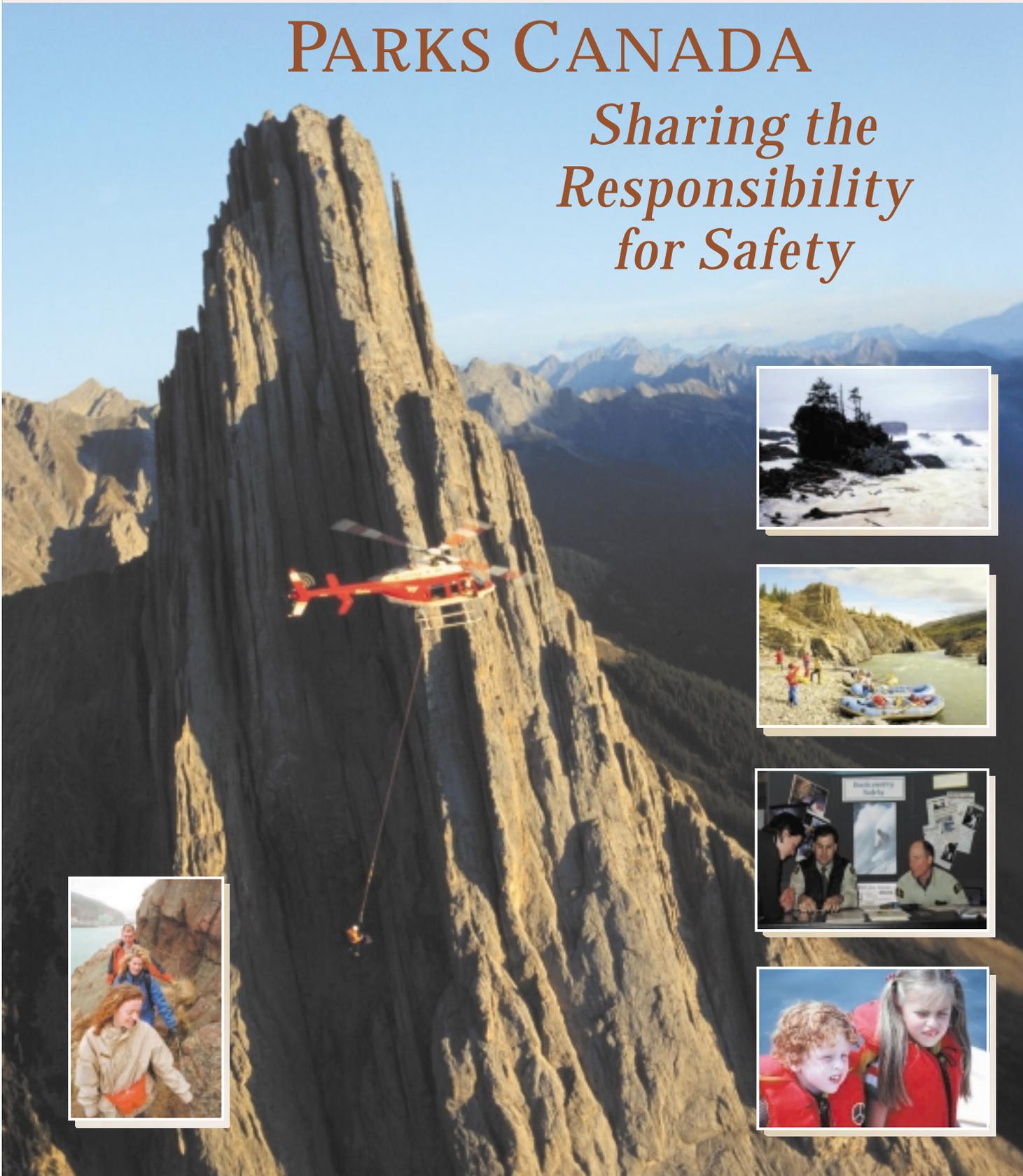


CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

PARKS CANADA

*Sharing the
Responsibility
for Safety*



Parks
Canada

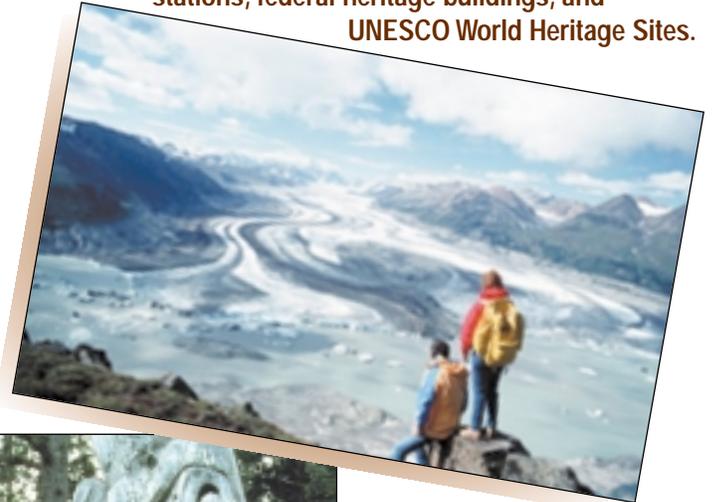
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WHAT IS PARKS CANADA?

Parks Canada protects and presents nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and fosters public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

Parks Canada is responsible for a wide range of natural and cultural heritage areas throughout Canada, including:
38 national parks, 792 national historic sites (132 of which we partially or fully manage), 8 historic canals, as well as marine conservation areas, heritage rivers, heritage railway stations, federal heritage buildings, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



EXPERIENCING CANADA'S TREASURES...

Each year, millions of visitors come to appreciate and enjoy the diverse natural and cultural landscapes managed by Parks Canada. From mountain peaks to rugged coastlines, from backpacking to birdwatching, people discover the wild beauty of our country in many different ways.....

PARKS CANADA PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM

In the beginning ...

Parks Canada's search and rescue program was born in the mid-1950s, when mountaineering accidents in the mountain national parks highlighted the need to develop alpine search and rescue skills within the Warden Service.

A Swiss guide was hired to establish an organized public safety program, and eventually two alpine specialists were hired and stationed at Banff and Jasper National Parks to train wardens.

The early 1970s saw significant technical advances, including:

- an avalanche forecasting and control program along highways, roads and ski areas;
- an internationally recognized avalanche bombing system;
- a double cable rescue system for evacuating climbers from difficult rock faces.



The 1970s also witnessed the expansion of the national parks system to include parks in the north, where extreme distances, terrain, and weather conditions make search and rescue particularly challenging. Marine components in new parks, as well as expanding small vessel recreation, created a need for marine search and rescue services.

Parks Canada's public safety program aims to reduce visitor safety incidents and to minimize the severity of incidents which do occur through prevention and appropriate response.

Between 1994 and 1998, there has been a yearly average of 1400 incidents on Parks Canada property, ranging in severity from false alarms to serious incidents and occasionally fatalities.

Parks Canada deals with a wide variety of public safety issues and incident types due to the vast territory and diversity of climates and terrain encompassed by its systems.

SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITY



Parks Canada is responsible for providing a public safety program that deals with the specific incidents and issues encountered within each heritage area. Although there is national coordination of the public safety program, levels of service and methods of dealing with incidents vary from one heritage area to the next.

Parks Canada also recognizes that park visitors have a certain responsibility for their own safety, and that risk management must become an integral part of their experience .

While some visitors recognize the risks involved in outdoor recreation, and are prepared for their adventures, many others don't know what they're getting into. That means they're unable to choose effectively between taking a smart risk and a foolhardy one.

The rising popularity of adventure travel and outdoor pursuits makes it particularly urgent to ensure that visitors take responsibility for their own safety.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF VISITORS:

Visitors are expected to plan and prepare for their trip before they leave home and once they arrive at their destination.

To do this, they must:

- recognize the risk inherent in their activities and ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and physical fitness to participate
- get trained, be properly equipped, and be prepared to survive until help arrives
- seek and heed advice from Parks Canada staff concerning risks and hazards, and how to prepare for them
- observe and adhere to regulations, fencing, barriers, and signs

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARKS CANADA:

Parks Canada's public safety program involves the following:

- identification and remediation of hazards related to infrastructure
- visitor risk management and public safety planning
- appropriate levels of search and rescue services
- targeted prevention, education and information programs that encourage self-reliance
- communication of site-specific hazards to visitors
- cooperation with other departments, non-governmental organizations, tourism operators, concessionaires, and service providers

PREVENTION

Understanding the Risks...

Visitors may be unaware of the specific hazards related to park landscapes and activities. Park staff try to prevent incidents and encourage self-reliance through policy implementation and visitor services.

Preventing incidents through policy implementation involves:

- providing and updating a public safety policy framework and planning mechanism ;
- assessing risks, and implementing risk management measures ;
- developing and regularly updating public safety plans ;
- incorporating visitor safety into program planning, communications, and delivery.

Services provided by Parks Canada to encourage self-reliance and risk awareness include:

- Public Service Announcements and other awareness campaigns which encourage visitors to plan their trip before they leave home ;
- public safety messages on the Parks Canada website ;
- information and advice on trip planning, hazards and risks, either directly (through Visitor Information Centres) or through our partners ;
- materials such as brochures, posters, and videos related to visitor safety, hazards, risk, and self-reliance ;
- environmental advisories, such as avalanche forecasts ;
- highway avalanche control ;
- hazard warning signs, fencing, and barriers ;
- safety registration services.



SEARCH AND RESCUE

Despite all your planning and preparation, and the efforts of Parks Canada, incidents sometimes occur. Parks Canada's highly-trained staff provide visitors with a wide spectrum of search and rescue services, all adapted to the varied and unique requirements of heritage area environments.

Parks Canada's search and rescue services are part of the National Search and Rescue (SAR) Program. Developed to minimize incidents and save lives, Parks Canada's search and rescue program capabilities include the following:



- evacuation from all types of remote locations found in heritage areas managed by Parks Canada
- search for lost persons in wilderness and semi-urban settings
- first aid and first response services
- marine, lake, whitewater and surf rescue
- dive operations
- avalanche and remote location search and rescue
- search dog operations
- medivac operations



Highlight on SAR Achievement

Parks Canada Public Safety Specialists have been the recipients of numerous awards acknowledging their leadership and skill in search and rescue, in many different environments (alpine, underwater, and coastal). Members of the Warden Service have been honoured with SAR Certificates of Achievement from the National Search and Rescue Secretariat and the Silver Plaque from the International Alpine Rescue Association.



COOPERATION

Parks Canada cooperates with various other organizations, including other federal government departments, provincial/territorial/municipal governments, non-governmental agencies, tourism operators, concessionaires, service providers, and volunteer organizations in the following areas:

- sharing public safety information and resources
- developing and implementing programs
- communicating with the public regarding hazards and risks
- training staff
- assisting in search and rescue situations in and around heritage areas
- providing equipment and expertise
- controlling hazards
- producing prevention materials



Federal Partners in the National Search and Rescue Program

Parks Canada is one of six federal departments, each with search and rescue responsibilities, which make up the cooperative, multi-jurisdictional National Search and Rescue Program. These departments are:

- National Defence
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Canadian Coast Guard)
- Transport Canada
- Canadian Heritage (Parks Canada)
- Environment Canada (Atmospheric Environment Service)
- Solicitor General of Canada (Royal Canadian Mounted Police)

Beyond Federal Partners...

Other organizations with which Parks Canada has completed projects and shared information, technology, and research include:

- various provincial and territorial agencies
- SAR volunteer groups
- the Canadian Red Cross
- the Lifesaving Society
- the Canadian Avalanche Association
- the SMARTRISK Foundation
- the Rediscovery International Foundation

Parks Canada will continue to work with its partners to provide an effective and efficient public safety program.



For more information about the Parks Canada public safety program, please contact:

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