMI. Since CPR is often required before and after AED use, AHSP should have at least five or more staff members complete Red Cross or American Heart Assn courses. The Red Cross offers a four hour Adult CPR/AED Course, given at various sites in the Washington area. AHSP should pay the course costs for staff undergoing this training. A longer 7 hour course for first aid, also includes CPR/AED and costs. Red Cross CPR/AED certification is good for one or two years and then retraining is required. All 50 states now have laws to protect laypersons that have been properly trained to use these devices. Red Cross Washington Metropolitan Area training course offerings are online at <http://www.redcross.org/takeaclass>.

**20. Medical Information Sheet For AHSP Participants.** A medical information sheet with the names and addresses of hospitals should be put in the participant information folder. The MRC will maintain a list of all first aid, CPR, and AED trained persons so that they can easily be called upon. Attendees should be told to seek treatment earlier, rather than later.

**21. Phone Numbers for TMI, Local Authorities, and Poison Center.** The Fire Response Coordinator will call the following local offices about a week before the AHSP to inform them of the dates and location of the AHSP. This will allow a better response in the event emergency services are needed via a 911 call.

- Dave Martin, TMI Director (H) On File.
- Pendleton County 911 Call Center in Franklin. Admin line: 304-358-3271
- Pendleton County Emergency Preparedness Office, Franklin.  
Bruce Minor, Director: 304-358-3889; Cell: 304-668-1100
- Pendleton County EMS Unit, Franklin. Admin line: 304-358-7869
- North Fork/Riverton EMS Unit. Admin line: 304-358-3271.
- Whitmer VFD (Randolph County). Clarence Turner, Chief: 304-227-4444
- Circleville VFD: Carl Warner, Chief. 304-567-2249 or 2617.
- Pendleton County Sheriff's Office, Franklin. Admin line: 304-358-2214
- The Mountain Institute (TMI) (host) 304-567-2644; Earth Sheltered Office: 304-567-2632
- Heavy Wrecker Service: Carl's Garage, Circleville, WV: 304-567-2249
- Wrecker Service: Roger Shirks Towing, Petersburg, WV: 304-257-9066
- Heavy Wrecker Service: John Riggelman's Towing, Petersburg, WV 304-538-6192
- National Poison Center: 800-222-1222

## Directions To Area Hospitals And Urgent Care From TMI

**1. Grant Memorial Hospital.** Route 28/55, Petersburg, WV 26847. Tel: 304-257-1026. Distance 48 miles. 1 ¼ hours driving time. Small, regional hospital in Grant County with 65 beds. Web page: <http://www.grantmemorial.com>. This is the closest and easiest to drive to.

Driving Directions: At TMI entrance, turn left onto Sawmill Road. Proceed approximately 6 miles to WV Route 28. Turn left onto Route 28 North. Go 8.6 miles. Turn left at US 33/WV 28 North. Stay on Route 28 North for 31.8 miles, until you reach the south side of Petersburg. You will see the hospital on the right side of Route 28.

**2. Davis Memorial Hospital,** Reed St & Gorman Ave, Elkins, WV 26241. Tel: 304-636-3300. Distance 40 miles. Driving time: 1 ½ hours. Ninety bed hospital in Randolph County. Web page: <http://www.davishealthsystem.org>

Driving Directions: At TMI entrance, turn left onto Sawmill Road. Proceed approximately 6 miles to WV Route 28. Turn left on Route 28 North. Stay on Route 28 for 8.6 miles. Turn left at US33/WV Route 28. Go 10.9 miles. Turn left at US33/WV Route 55 West. Stay on US33 for 34.7 miles to Elkins. In Elkins, turn right on S. Randolph St. Turn left on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, which becomes Gorman Ave. Gorman Ave. runs into the hospital.

**3. Rockingham Memorial Hospital,** 235 Cantrell Ave, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Tel: 540-433-4100. Distance: 69 miles. Driving time: 2 hours. Large medical facility in Rockingham County with 238 beds. Web page: <http://www.rmhonline.com>

Driving Directions: At TMI entrance, turn left onto Sawmill Road. Proceed approximately 6 miles to WV Route 28. Turn left onto Route 28 North. Stay on Route 28 for 8.6 miles. Turn right at US33/WV Route 28. Stay on US33 East to Harrisonburg, VA, about 54 miles. In Harrisonburg, US33 is also W. Market St. Turn right on S. Liberty St. Turn left on Cantrell Ave. Go two blocks and you will see the hospital on the right.

**4. Urgent Care – North Fork Primary Care Clinic.** Return to Route 28. Turn left – north. Follow Route 28 approx 10 miles to Riverton/North Fork. Address: 16921 Mountaineer Drive. Open 5 days a week. Physicians Assistant and Nurse Practitioner. M-Th: 8:30am-5pm. Fri: 8:30am-12:30pm. Tel: 304-567-2101.

**5. Urgent Care – Green Bank Community Care Clinic.** Return to Route 28. Turn right – south. Follow Route 28 approx 27 miles to Green Bank. Address: 90 Route 28, Green Bank. Open: M-F: 8:00am – 5pm. MD on staff. Tel: 304-456-5115.

**The Mountain Institute,** Spruce Knob, WV. Telephone: 304-567-2644. Ask for Almost Heaven Star Party staff. Earth Sheltered Office (daytime only) is 304-567-2632.