

## **Wilderness First Responder vs Wilderness First Aid**

### **Wilderness First Aid**

The purpose of the Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course is to train and certify people to cope with wilderness hazards and emergencies. WFA is intended for those people who do wilderness recreation. The course appeals to individuals, who hike, camp, travel, bike, or spend a frequent amount of time outdoors. At the completion of the WFA course participants will be able to recognize wilderness emergencies and provide basic emergency care

WFA combines lectures, slides, and hands on skills practice to help students take charge of their own learning. Students will not be required to have a full understanding of the emergency they encounter rather an understanding of how to care for the injury.

WFA course topics are divided into five main sections. The topics include:

- Environmental hazards
- Wilderness wound and burn care
- Biological hazards
- Bone and joint injuries
- Medical problems

An important part of dealing with an emergency in the wilderness is being able to understand the patient assessment system. At the completion of the course, students will have a general idea of the importance of getting a good patient assessment. Participants will also be required to use their patient assessment skills in mock wilderness scenarios.

In review, WFA is designed for those folks who want to learn more about medical or traumatic emergencies they may encounter in the wilderness. The focus of learning will be on recognizing emergencies and providing basic care till help arrives. There is no pre requisite for this course.

### **Wilderness First Responder**

Wilderness First Responder (WFR) is a nationally recognized program offered by the American Safety and Health Institute that trains participants to respond to emergencies in remote settings. WFR is designed for individuals who recreate frequently or spend a great deal of time in the wilderness. Individuals from outdoor organizations such as the Sierra Club, scout leaders, wilderness trip and guide leaders, park ranger, ski patrol, and many other outdoor enthusiasts are common participants. WFR is specifically designed to provide students with the tools to make critical medical and evacuation decisions in remote locations. Emphasis of the course is placed on prevention and decision-making, not the memorizing of lists. Half out the WFR course will be lectures and the other half of the time will be spent completing practical skills and case studies.

The general topics are the same in the WFR course as they are for the WFA course. WFR covers the following topics more in depth than the WFA:

- Patient Assessment
- Vital systems and shock
- Spinal injuries
- Emergency medical services in the wilderness
- Evacuation techniques
- Understanding mechanism of injuries

There are several important differences between the WFA and WFR that need to be recognized for certification purposes. They are as follows:

- WFR students need to have knowledge of all the body systems and understand why and how wilderness injuries occur and how they can be prevented
- WFR students will learn more advanced techniques such as; clearing the spine, and how to reduce shoulder dislocations
- WFR students will be required to have a complete and full understanding of the patient assessment system
- WFR students will learn about drug and oxygen therapy
- WFR students will participate in case studies, mock disasters, and complete oral exams

In review, WFR is geared for individuals who want to gain a more in depth knowledge of wilderness emergencies and how to provide more definitive care. The focus of the WFR course is not memorizing “how to” lists of providing care but having a full understanding of what is happening in the body when various injuries occur. WFR is intense and will require students who are committed to attending class and who are willing to take charge of their own learning.