

# Rescue Dynamics®

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Subject: **Wilderness Medicine Tomes:  
A Review of 1<sup>st</sup> Aid and Medical Texts**

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Instructional Support

Technical Note

05/14 – Spring

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Wilderness first aid and wilderness medicine have grown in the last quarter century from a relatively unsophisticated and obscure branch of medicine with little specialized training available to a full fledged medical specialization with its own medical society.

Dozens of entrepreneurs are now offering specialized courses in medical response from the most basic levels up to and including conferences for physicians and other advanced care givers.

This series of reviews lists many of the books and field guides currently available on the topic of wilderness medicine, first aid and environmental emergencies. A listing of additional texts that are not yet reviewed is included at the end of the article to provide a more complete survey of the topic for those interested in additional study.

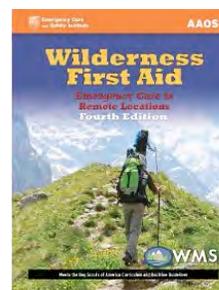
The books are listed chronologically from newest to oldest. Field guides are listed separately. The length of each book is noted along with typical retail prices in both US and Canadian dollars where available. Prices have been fluctuating wildly with exchange rates recently, and thus should be taken with a grain of salt.

In order to differentiate between the level of comprehension required and best audience for each text, one or more of the following letters will follow each title:

P - Physician, Nurse, Paramedic level  
A - Advanced first aid / EMT level  
B - Basic first aid level

In addition, a highly subjective star rating of one, two or three stars is used, with **☆☆☆** and a **bold red title** being a highly recommended choice.

A list of newer books that have not yet been reviewed can be found at the end of this article.

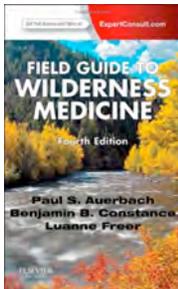


**Wilderness First Aid: Emergency Care For Remote Locations** 4<sup>th</sup> edition, published by Jones and Bartlett, 2013. (**☆☆☆**) This collaborative effort by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and the Wilderness Medical

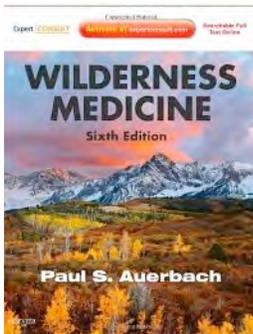
Society raised the bar and set the new standard for all basic first aid texts dealing with wilderness emergencies. What *Wilderness Medicine* is for physicians, this book is for basic wilderness first aider providers. Up to date, comprehensive and full colour, this is the wilderness first aid text you should buy first. You may not need another as almost all others pale in comparison. Updated with the 2010 CPR guidelines. 368 pages: Price: \$30.00 CDN / US.

**The Outward Bound Wilderness First Aid Handbook**, 4<sup>th</sup> edition by Jeffrey Isaac, published Falcon Guides, 2013. (B☆☆) Similar to, but not quite as comprehensive as, the *NOLS WFA Handbook*, reviewed above. 272 pages: Price: \$18.95 CDN / \$16.95 US

**NOLS Wilderness Medicine**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition by Tod Schimelpfenig, published by NOLS and Stackpole books, 2013. (B/A☆☆) Both the text and line drawings are reasonable and comprehensive. Not a best first choice but worthwhile as a second or third book to buy to round out your collection. It is the standard text for the NOLS Wilderness First Aid courses. 336 pages: Price \$19.95 CDN / 14.95 US



**Field Guide to Wilderness Medicine**, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by Paul S. Auerbach, Benjamin B. Constance and Luanne Freer, published by Mosby, 2013. (P☆☆) This is the physicians field guide to *Wilderness Medicine* above. It is an excellent reference for physicians looking for a portable manual on wilderness medicine. 1024 pages. Price \$60.95 CDN / \$50.95 US.



**Wilderness Medicine**, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by Paul S. Auerbach, published by Mosby, 2011. (P☆☆) Every field of endeavor seems to eventually have a book written about it that most practitioners consider to be the state of the art "bible".

*Wilderness Medicine* is such a book written by the most respected physicians, researchers and prehospital care professionals. It is best used by those well schooled in the medical sciences at the EMT level or above. Having a medical dictionary close at hand as well as a solid foundation in the topic as provided by several of the other advanced level texts on the subject are requisite to an understanding of the medical concepts and terminology presented. It is an excellent reference for physicians looking for in-depth discussions on wilderness medicine. If you are below the level of paramedic you may find this book is too in-depth for you. This is also the most costly text of the bunch. Over 2200 pages: Price \$215.00 CDN/US.

**Wilderness And Rescue Medicine**, 6<sup>th</sup> edition by Jeffrey Isaac and David E. Johnson, published by Jones & Bartlett, 2012. This is primarily an overview of wilderness related protocols and not really a comprehensive text on wilderness first aid. It is well written and a good adjunct to some of the other texts reviewed. 226 pages. Price \$84.95 CDN/US.



**Outdoor Emergency Care**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition by National Ski Patrol, Edward C. McNamara, David H. Johe, Deborah A. Endly, published by Prentice Hall, 2011. (P/A☆☆½) This is quite simply the best advanced first aid compilation yet to come out for those providing

treatment in an outdoor environment. It is far beyond the basic level but well within reach of the conscientious student to comprehend the material contained. Designed as a teaching text for the US National Ski Patrol, it has been widely adopted as the text of choice for some advanced wilderness first aid programs. The latest edition is full colour and expanded and has removed a significant portion of the pure wilderness material that enhanced the previous four editions, thus limiting its usefulness as a proper "wilderness" text. As its name implies, it is *outdoor care* but not necessarily *wilderness care*. Worth the price as a reference for ski patrollers. 1272 pages: Price \$105.00 CDN / \$95.00 US

**Wilderness First Responder: A Text for the Recognition, Treatment, and Prevention of Wilderness Emergencies**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition by Buck Tilton published by Falcon, 2010. (A/B☆☆) This text is somewhat more advanced than the basic level but somewhat more basic than what I would consider the advanced level. This book addresses several more advanced topics than *Mountaineering First Aid* (like AED & basic oxygen administration) but falls far short of being as comprehensive as *Outdoor Emergency Care*. It is quite readable with a limited amount of jargon. It defines a solid intermediate level of first aid care, applicable to the serious outdoor enthusiast. The line drawings are sometimes of questionable quality and are a distraction from an otherwise good text. A few colour photos would be a welcome addition. A solid choice for

those looking to go beyond the simple basics. For those interested in a more serious and in-depth treatment, *Outdoor Emergency Care* may be a better option. 320 pages: Price \$53.95 CDN / \$34.95 US.



**Medicine for Mountaineering & Other Wilderness Activities**, (P/A☆☆☆) 6<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by James Wilkerson, published by the Mountaineers, 2009. This venerated old tome has been one of the standard guides for

mountain medical issues for several decades. It is light in the first aid oriented department and heavy on the medical side of things as its title would imply. As a wilderness traveler progresses through first aid training and on to more medically oriented topics, this text should be a part of the ongoing education process. Many techniques and procedures discussed and illustrated are truly the province of the expedition physician or paramedical personnel and should only be attempted by those with appropriate training. A good base camp reference. 384 pages: Price \$34.95 CDN / \$30.00 US

**Wilderness Medical Society Practice Guidelines for Wilderness Emergency Care**, 5th edition, edited by William Forgey, published by Falcon books, 2006. (P/A☆☆☆) This is not an instructional text. It is a series of protocols developed by experts in various fields and vetted by members of the Wilderness Medical Society. Valuable for wilderness professionals or those providing prehospital care in the wilderness. 109 pages: Price: \$20.95 CDN.

Note: The Wilderness Medical Society no longer publishes the Practice Guidelines in book format. They have now chosen to publish individual topic guidelines in the medical journal "Wilderness & Environmental Medicine". These are available as free PDF downloads from the WEM journal website.

**Hypothermia, Frostbite and Other Cold Injuries**, by Gordon Giesbrecht and James Wilkerson, published by the Mountaineers, 2006. (B/A☆☆☆). This is a valuable and comprehensive update of the original book written in 1986. A good modern discussion of problems related to the cold. 141 pages. Price: \$23.95 CDN

**Injuries in Outdoor Recreation: Understanding, Prevention, and Treatment** by Gary N Guten, published by Falcon books, 2005. (B/A☆☆☆) This is *not* a first aid textbook but rather a book dealing with forty common outdoor injuries from diagnosis to rehabilitation. Since so many outdoor athletes suffer one of these injuries in their lifetime it is included in this review. 320 pages: 16.95 US

**Going Higher, Oxygen, Man and Mountains**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition by Charles Houston, David Harris and Ellen Zeman, published by the Mountaineers, 2005. (P/A/B☆☆☆) The definitive lay persons guide to altitude. If you are going high you owe it to yourself to be familiar with the contents of this excellent work. The 5<sup>th</sup> edition has significant new and revised material to warrant purchasing even if you have earlier editions. Reasonably illustrated with photos, charts and drawings. 320 pages: Price \$27.95 CDN / \$22.50 US

**Mountaineering First Aid: A Guide To Accident Response And First Aid Care**, by Jan D. Carline, Martha J. Lentz, Steven C. MacDonald, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, published by the Mountaineers, 2004. (B☆) A very basic jargon-free text on the most common wilderness injuries. Illustrated with a limited number of good quality line drawings. The 5<sup>th</sup> edition has undergone significant revision but still remains a cursory treatment of mountain first aid. It is good as a very basic introduction or as a simple review but those wandering into more remote environs will find this pocket guide lacking. 169 pages: Price \$15.95 CDN / \$12.95 US.

**Outdoor First Aid: Mountain Safety Manual 23**, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Christine Griffin published by New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2004. (B☆) This book is very similar in content and depth to *Mountaineering First Aid* but with a New Zealand perspective. It is quite readable and essentially jargon-free. The line drawings are often somewhat simplistic. 145 pages: Price approximately \$25.00 CDN.

**Wilderness Medical Associates Wilderness First Aid Guide** (Pamphlet) by Nancy Doherty, Dennis Kerrigan, David E. Johnson published by Wilderness Medical Associates, 2004. (B☆) 20 pages printed on one folded sheet of paper: If you want a single sheet of waterproof paper with a few reminders printed on it, then I guess you could chose this. Otherwise it is hardly worth the money. Price \$6.95 CDN / \$4.95 US.

**Outdoor Emergency Care Study Book**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, published by Jones & Bartlett, 2003. A student workbook to accompany the *Outdoor Emergency Care* text. Worthwhile as a training adjunct for advanced first aid courses taught using *OEC*. Not produced in a 5<sup>th</sup> edition to match the most recent text.

**Backcountry Medical Guide**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by Peter Steele, published by The Mountaineers, 1999. (A/B★) This is a small reasonably comprehensive pocketbook dealing with first aid and medical emergencies. Sparsely illustrated with black and white line drawings. Includes drug administration information that should be used with a healthy dose of caution, additional reading and research. 270 pages: Price: \$25.00 CDN / \$15.95 US

**The Basic Essentials of Hypothermia**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by William Forgey, published by Falcon Guides, 1999. (B/A★★) A single topic presented in a short concise and readable booklet. A worthwhile adjunct to many of the basic texts but now a bit dated. 90 pages: Price \$7.99 CDN / 5.99 US.

**Wilderness 911**, by Eric Weiss, published by the Mountaineers & Backpacker Magazine, 1998. (B★★) Another reasonably comprehensive first aid pocketbook. This one has useful "when to worry" and "backcountry tricks" boxes sprinkled throughout the text. Illustrated with line drawings. A few more illustrations or perhaps a few photos may have helped. 237 pages: Price: \$26.95 CDN / \$16.95 US

**A Comprehensive Guide to Wilderness and Travel Medicine**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Eric Weiss, published by Adventure Medical Kits, 1997. (B★★) Not quite as comprehensive as *Wilderness 911* by the same author, but in a much more compact size that would be suitable for carrying in a medium to large size first aid kit. A good choice in the compact booklet category. 198 pages: Price \$10.00 CDN / \$6.95 US

**St. John Ambulance Official Wilderness First Aid Guide**, by Wayne Merry, published by McLelland & Stewart, 1997. (B★★) A good basic comprehensive pocket book whose flavour is influenced by the arctic and indigenous peoples. Addresses many important wilderness issues in an easy to read and understandable format. The second best basic level book. 272 pages: Price \$19.99 CDN. Out of print.

**Medicine for the Backcountry**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Buck Tilton and Frank Hubbell, published by ICS Books, 1994. (B★★) Another reasonably concise pocket book sparsely illustrated with line drawings. 192 pages: Price \$17.99 CDN / \$12.99 US

**High Altitude, Illness and Wellness**, by Charles Houston, published by ICS Books, 1993. (B/A★★★) A brief and concise synopsis by the author of *Going Higher*. If you are going to altitude and have not read one of Houston's two books, you may be making a serious mistake. Buy one or the other... or both. 72 pages: Price \$8.99 CDN / \$6.99 US. Out of print.

**The Pocket Doctor**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Stephen Bezruchka, published by the Mountaineers, 1992. (B/A★★★) A compact booklet addressing travelers medicine rather than first aid. Very Handy. 95 pages: Price \$7.00 CDN / \$4.95 US

**Color Atlas of Mountain Medicine**, edited by J. Vallotton and F. Dubas, published by Mosby, 1991. (P/A★★) A Mosby Yearbook containing a collection of articles well illustrated by suitably graphic color plates. Of only passing interest to first aiders, but worth a look for physicians. The second most expensive book in this review. 223 pages: Price > \$100.00 CDN

**Basic Rescue and Emergency Care**, edited by Robert A. Worsing, Jr., published by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, 1990. (B/A★★) This is not a manual on first aid or rescue systems. It is more global than that. It provides introductory coverage of rescue response from Incident Command to patient care. In a cursory way, It introduces all aspects of LAST – Locate, Access, Stabilize, Transport. It is NOT wilderness specific, but it should be required reading for anyone who intends to pursue a career in rescue. Out of print.

**Medical Handbook for Mountaineers**, by Peter Steele, published by Constable & Co, 1988. This is the outdated original version of the 1999 *Backcountry Medical Guide*, by the same author.

**Medicine for the Outdoors**, by Paul Auerbach, published by Little & Brown, 1986. (B★★) One of the first of an entire genre of reasonably comprehensive first aid pocketbooks. 347 pages: Price \$17.95 CDN

**Environmental Emergencies**, by Richard Nelson, Douglas Rund and Martin Keller, published by W. B. Saunders, 1985. (P★★) Up until the publication of *MWEE* this book was one

of the few physician / nurse level references on environmental emergencies. Much of the information is now dated and superceded by MWEE, but it is still a useful reference. 360 pages: Price \$35.00 CDN. Out of print.

**TICKS and What You Can Do About Them**, by Roger Drummond, published by Wilderness Press, 1990. (B/A☆☆) A good little booklet on these ubiquitous pests. Unfortunately US rather than North American oriented. Now outdated. 66 pages: Price \$5.95 CDN. Out of print.

**Wilderness First Aid - A Resource Manual for Outdoor Leaders in British Columbia**, by L. Krogh, M. Langford, E. Peters, L. Robertson, edited by A. Christensen, published by the Wilderness First Aid and Safety Society of British Columbia, 1985. (A☆☆) After *Outdoor Emergency Care*, this used to be the second best advanced first aid text out there. Being over twenty years old it is now unfortunately dated. Many areas have undergone significant evolution since this reference was written. 382 pages: Price \$45.00 CDN. Out of print.

**Mountaineering Medicine, A Wilderness Medical Guide**, 10<sup>th</sup> edition by Fred Darvill, Jr., published by Wilderness Press, 1983. This small booklet is now largely superceded by better and more recent compilations. 60 pages: Price \$5.00 CDN. Out of print.

**First Aid, Quick Information for Mountaineering and Backcountry use**, edited by Gerald Sabel, published by the Mountaineers, 1982. (B☆☆) A tiny booklet that would fit into a first aid kit, but now outdated. 35 pages: price \$2.50 CDN. Out of print.

**Mountain Sickness, Prevention, Recognition and Treatment**, by Peter Hackett, published by the American Alpine Club, 1980. Outdated and not as good as either of the listings by Charles Houston. Out of print.

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### Field Guides

**Wilderness First Aid Field Guide** by Alton L. Thygerson published by Jones and Bartlett, 2006. (B☆☆) This is a reasonable and concise listing of signs, symptoms and treatments for common wilderness injuries and maladies. It lacks the quality diagrams found in Jim Morrissey's field guide reviewed below. 131 pages: Price \$28.95 CDN

**Field Guide for wilderness travelers, outdoor professionals and rescue specialists**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition by Jim Morrissey, published by Wilderness Medical Associates, 2000. (A☆☆☆) Spiral bound waterproof pages in a compact format. Best of the bunch so far. A good addition to a base camp trauma / medical kit. 100 pages: Price \$30.00 CDN / \$19.95 US

**Wilderness & Rural Life Support Guidelines**, edited by Robert Koester, published by dbS Productions, 1991. (A☆) Loosely bound waterproof sheets containing guidelines and protocols for management of illness and injury in remote settings. Now outdated and out of print. Not in the same class as the Morrissey *Field Guide*.

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### NEW or NOT YET REVIEWED (in blue):

**Field Guide to Wilderness Medicine**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, by Paul S. Auerbach, Howard J Donner and Eric A. Weiss published by Mosby, due for release in 2008

**Basic Illustrated Wilderness First Aid** (Basic Essentials Series) by William Forgey and Lon Levin: 96 pages Publisher: Falcon; 1<sup>st</sup> edition due for release in 2008. Price \$9.95 US

**Pocket First Aid and Wilderness Medicine** 10<sup>th</sup> edition by Jim Duff, published by Cicerone Press, 2007. 192 pages: Price \$15.00 CDN / \$12.95 US

**Basic Essentials Wilderness First Aid**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition by William Forgey, published by Falcon books, 2007. 96 pages: Price \$11.50 CDN

**Backcountry First Aid and Extended Care**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition by Buck Tilton, published by Falcon books, 2007. 128 pages: Price \$7.50 CDN

**NOLS Wilderness Medicine** by Tod Schimelpfenig, and Joan Safford (Illustrator) published by Stackpole books, 2006. 317 pages: Price \$20.00 CDN / \$16.95 US

**Altitude Illness: Prevention & Treatment** 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Stephen Bezruchka published by Mountaineers Books, 2005. 156 pages: Price \$9.95 CDN

**Mis-Adventure—Rise to the Challenge** (A step by Step Guide to Accident Handling) by Anna Christensen published by Wilderness Alert, 2007. Price \$39.95 CDN. (New Canadian text - not yet reviewed. At first glance it looks reasonable, but time will tell.)

**Pocket First Aid And Wilderness Medicine** by Jim Duff and Peter Gormly: 247 pages, Publisher: Cicerone Press; 10th edition (March 30, 2007). Price \$12.95 US

**Wilderness Medicine, Beyond First Aid**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition by William Forgey published by Globe Pequot, 1999. 256 pages: Price \$20.00 CDN / 14.95 US.

**The Basic Essentials of Hypothermia**, by William Forgey, published by Falcon, 1999

## Humour

**First Aid for Hypochondriacs**, by James Gorman, published by Workman Publishing, 1982. (P/A/B☆☆) After all that serious medical reading you will need to have a few laughs browsing through these pages of hypochondriac humour. Out of print.

**Note:** For reviews of books which contain information on mountain rescue, see the book review article entitled "Please Help Me, I'm Falling", part of this Technical Note Series.

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About the Author: Cyril Shokoples is an internationally certified Mountain Guide and is a Past President of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. He has been a member of the Alpine Club since 1974. He received the Distinguished Service Award from the Alpine Club in Canada in 2002. He subsequently received the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides in 2003. He received the George Stefanick Legacy Award from the ACC Edmonton Section in 2005. In 2012 he was inducted as an Honorary Member of the ACC.

Cyril Has been training mountain guides and National Park professionals in advanced first aid for over 30 years. He spent 8 years as coordinator of Prehospital Care Programs at the Alberta Vocational College where he ran Alberta's first nationally accredited EMT- Ambulance program. He is also a PADI certified Divemaster and Open Water Scuba Instructor. He currently resides in Edmonton and is the proprietor of the firm Rescue Dynamics, which is involved in climbing, rescue and safety instruction, as well as mountain guiding.

Further information on courses as well as additional copies of this and other technical notes in this series can be obtained directly from Rescue Dynamics. On the Internet, visit the Rescue Dynamics website at - <http://www.rescuedynamics.ca>