



THE GREAT SCENARIOS BOOK

Revised 2005

Exciting and demanding scenarios provided by the following programs:

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

SAGA

Montana Conservation Corps

Western Colorado Conservation Corps

Mile High Youth Corps

Southwest Youth Corps

Canyon Country Youth Corps

Minnesota Conservation Corps

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Read each scenario out loud to the group, one at a time. Then facilitate a discussion on how best to address each situation. Use the following questions as a discussion guide.

Discussion Questions

1. Identify the problem in each situation
2. What would you have done instead?
3. How could this incident have been prevented in the first place?
4. How should this incident be dealt with?
5. What organizational policies, procedures or protocols pertain to this situation?
6. What behaviors should be changed? By whom?

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VEHICLES

Crew Leader is presented with an inappropriate road which seems kind of 'sketchy.' Upon traveling up the road, driver grazes a rock on the side of the road. Upon traveling down the road, driver grazes same rock a second time. How might this event have been avoided? What is the reporting process now that it has occurred?

A driver was traveling down a rural highway at approximately 55 mph. The driver realizes that he is not sure of the directions to the site. The driver reaches down to retrieve a map and driving directions that are on the floor of the vehicle. The vehicle strays to the right shoulder of the road. The driver loses control of the vehicle, leaves the road and rolls over.

A crewmember gets upset at another crewmember and takes his aggression out on the vehicle by kicking the door shut. There is a not-so-obvious dent in the side of the vehicle.

A staff member is returning to a work site at approximately 2:30pm after having taken a member to the doctor. The staff is feeling fatigued. A few miles later the staff member falls asleep while driving, the vehicle leaves the road and strikes a tree.

A van is traveling up a steep, winding gravel road. As the vehicle reaches the top of the hill the driver suddenly realizes there is a sharp left turn. The driver applies the brake attempts to negotiate the corner. The vehicle veers to the right shoulder, the shoulder collapses under the weight and the vehicle crashes over the side of the hill.

A van is traveling on a straight desert highway pulling a trailer. The driver signals for a left turn onto a Forest Service road. As the van makes the turn, it is impacted on the left side by a vehicle that was attempting to pass.

It's the week before corps member orientation and things are hectic. Corps members are starting to arrive and need to be picked up. In the process of doing pick-ups a van is driven into the parking lot of the airport. In doing so, the rack on van is ripped off by the parking lot ceiling. As the driver drives through he/she immediately recognizes the problem. Traffic is backed up and there is no way of moving forward without further damaging the van. What do you do?

A CM has been told by their CL to clean out the van and be in to an education session by 8:30. The CL then goes about his/her business. At 8:35 a staff member has to go out and tell the CM s/he is late and missing the speaker. The CM then tells the staff that their CL told him/her to clean the van and s/he will be in as soon as s/he's finished. Situation is CM's playing one staff member off of another.

A crew gets set to load up the van. The trailer is loaded appropriately. Minimal gear is thrown in to the back of the van. Now how do you determine who sits where in the van?

VEHICLES (continued)

The crew is approaching the van, getting ready to drive for 4 hours to a weekend site. A burst of “shotgun” comes from five people. How do you determine the most appropriate member for the job?

CORPSMEMBER BEHAVIOR

While returning from work one corpsmember squashes a beetle, on purpose, on the trail. A particularly concerned corpsmember confronts the squasher for his blatant disrespect for living creatures. A shoving match ensues. What are policies regarding violent behavior? How do you diffuse the situation?

The crew is newly forming. They have been together for about a week. One of the female members, Julie, is 18, a good worker, but a little insecure due to her lack of technical skills. Ralph, the 24-year-old crew leader, is very competent and a little macho around the chainsaw. Ralph makes a few minor comments about Julie’s skills and that maybe she would be better back at camp. Julie tries to ignore Ralph’s comments because he is well-liked and well-respected by the crew. But she gets more uncomfortable and insecure, not wanting to give Ralph any reason to make further comments. Unfortunately, in her insecurity, she makes more mistakes and over time Ralph’s comments get more cutting. But he is careful not to speak this way in front of other members or the other leader.

Crew leader, Bill, has a female assistant, Marcia. They have been getting along well for the first few weeks until one afternoon walking back to camp Bill states that he has become attracted to Marcia. She is caught by surprise and flustered a little but tells him she is not interested. She feels uncomfortable around Bill from then on and does nothing more to encourage him. In fact, she tries to be discouraging but not rude in front of the crew. A week later, they are alone again and Bill says that he is even more attracted now that she has been acting like a ‘bitch.’

Aaron is a 24-year-old crew leader. He has struck up a friendship with Laura, a 23-year-old member. They have been spending time together and find out they have a lot in common, same major, same part of the country, same taste in music, books, etc. They have gone out with the crew to socialize several times during their days off. Then they go to a movie together without the crew. Aaron thinks there is ‘something’ there between them and he asks Laura out. She is friendly but says she is not interested in that type of relationship. The next week, during evaluations, Aaron, who is a stickler for people learning their jobs, gives Laura an unfavorable evaluation regarding her performance of her crew role.

CORPSMEMBER BEHAVIOR (continued)

The crew happens to have two male crew leaders, 3 male members and 2 female members. All of the males grew up on ranches and are very comfortable outdoors and with hard physical labor. The talk around the crew is pretty rough. One of the females, Gloria, tries to cope by fitting in. She acts as if nothing bothers her and gives the guys a dose of their own medicine when they kid her. Emily feels uncomfortable with this approach and tries to confront the rest of the crew whenever she becomes uncomfortable with the conversation in the crew. This causes the crew to single her out and Gloria escapes most of the ribbing.

One CM is appointed Assistant Crew Leader (ACL) and is expected to uphold certain duties. While the crew is out on the job site the CL has to go and speak with the project sponsor. The ACL is left in charge without being told. As soon as the CL is out of sight the other CMs start to slack off. When the ACL tries to tell them to get back to work they won't listen and continue to be lazy until the CL returns. Situation is someone not being respected because to the CMs they aren't seen as a person in authority.

During an education session a CM is in the back of the room throwing up gang signs and being disrespectful to the speaker. This CM is starting to rile up the other CMs. The CM does not see the staff leading the session as a person in authority.

On Friday the crew is told to go out and wash the van. Three out of 12 members start washing and vacuuming the van while the rest of the CMs stand around and smoke cigarettes and play ball. This really upsets the CMs that are cleaning. Conflict begins to arise.

The crew is working on a trail project with a young but skilled technical advisor. The crew has been working very well together and likes the TA who has taught them a lot. On the third week of the project, the crew is sitting around at lunch telling jokes. The jokes become sexual in a light-hearted way. Courtney tells a joke that is a bit off-color and everyone laughs. Then the TA comes back with a comment that he would really like to see her in that situation. Some members laugh but Courtney becomes very uncomfortable.

The crew is on a 5- week spike. One of the 16 year-old corps members has been sharing stories of his life with the rest of the crew. Stories include being part of the CIA, making big bucks translating Russian. As real as it may be to that corps member, the rest of crew realizes that the stories are just fanciful. Steps have been taken to discuss the situation with that individual and with the group. Even after long hours of discussion, the stories keep coming. The crew is doing their best dealing with the situation but is growing tired of the stories. They just want to get to know him but all they get are these fanciful stories with no reality mixed in. How do you handle this situation?

CORPSMEMBER BEHAVIOR (continued)

Your crew has become a great team and everyone participates equally in all aspects of your projects and crew life. One day the crew is constructing a trail and a tree is blocking the direction the trail should lead. Dave and Sally get to this point in the trail first. When Sally starts to help move the tree, Dave laughs at her and tells her to wait for the guys. Sally says she can do it, and continues to try to help, but Dave only moves away from the tree. Sally persists, but Dave tells her that girls are too weak to do that type of work. Sally is mad and upset. She feels as though the unity that had developed between the crewmembers is ruined.

Your crew is taking a break during a hot day. Everyone is having a good time. Then Rhonda makes a comment that only Black people should have to work in this heat. You mention this to Rhonda, but she continues. You are slowly becoming more and more angry and offended. Once again, you confront Rhonda about her stereotyping. Instead of stopping, Rhonda turns to you and says that stereotyping like that is funny because it's true. You are so angry at this point about Rhonda's racist attitude that you can't even think straight.

Your crew is starting out on their first spike after a week of in-town work. It's a young but enthusiastic crew. The week before, one of your best members is late twice, just 10 minutes each time. You mention something to him about it. This time you are supposed to meet the sponsor at a particular time to get the horses loaded for an 8-day hitch. The same member is 15 minutes late and you don't know when or if he will be showing up. You know the sponsor is expecting a crew of 7 people to work on the project. A couple of the members are getting restless to go.

You have a crew that has quite a mix of ages and maturity levels. One woman is very conscious of appropriate language and likes to hear it always being used. Another woman is more indifferent but usually agrees with the other woman. One of the males on the crew is pretty quiet and keeps to himself. The other male is pretty rude at times. He tries to be a macho man and always call the females girls even though they often correct him. Often times he swears and curses as well. Your sponsors have also not been the best with language so it's been tough for you to call him on it. The more vocal of the two females has asked you to talk to her after work tonight about the situation. When you meet she is very frustrated with the situation and is upset that you let him get away with it. How do you handle this?

A corpsmember sits down with the rest of the crew at supper. He doesn't use any table manners because he feels if he is not sitting at a table, why should he use manners? Other crewmembers have complained about this and you have talked with him two different times.

A CM has not engaged with the crew and has decided to make the crew leaders best friends instead. S/he constantly clings to the crew leaders and consumes a lot of their time, taking time away from other issues and other CMs. How do you engage that CM with the crew as s/he is not only consuming a lot of your time but is becoming an outcast and being viewed as the "teacher's pet?"

CORPSMEMBER BEHAVIOR (continued)

A CM is constantly asking the crew leader questions, most of which are questions that are either unanswerable or have been answered numerous times before. As a leader, how do you handle the constant barrage of questions when you know that most of those questions they already know the answer to?

Sean arrived on the crew and seemed like he was going to fit in fine. His work on the work project in the wilderness was outstanding. He got along great with the other corps members but seemed to have time in the evening when he would need to be by himself. When letters arrived from home, Sean would separate himself from the group and then go straight to bed without talking to anyone. His tent mate felt that something was wrong and talked to the crew leaders about it. The crew leaders took Sean aside after this had happened a few times and asked him if everything was okay. Sean was uneasy and said that he really liked the corps and the work and everyone that he was working with and left it at that. The crew leaders dug a little deeper. Sean finally confided in them that he was a father of a 10 month old baby. He was embarrassed because all of the other kids on the crew seemed like they wouldn't be in that situation. He was afraid they would look down on him for it so he refused to talk about it with them. Sean had withheld the information from the application as well because he was afraid the corps wouldn't accept him either. With some encouragement from the crew leaders, Sean became comfortable talking about it with the crew and through that, found out that one of the girls on the crew also had a baby at home and had been embarrassed for the same reasons that Sean was. Sean and Lisa found they could talk with the crew about being parents as teenagers which opened up new areas of conversation and perspective for everyone. Throughout the session, Lisa became more and more homesick for her baby as did Sean. They then began to commiserate about missing their children and though the crew leaders worked hard to keep them engaged in the crew experience, both Sean and Lisa quit with just over a week left to go in the session.

CORPSMEMBER BEHAVIOR (continued)

Seth arrived at his wilderness site for his four week session with the right attitude and the right gear but it quickly became obvious to the crew leaders that the IEP they had read did not accurately summarize Seth's challenges. Seth had to be given directions in very small increments with frequent checks to make sure that he understood and completed the task. He was a hard worker as long as someone periodically checked on him and kept him moving. One morning Seth's tent mate came and talked to the crew leaders and said that something smelled really bad in their tent. It was quickly figured out by the crew leaders that Seth had defecated in his pants inside his sleeping bag. The male crew leader talked to him about it and he admitted that he had been "holding it" because he didn't like the latrine in the woods and that he had had an accident the night before. The Crew Leader gave Seth instructions to gather all of the soiled clothing etc and to bring it to a designated area where they would clean it together. Several minutes later, the crew leader looked up and saw that Seth had taken the clothing into the stream just above the drinking water collection area near the kitchen and filtration system and had rinsed it all into the stream. He called him out of there immediately and explained why he couldn't do that for health and safety reasons. They then proceeded to an area where they could finish cleaning the clothes and sleeping bag. Then crew leader took Seth to the male latrine and talked him through how to use the latrine so that it was safe and comfortable (this had already been done on the first day as well). Seth seemed more confident and comfortable with using the latrine. The next day, Seth's tent mate said that Seth smelled again. When the crew leaders checked in with him, he had indeed soiled himself in his sleep again. They worked through the clean up process with him and gave him more encouragement on how to avoid this and called their supervisor for advice on what to do if it happened again. The supervisor advised them that they could not endanger the health of the rest of the crew and that if it happened again or there were further similar issues, Seth would have to be let go. The next day, a corps member returned from the latrine and told the crew leaders that someone had smeared poop everywhere. The crew leaders went and looked and indeed, there was excrement in every place it shouldn't be, therefore again creating a health and safety issue for the crew. The crew leaders talked with Seth who said that he made the mess by accident. The crew leaders then let him know that they had to make arrangements for him to go home because of the health and safety issue that this created for the crew. Seth left the crew that afternoon with the supervisor.

PUBLIC IMAGE

A member of the public approaches the crew, complaining of the grotesque nature of the hood ornament of spinal and pelvic bones. She is adamant that 'her tax dollars' are going to support a program that shows such disrespect for the environment. How do you appease the situation?

An in-town crew has been working on a front country trail during the wet season. Most of the corps members use the public transit system to get to work and back home. There have been complaints about folks being too dirty and smelling bad. What do you do in this situation?

A corpsmember has not taken a shower in three weeks. He smells terrible and won't take a shower. He is actually offending the crew and the project sponsor with his smell. He says he won't shower because the mosquitoes will eat him. The river is near your camp sight. He says he doesn't like the river because it is intimidating to him so he won't go in.

Since the day that you have started punctuality has been stressed and you wake up extra early to make sure you are at work on time. Over the next few weeks you notice people showing up 5, 10, 15 minutes late on more than one occasion. You are now torn because you don't feel as though it is fair they are not held accountable for their actions but you are not their supervisor and it is not your position to say anything.

Following Closing Ceremonies, one crew decides they will get a hotel room collectively. The following Sunday, you receive a phone call at home indicating that the crew apparently 'trashed' the hotel room, threw a potted plant off the balcony, put footprints on the ceiling and then left their paystub behind. How do you approach the disgruntled hotel owner? How do you approach the crew members and crew leader now that they are off program and no longer employees?

At a local campground where staff and members tend to stay pre and post session, an employee was seen, in a clearly marked youth corps vehicle, utilizing the facilities (shower, laundry) without signing in or paying for the services. How do you approach this staff member?

PROJECT SPONSOR RELATIONS

For the duration of the workweek, the project sponsor assigned to your project does not give you direction on a daily basis, requesting that you wait for him to arrive before you begin work. Each day he arrives two hours late. How do you keep the crew occupied? How do you use this as a teachable moment about positive work ethic?

Since the start of the project, the project sponsor has been very uncooperative. Tools and materials are not there when needed, or when asked for. Project specifications change on a daily basis or even part way through a nearly completed project. Their attitude towards the crew is unprofessional and at times a bit demeaning. How do you handle this situation?

Your crew is on a very difficult trails project in the backcountry. The sponsor is very demanding and particular about technical elements of the trail work. When he first comes to the project to line the crew out, Jenny, one of the crew leaders, helps the crew unload the gear. The other crew leader, Dan, talks with the sponsor and gets lined out on the project. The next day, the sponsor returns and continues to address Dan, alone, about the project even with Jenny standing there. Dan is more technically skilled in trail work but Jenny is very eager to learn. Two days later, the sponsor returns and continues to talk to Dan about the project. Jenny asks him a question and he responds with, "If you are asking a question like that, I'm afraid you are on the wrong type of project."

A youth on the corps is blamed for something that he says he did not do. You learned from the project sponsor that a youth with similar characteristics of the youth in question was smoking pot in the park. The description of the youth wasn't exact so you can't be positive it was he. The youth in question is very upset that he has been blamed, especially since he has only 20 hours until he completes his AmeriCorps award.

A project sponsor presents a project to the CLs at the beginning of the week. By Wednesday the crew is flying through the work and is expected to finish early. The sponsor comes out that day to check on the progress and is not satisfied with the work that has been done. The sponsor finds the CL and flies off of the handle (extremely angry), telling him that this is not what they had specified. The CL feels as though they are doing everything exactly how it was explained.

The project sponsor is schedule to meet your crew on Monday to line out the work project. It is now one hour past the scheduled meeting time. How do you keep your crew occupied?

PROJECT SPONSOR RELATIONS (continued)

The crew starts a project with a sponsor who has worked with youth corps crews many times in the past and had been very polite and very supportive of working with youth and the corps. As time goes on with the project, the sponsor gets angry on a regular basis and actually yells at the crew on a daily basis for small mistakes on the project that are sometimes his own. This sponsor also makes terrible comments about his supervisor in front of the crew including the use of racial slurs. When the leaders did the highs and lows of each CM in the daily crew meetings, each CM's high was if the sponsor was not at the worksite that day and the low was if he was there that day. As a leader, how do you: 1. Handle the crew and the moral issues, and 2. Deal with that sponsor directly about his actions in front of the crew?

The crew is working on a barbed wire fence on a ridgeline and a thunderstorm moves in. The crew leaders decide to pull the crew off the project and descend off of the ridge down to camp where they prepare for a lightning situation. The project sponsor arrives and is angry that the crew is not working. He believes that the leaders and the crew are just being lazy and starts asking questions like, how do they justify their work hours when the agency is paying for this crew to be working out there? 1. Do you think the crew leaders made the right decision to pull the crew off the project in this weather situation? 2. How would you handle the angry project sponsor, explain that you have specific safety protocols, and answer his other questions?

A project sponsor has been working with your organization for years and is a huge fan of the program. Unfortunately, the project work has increasingly become busy work rather than meaningful productive projects that engage the participants. By the third week of the summer, the crews are doing nothing more than litter pickup and straightening nails in the shop. What are the steps needed to improve this situation?

You arrive at a pre-determined weekend site to find that the forest service campground (fee) does not take credit cards. It is the end of your three day stay there and you cannot rally enough cash amongst your crew to pay for your campground fee.

WORKING WITH AT-RISK POPULATIONS

A corpsmember discusses her history of suicidal behaviors, saying she was taking medications for this condition prior to her arrival. She has discontinued her medication and is feeling destructive once again. She has provided graphic examples of her thoughts of self-mutilation to her fellow corpsmembers.

One the corpsmembers is taking prescribed drugs. This corpsmember feels that s/he needs to share their medication with other corps members. How do you keep this from happening?

The crew has just come into camp and something has come up missing from inside one of the tents. You know that there is a youth on your team that had a shoplifting charge. The corpsmembers start blaming each other.

There is a CM that is very hard to approach. Anytime the CL tries to talk with the CM and explain what the CM has done wrong or something the CM needs to improve on, the criticism is not taken well. The CM blows up and acts out very irrationally. What does the CL do now?

A corpsmember has developed a reputation among the crew as having an exaggerating tendency. She approaches you one morning and wants to complain that she has been sexually harassed by a fellow corpsmember. What does the CL do now?

It comes to your attention that one corpsmember is distributing over-the-counter medications to other corpsmembers during the day. What actions do you take?

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

A crewmember on the Continental Divide Trail Crew presented with persistent diarrhea and vomiting throughout workday and through the night. Eventually, six members of the same crew presented with similar or more aggravated symptoms. Contributing factors may have included altitude, dehydration, sanitation, or food borne illness.

A crew is working on a front country glacial trail. This trail is a very high use trail, hundreds of tourists per hour. On top of that, it's a place where brown and black bears are frequent. Tourists are continually taking pictures of these bears and at times they get in between mom and cub. How do you deal with the tourists and the agitated bears?

A crew leader that abides by policies and procedures mostly, is on an overlook during a thunderstorm with the crew. He thinks that by not working in a storm people might think he is lazy. The park service crew on the next overlook is working through the storm as well.

All weekend it has been snowing up in the mountains and they have accumulated 5 feet of fresh powder. Your friend and co-worker decides to take Monday off by calling in sick. He had told you the night before he was going to do it and then go skiing. The next day at work the boss asks you how your friend was feeling, knowing that you two are friends. You are now in the position where you either have to lie or get your friend into trouble.

Two co-leaders that have been working together for a few months now start to feel tension. One of the CLs feels as though he always has to play the bad cop and uphold the discipline procedures. He doesn't feel as though he can talk to the co-leader about the situation. This not only makes the working environment hostile but also starts to cause a tear in the two leaders' relationship.

Your crew went for a day hike in the Medicine Bow range in northern Colorado. You stayed back at camp with a member who is resting his tendonitis. The crew is late to their designated return location by 2 hours.

A corpsmember refuses to carry his tool according to protocols when walking to the job site stating that he was taught by his father the appropriate manner to carry a tool. Other than this constant infraction the member produces high quality and quantity trail.

Upon returning from a weekend recreation hike, you find that your camp has been ransacked and several items were stolen.

Your project sponsor refuses to abide by your established youth corps protocols and safety considerations. He does not wear a hard hat when using a tool. He smokes on the job site.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL / NON-NEGOTIABLE RULES

On the drive home some of the corpsmembers on your crew are planning to go out for drinks after work. Two of your corpsmembers are underage but they are participating in the conversation.

You are on a 10-day spike in a front country location, camping at a campground on the edge of town. Two of your members are of legal drinking age and are talking about walking down to the bar after dinner. You mention that they are on spike and therefore can't drink until they get home. They begin to question you and point out that they are of legal age.

Your crew talks a lot of war stories about their weekend drinking and drugging escapades. They are good workers and it's never affected their work performance. About three weeks into the term one of your members confides in you he is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and is feeling pressure from the crew to go out to the bar with them after work.

One of your members comes to work on time but you suspect she is hung over. You have a 6-hour drive to your location and all you have to do the first day is set up camp.

You are driving home from your first full spike project. Things have gone well. Your crew asks you to go out with them for a beer after you return home from a long spike.

You are having a campfire check-in. The crew is getting pretty tight and emotionally close after being together for several weeks. People are beginning to disclose things about themselves. They ask you about your drug experiences and current usage.

A staff member becomes aware of a CM's frequent drug use. The CM never comes to work high and acts responsibly while at work. The staff member is now in a position of wondering whether to step in and say something since technically this person hasn't given any reason to suspect drug use at work.

One night you overhear one of the volunteers talking to one of the CMs about getting drunk and a few other inappropriate topics. You know that this is not only unprofessional, but against the Corps rules. When you confront the volunteer he tells you that he was just trying to get to know the CM better. The more the CM could relate to him the better chance he had to approach the CM when the CM had a problem. The volunteer is kind of hostile about you stepping into his business.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL / NON-NEGOTIABLE RULES (continued)

With a zero tolerance for alcohol, tobacco, or drugs policy in place, the corps had emphasized with corps members and staff that personal vehicles parked on a site were subject to this policy. After some time off, two assistant leaders returned to the site and left full beer cans in their car. A CM found the beer when retrieving something else from the car and talked to the ALs about it. They asked him not to say anything and that they had forgotten it was there and they would get rid of it and therefore, then be in compliance with the policy. The CM didn't feel right about being asked to keep this secret and talked to the Leader. The Leader was clear about the policy and knew that it had been clearly violated. She called the assistant leaders in and asked them about the beer. They admitted to having it and said they would get rid of it immediately and not do it again. She called her supervisor who came to the site. The leaders and supervisor sat down in private and talked through the next steps. They then talked to each assistant leader individually and helped them come to the understanding that the covering up and asking a corps member to lie for them was just as serious as breaking the explicit policy. The leader and supervisor then let the assistant leaders know that they had just freed up their future and were now fired from the corps.

OTHER SCENARIO TOPICS

Bill and Marti are two of your best corpsmembers. They are motivated, enthusiastic and quick to learn all the technical skills. They are also two of the more mature members of the crew. They have a lot in common, both in skills and temperament. Several weeks into the season, they begin flirting with each other in a low-key way. Within a week, it is clear that they are becoming a couple. They are beginning to remove themselves from the group a little and isolate in the evenings. It is beginning to affect the rest of the crew but no one wants to say anything because they like both of them and they are strong crewmembers.

The assistant crew leader on the St Parks crew is a member of the AmeriCorps team. For nine months they have all become close friends and hang out all of the time. When the crew starts in June, one member is elected by staff to be the ACL. This person now has a more difficult role, in supervising people she has been friends with for the past year. How do you balance the friendship/authority role?

Something has been bothering you at work for a while now and you don't feel like the situation is getting any better. It is time that you went to your supervisor to make sure he is aware of the problem and can give quick resolve. After the conversation you feel a little better and can only hope for the best. Two weeks later the problem has still not been resolved and you begin to wonder if any action has been taken at all.

A CM always comes into your office in the morning to say hello and talk about the day before. Every time you talk with this CM she reads things off of your desk or on your computer and makes comments. You are upset because the information is none of her business and sometimes even confidential. You have to work with this member and don't want to push her away. You have tried subtle hints to the member but she doesn't seem to pick up on them.

Two crew leaders have been paired together for the summer. They are both very different people but are expected to work together all summer. One of the CLs is very present, takes on every situation and sometimes overbearing. The other CL is a little more reserved and takes a more subtle approach. The problem arises when the quieter of the two is never heard or seen as a leader because the other always jumps in first.

CMs do not respond well to a staff member's leadership style. They feel the leader is too authoritative, too set on his own agenda and not willing to bend. This is becoming a no win situation for either party because the CM's aren't responsive to the staff member because they feel mistreated. Likewise the staff member is frustrated because the crew gives him such a hard time.

DUTY OFFICER PHONE CALLS

How might you handle the situation prior to calling the Duty Officer? What types of solutions might you offer to the Duty Officer?

Phone call received from a crew leader. "The van is squeaking from the front end, it is not affecting the performance."

Phone call received from crew leader. "We ran out of food, half way through the week. We are close to HQ, should we buy food or stop by HQ for a mid-week resupply?"

Phone call received from crew leader. "A corpsmember has been diagnosed with an absessed tooth. The doctor prescribed vicadin for 7 days. The corpsmember has no funding to come up with cash for the prescription and can't work on vicadin." It is the first week of the session.

Message received from crew leader. "Joanie, mentor, has severe fatigue, she stayed in camp and slept all day. We sent her to the clinic, there was no one at the RMYC offices. We tried to fax the Incident Report but it would not go."

Message from crew leader. "The van is dead."

Phone call from crew leader. "I have a crew member at the clinic with symptoms of nausea and vomiting and diarrhea."

Crew Leader called to say, "Joey is quitting due to prior physical conditions."

Crew Leader called to say, "I am just trying to reach the Project Manager and leave a message."

Crew Leader called, distressed, to inform the Duty Officer: "When we were on our weekend recreation, someone broke into our tents and stole some stuff from a bunch of people."

CASE STUDIES

Case Study Number 1

Setting:

Salmon-Challis National Forest. Mid-August. Many continuous days of 95+ heat. Working on a 19-day hitch. Current portion of project includes: Tread reconstruction (TR), water bar installation, brushing. The campsite that you are working out of is located 6 miles from the trailhead, crew was stock supported, and no TA is on this portion of the project. Campsite is along a creek, has been their base camp for the past 14 days and will be their base camp until they finish this hitch. Worksite is located $\frac{3}{4}$ mile up the trail away from the campsite and away from the creek about a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Worksite is higher in elevation than the campsite and is sparsely vegetated. Crew has been working in the S-C for the past month. Working relationship with the sponsor is good: crew knows what the project entails; communication with sponsor has been good up to this point in time. Crew has a radio and has been checking in with dispatch once a day to report where they are camped and fill them in on how things are going.

Crew:

Wendy-25, Crew Leader-2nd year leader, solid trail skills, loves getting projects done, feels solid project work is the best way to keep crew dynamics running smoothly

Tom-26, Crew Leader-1st year crew leader, came to MCC to give back to the places he loves, the “soft skill” leader of the two.

Alex-Crew Member-19, taking time off from school to “figure things out”, loves the outdoors

Beth-Crew Member-23, college graduate in religious studies, loves volunteer work; thought MCC would be a neat experience, little outdoor experience prior to MCC

Tony-Crew Member-22, recent graduate, wants to work in the conservation field, sees MCC as a stepping stone, dream is to work in trails, sleeps with his Pulaski

Molly-Crew Member-26, gave up the “business world” recently and is following her love for the outdoors

Rebecca-23, her second AmeriCorps term of service, previously lived in Seattle working with homeless youth doing STD education

Section A

The season has been going quite well for the crew. All are getting along pretty well. Tom and Wendy feel like it is now a well-oiled machine. The crew is almost done with a very long hitch and all are getting pretty psyched to get back to town and relax. Your days off in the backcountry were great and gave the crew the chance to really get out and explore the area they have been working in. Because things have been going pretty well, Tom and Wendy have not been doing much as far as check-ins lately with their crew, there hasn't been the need for it. Because of the walk back to camp, all have begun to slack a little bit on some things. At the start of the season all were sharpening tools on a regular basis. Now that the worksite is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from camp they are caching their tools up there and not sharpening them very much. But it hasn't been an issue since mostly they are doing TR and the soil has not been very rooty.

The weather on this hitch has been brutal. The kind of Salmon weather they had heard about: HOT! Most days have seen highs in the upper 90's and because of that they have

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been starting their workday at 6:00 rather than 7:00. This means finishing work at 4:00 so as to be back in camp by 4:30. Everyone has been bringing 3 quarts of water with them a day. This is working pretty well. Everyone is usually out of water by the end of the day but drink at least a quart when they return to camp. The creek is far enough away that folks aren't going down to pump water during the day. Because of the heat, afternoons are fairly long but Tom and Wendy have broken them up with two afternoon breaks so that people don't wear themselves out. Also everyone has been encouraged to take a break if they need one.

It is day 14 and not as hot as usual. The crew is making good progress and it looks like they may be able to finish this section of TR if all goes well. When lunch arrives everyone is excited. The sponsor didn't expect them to get this section completed until day 16 and it is only day 14. Everyone agrees that it would be great to finish this section up today but in order to that, everyone will have to work really hard to get it done. At about 3:00 Tom notices that a few people are beginning to tire and it looks like they won't get this section done until tomorrow. He decides to pull Wendy aside and figure out where to go from here.

Questions:

What are the some things leaders need to be aware of at this point in time?

What do you think the leaders should decide to do?

What do you see are some potential problems here?

What are some of the causes of these problems?

Section B

After discussing the situation, Tom and Wendy decided that it would be a good idea to just plug away and get it done. Tom had some concerns about this but Wendy really thought the boost in morale from plugging ahead would far outweigh the bummer of heading back to camp with a job almost finished. They agreed to bring the group together and try to rally them to finish. Wendy agreed that if Tom thought folks were not physically up to the task, they would allow the group to vote against finishing the project today and she would be OK with that.

When they gather the crew together all are pretty tired. Tony and Alex are psyched to get the project finished and Beth is OK with that. Rebecca thinks they should head back to camp and finish tomorrow but is also willing to let the majority of the group decide. Molly is completely indifferent. The group has little water left but everyone says they are fine because it isn't as hot as it was the past few days. They decide to finish up today even though that may mean working a bit late. They decide that if they do this they will take some time off tomorrow either at the start or end of the day.

It is now 5:30 and the crew is getting really close to finishing. Tom has noticed everyone dragging for the past 45 minutes but still decides to push on. He is working at the front of the line and Wendy is working at the end. Tony is cruising along and sees that the end is only about 200 feet away, and it looks like they will get it done. Just then a CM comes up behind you and says that Tony has fallen over with a Pulaski in his hand.

Questions:

Do you agree with the decision that was made? Why or why not?

What is your opinion of how they arrived at their decision?

What do you think has happened?

Are Tom and Wendy working well together as a co-leadership pair?

Section C

When Tom arrives on the scene he is unsure what has happened. When he questions Tony, he gets some voice response but it is pretty obvious that Tony is “out of it.” They immediately begin to clear the area and get Tony laid out. They remove his hardhat and gloves. During this process it is noticed that Tony is drenched in sweat. Wendy asks everyone how much water they have. Between all of them they have only about a ¼ quart of water. No one has the water filter since they have not been using it at the worksite. Wendy sends four CMs down to get water, two to quickly pump a couple of quarts and others to get some more. Tony is still conscious but is still pretty out of it. Wendy and Tom begin to put the pieces together about what has transpired. It seems that Tony had been working pretty hard. He had gotten into a bunch of bear grass and roots and had been wacking away at them pretty hard with his Pulaski. Rebecca heard him swear a few times at his tool but didn’t think anything of it. After about ½ an hour two CMs return with two quarts of water. Tom begins to give some to Tony in small doses. He does not seem to be improving but is also not deteriorating. Tom and Wendy ask CMs how much food they all have and come up with a bag of gorp and a powerbar. While still giving Tony small amounts of water, they also begin to give him some gorp. The other two CMs now arrive with more water. Tom and Wendy tell all CMs to drink a quart each. Tony begins to come around slowly. The group decides to wait a bit longer. Within about 30 minutes Tony is feeling well enough that he thinks he can walk back to camp with assistance. After a long hike back all of the crew is safe back in camp. Tom and Wendy decide to keep a close watch on Tony throughout the evening and into the night. He continues to drink water and is able to eat a bit of dinner. Tom and Wendy then decide to meet just the two of them to decide what their next step should be. They decide to radio the Forest Service in the morning to arrange for an early pick up. They fill the FS in with as much detail is possible. The FS tells them they won’t be able to get a packer in until tomorrow and ask if they want a helicopter evac. The leaders decide that is not necessary since they now have water right at their site and because Tony is doing well. The group spends the day around camp getting ready for a pack out the following day.

Questions:

Do you agree with the CLs decision to leave the hitch early? Why?

What did the CLs do right? Wrong?

What could the CLs have done differently to avoid this accident from happening?

How would you address the issues concerning this hitch with the crew?

Discussion Topics for Case Study Number 1

- Hot weather and dehydration are serious health concerns. It is very difficult to fully recover from certain levels of heat stroke in the field.
- Pushing the crew in hot weather may not be the best decision, regardless of how crew is feeling physically. Often times people do not realize they are extremely

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dehydrated or hungry until it hits them all at once and they have difficulty making safe, well thought out decisions.

- Caching tools at the worksite is acceptable but they still need to be sharpened and maintained. Simply hiking to the site with a couple of files and rotating them among the crew is a good way to keep tools sharp and safe.
- Leaders need to be aware of CMs who say they don't care or are indifferent to decisions being made. Because the CLs have not been initiating crew debriefings, they cannot accurately gauge how people are truly feeling.
- Crew may not be as "well-oiled" as they think. Maybe conflicts have not come up within the crew yet because nothing bad has happened yet (things like bad weather, tough projects, mule wrecks, etc.). The crew has not been "tested" yet.
- As always, communication (and a lack thereof) plays a crucial role in the success of the crew. Maybe some of the problems in this case study could have been alleviated if the CMs expressed more of their concerns and ideas.

Case Study Number 2

Setting: You are now working for the Lolo National Forest in the Great Burn. It is your fifth hitch of the season, late August. The work has been going pretty well. Your crew is getting along well but not quite as well as you had hoped when the season started. There seems to be some tension within the crew.

Crew:

Chris-Crew Leader-26 years old, first year with MCC

Andrea-Crew Leaders-28 years old, first year with MCC

Sarah-Crew Member-25 years old, first year with MCC, just graduated from U of M

Amy-Crew Member-24 years old, first year with MCC, moved to MT for MCC from Boston

Bob-Crew Member-26 years old, first year with MCC, has volunteered with USFS in past, been bumming around Missoula for a few years

Steve-Crew Member, 24 years old, first year with MCC, did NCCC last year out of Denver

Section A

The fifth hitch of the season. Things are not going all that well. You feel like the crew is not really gelling the way you had hoped. Things started out pretty well but have really leveled off and even gotten worse. You sense that there are some tensions there but have not been able to address them all that well. You avoided having some chats with the crew for a while mostly because you thought things would settle themselves. After all your crew is made up of mostly 25 yr olds and you feel they should be able to voice concerns that they have. During the second week of training you asked the crew about debriefs and they said they would voice concerns if they had them. On your first hitch you tried to debrief but no one was very interested and they felt like they deserved their own time at night. You and your co-leader were OK with this because all seemed to be going pretty well.

On the third hitch you decided to take a bit more of a proactive approach and have a meeting after dinner a couple of nights. A few things came out but nothing really important. You begin to feel that folks must really not be too concerned about the tension you have perceived and you let it all slide. During the fourth hitch you again begin to see this tension arise again. You are not sure what to do. Last time you had a chat with the crew after dinner not much was accomplished and people didn't like it very much at all. You do really feel like Steve and Bob have some issues and it also seems like Sarah and Bob have some issues as well. You decide to have another meeting midway through this hitch and once again, nothing is really accomplished. However, this time people are in a better mood the next day.

On the fifth hitch things are going pretty poorly one evening. Bob and Steve are exchanging a bit of banter and glances. Sarah begins to get into it as well. Finally Sarah and Steve have teamed up on Bob. They are telling him he is really beginning to piss them off for not doing dishes that much and generally not pulling his weight. Bob is getting really defensive about the whole thing and begins to verbally harass the two of them calling them assholes and saying they should all just lighten up a bit. This isn't the Army after all!

Questions:

What are some potential problems within this crew?

What could the CLs have done to try and eliminate tensions within the crew?

What did the CLs do right?

Do you agree with the CLs' actions concerning crew dynamics and communication?

What are some ways to instill positive communication within a crew like this one?

Discussion Topics For Case Study Number 3

- Realize the importance in CLs not assuming *anything* about their crew. For example, do not assume people will be free of conflict simply because they are older in age.
- Again, be aware of the great importance in debriefing and in open communication within the crew. If debriefing does not go well at night, maybe try again during the workday. Many possibilities exist including taking a longer lunch or maybe taking a break just for talking. Debriefing during the workday may not always be an option when working with a sponsor, but once in a while this may be necessary in order to continue working as a successful crew.
- Look at the background of both the CMs and the CLs. All are first year MCC participants and all have very diverse backgrounds. Members of this crew may know about the workload but may know nothing about communication and working and living with a crew. It is important that CLs be aware of crew dynamics like these at the start of the season.
- Do not be afraid of pushing people to talk. There are many different ways of debriefing and not all talks have to be for extended periods of time. Maybe play a game or do an initiative that gets people thinking as a group rather than as individuals. Be creative with debriefings. The idea is not only to solve problems, but also to have fun and learn from each other as well.

Case Study Number 3

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Setting: It is early September. Your crew is working well but has not always. There have been some major disputes within the crew. Two members have had DAFs because of attitude and showing up late. Things are going pretty well now though. It's been two hitches since the last real problem. The project you are about to start is an ATV trail on FS land. Not all in the crew are overly excited about it but you have talked to them and all are willing to do the work.

Situation: Three days into the ten-day hitch attitudes are beginning to rise. The work is pretty hard. The area is quite muddy and because the trail is wide, it requires quite a bit of clearing. A few members are beginning to talk about how this project sucks and ATVs shouldn't be allowed in here anyway. Why are we doing this work for something we don't believe in? they complain.

Questions:

How do you handle this with your crew?

What could you have done to possibly prevent some of the tension from rising?

What are some ways of possibly diffusing the situation?

How do you handle the whole concept of the word "conservation" with your crew?

Do ATVs have a right to be on trails?

Are there "better" ways to enjoy public lands?

Discussion Topics For Case Study Number 4

- Honesty is really important here. Make sure everyone understands how other members of the crew feel. As a CL, do you want to act like you enjoy the project if you really do not? Being open with the crew about your own concerns with the project may make the CLs more approachable throughout the project.
- Use your sponsors! They are a wealth of knowledge and are almost always open for discussions. Encourage CM to (politely) ask the sponsor questions about the project.
- Get educated on all sides of the issue. There is nothing worse than an uneducated, one-sided argument from someone who knows little about what they are talking about! What if handicapped people use ATVs? Would this change the opinions of some people?
- Talk about the good things that come out of doing things you may not necessarily agree with. Make CMs aware of the greater good their work may be doing (for MCC, for the public, their crew, etc.). Reminding CMs of the positive aspects of their work may reduce the emphasis on the negative ones.
- Remember the importance of positive reinforcement in situations like these. If the project truly is a sucky one, bring treats for lunch, take hikes, or leave a little early on Friday. Do whatever it takes to reward people for hard work and positive attitudes.

Case Study Number 4

Setting: Week 8 of the season, your third 10 day backcountry hitch with a sponsor you will work with for three more hitches. Project includes 8 miles of trail improvement

including log out, tread improvement, water bars, check dams, etc. Sponsor is working about half the time with you. He begins the hitch, takes off then returns towards the end.

Situation: Your crew is accomplishing all of the work that was expected, you are actually a bit ahead of schedule due to eager crew members at the start of the season. Your first hitch went really well. Everyone pulled their weight and had a great attitude. You began the season debriefing at the end of every day, quick check-ins to see how people were doing. Things continued going well for the first part of the second hitch. As things began to run really smoothly, check-ins became less frequent. The crew voiced that they did not need them since everything was going pretty well. Mid-way through the second hitch the energy level began to dwindle a bit. Some attitudes began to surface. Your co-leader and you talked this over and chalked it up to tiredness at the end of a hitch. You decided to wait and see what happened on the next hitch. In the final days of the second hitch one crew member began to openly question some of the aspects of the project. He did not think it was the best way to do it. The sponsor was not around so what did it matter? You laughed this off and waited for the next hitch.

The third hitch started pretty well. Your co-leader and you felt good about the situation. People seemed to be re-energized after a break. Because of this you opted not to check-in with people but rather gauge them as they work. On the third day of the project more attitudes begin to surface. Generally, people are not happy with the project and are not looking forward to three more hitches. The bugs are starting to come out too. Many crew members are letting work slide and the overall quality of the project is sliding. Your crew continues to get along pretty well at the end of the day but during work hours everyone seems to not be too thrilled with the job. The crew member that started to question some aspects of the project is really beginning to drag the crew down. The frequent bitching is contagious.

What should you do at this point in time?

What could have been done to avoid the above-mentioned situation?

What was going right at the start of the project?

What was going wrong at the end?

When did things really begin to go downhill? What were the signs of this?

Discussion Topics For Case Study Number 5

- Do not be afraid to issue DAFs. Many problems will disappear after a CM realizes that you are serious enough about the issue to attach a piece of paper to it.
- Again, addressing problems when they first surface can often alleviate future conflicts.
- Maybe find a way to make the workday more fun for the CMs. If they are getting along in camp and when they're not working, they may just need some motivation to bring positive energy to the worksite.
- Communicate your issues to the sponsor. You may be able to line up a different project for the remainder of the hitches. Maybe the crew just needs some variety in the work.

Case Study Number 6

Setting: It is mid-August. Your crew has now been working together for more than 2 months. You've had some ups and downs but for the most part your crew has done really well. There have been some issues but your co-leader and yourself have handled them all very well. Project wise, it's been kind of hit and miss. All of your projects have looked great on paper but in actuality some have turned out to be bummers. There has been miscommunication with sponsors repeatedly. Twice you have arrived on site and the sponsor is not quite ready for you. You've had to kill some time. CMs have handled this pretty well but it's getting old. You've made sure before this hitch to make sure everything is lined out. You got an accurate Project Information Sheet from your RS and also called the sponsor to make sure all was set.

Situation: When you arrive to meet the sponsor on Wednesday, there has been a slight change in plans. The backcountry project that you had anticipated working on has been rescheduled due to sponsor conflict. A different crew from your region will now get the backcountry project and you are stuck doing campground maintenance. You are not looking forward to going back to your crew to tell them this. They have been looking forward to this project for weeks after being on several front country projects. As a topper the other crews in your region have already been on numerous backcountry hitches.

How do you handle this situation?

What are some possible solutions to the problem?

What will you and your co-leader have to be aware of during this hitch?

What can you do to prevent this from happening? Happening again?

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Discussion Topics For Case Study Number 6

- Talk to your sponsor about your concerns. They are often unaware of what types of work your crew has been doing all season and may not realize that one crew might *need* a particular type of project. Switching projects with the other crew may be a possibility. Be honest with the other CLs as well as your sponsor.
- If you're stuck with the project, incentives may be crucial to maintain sanity within the crew. If the work can be done quickly, maybe talk with the sponsor about taking a day or two off to get into the backcountry for a night. Remember that being honest and upfront with sponsors is really important. You may be surprised at some of the things you are able to do while out on spike if you assert yourself and are open to possibilities.
- Ask the sponsor to explain the situation to the crew if you think it will help CMs understand the situation better than if you explained it yourself.
- Do not be afraid to talk to the sponsor about future projects and what you need and expect from them. Explain your situation and stand up for your crew and your need to work on quality projects. Explain to the sponsor that it is in his/her best interest to give the crew challenging work. Most crews provide better quality work and also get more accomplished when they are enjoying both the work and the work environment.