

Due to the effects of low atmospheric pressure on your body – including less available oxygen encountered at high altitude – it is strongly advised that individuals in the following categories not travel to the summit of Mauna Kea:

- Persons under 16 years of age
- Pregnant women
- Anyone with high blood pressure, heart or respiratory conditions
- Scuba divers with less than 24 hours after their last dive
- Anyone who has been drinking alcohol (consumption of alcohol is strongly discouraged on Mauna Kea)

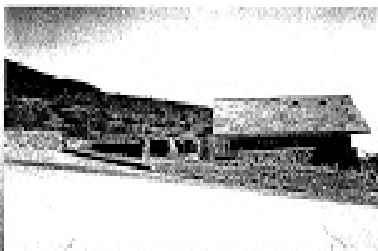
Other important needs:

- Well-maintained, four-wheel drive vehicles
- Protective clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses
- Drinking water

Stop at the Visitor Information Station (VIS) at the 9,000-foot level and obtain a handout about Mauna Kea Hazards. These handouts contain additional information about the conditions described here.

Hikers are encouraged to use the "buddy" system and to advise Rangers and/or VIS staff of their plans.

Spend at least 30 minutes at the VIS to allow your body to adjust to the elevation change.



Anyone proceeding beyond the VIS should understand that the atmospheric pressure on your body is roughly half of the pressure at sea level. Your body may not adjust properly to this condition. Symptoms can include: shortness of breath, headaches, dehydration, nausea, impaired vision and drowsiness, and loss of balance and muscle coordination. More than a mere inconvenience, high altitude sickness can lead to serious – even life-threatening – situations. The only way to alleviate these conditions is to descend to a lower elevation.

Additional information on high altitude sickness can be found at:
<http://www.ifa.hawaii.edu/mko/visiting.htm>

Drive Safely

Four-wheel drive vehicles are strongly recommended beyond the VIS. The unpaved, 8-mile road rises nearly 4,000 feet to the summit. Sections of the road can be extremely rough with steep grades of up to 15 percent. Ice and snow can further add to the dangers.

- Observe the 15-mile-per-hour speed limit at all times.
- To reduce the chances of brake overheating and brake failure, use low gear when descending rather than relying solely on your brakes.
- If you should encounter road maintenance equipment, please drive with extreme caution. Be especially careful when crossing the temporary rick that's built up down the center of the road to permit equipment to move over the road surface. Do not follow behind the equipment.

- Weather conditions can change rapidly.
- Daytime temperatures can range from the 50s to well below freezing.
- Wind speeds can exceed 100 miles per hour.
- Ultra violet radiation is very intense at the summit; severe sunburn can occur rapidly.
- The atmosphere on the summit is extremely dry.

Protective Measures

- Protect your skin and eyes by using an effective sunscreen, sunglasses and protective clothing.
- Drink lots of water to keep your body hydrated – it helps to fend off the effects of altitude sickness.
- Be aware of conditions and dress appropriately.

Winter Conditions

Winter can bring especially hazardous conditions. Snow and ice can form rapidly. Evacuate the summit for lower elevations as soon as hazardous conditions begin to develop.

For your own safety, please heed "Road Closed" signs if posted.

Call (808) 935-6265 to obtain recorded updates on road conditions and road closures.

