

RIVER CROSSING SAFETY ON GLACIAL STREAMS

Most glacial rivers crossings on the flanks of Mt. Hood Wilderness do not have bridges. Timberline and Pacific Crest Trail hikers should *be prepared* for dangerous river conditions. The following safety procedures are recommended *before* attempting any river crossing.



- 🌲 Avoid hiking alone when crossing glacial streams.
- 🌲 Check the weather before your trip. Avoid these trails if storms are predicted.
- 🌲 Plan crossings for early morning, when glacial rivers are lower.
- 🌲 Be willing to turn back if conditions appear unsafe. Red flags include:
 - ◆ Fast water
 - ◆ Very cold temperatures
 - ◆ Downstream hazards like waterfalls
 - ◆ Difficulty determining depth
 - ◆ Water higher than your knees
 - ◆ The sound of boulders rolling along bottom.
- 🌲 Scout up and down for the safest crossing, which may not be the trail crossing. Look for gradual banks, shallow water free of obstructions, and similar conditions downstream.
- 🌲 Keep your pack on, but undo the hip and chest strap. Remove the pack if you lose footing.
- 🌲 Wear boots, sneakers, or water sandals for foot protection and ankle support.
- 🌲 Use a hiking stick as a 3rd leg, especially on the upstream side and to scout for drop offs.
- 🌲 Cross together. Face upstream and get in a line perpendicular to the stream's flow. Grab the person's shirt in front of you and move sideways one foot at a time, feeling for a stable surface before transferring your weight. Two people can also face each other holding arms and move side ways.
- 🌲 Look on the Forest website for more river crossing safety tips. www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood



These river crossing safety signs were donated by the family and friends of Sarah Bishop, a skilled hiker and lover of wilderness. Despite crossing many streams safely while hiking the Timberline Trail in August, 2004, she died tragically on the Sandy River during an unseasonable high water event.

