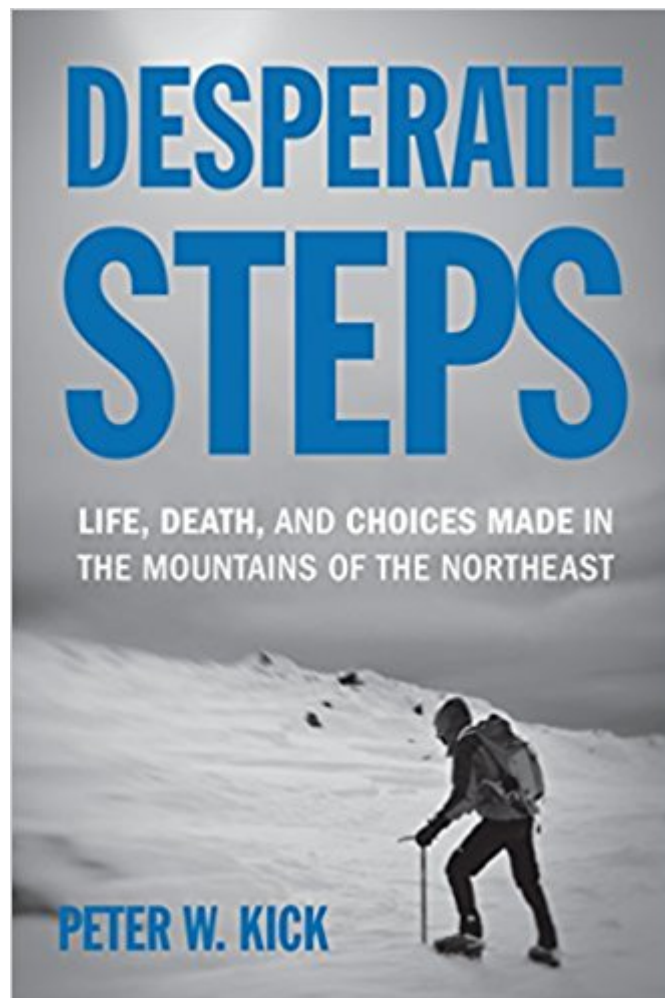




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# Desperate Steps: Life, Death, And Choices Made In The Mountains Of The Northeast



## Synopsis

In the backcountry, a single piece of gear could mean the difference between a comfortable night under the stars and a harrowing tale to tell once you're home. Or it could mean that you don't make it home at all. In this all-new collection from the publisher of *Not Without Peril* and *No Limits But the Sky*, author Peter W. Kick recounts twenty true tales of backcountry misadventure and misfortune, including incidents along the famed Appalachian Trail, and seeks the lessons learned in each. From close-calls to unsolved mysteries, these stories illuminate the realities faced by outdoorspeople across the Northeast. Weather is unpredictable. The best laid plans go awry. And in the worst of times, even the best decision may not be enough to turn the tides. In the tradition of *Appalachia* journal's renowned "Accidents" section, Kick reports on the facts as they were known on the ground— with the help of first-hand accounts of victims, families, witnesses, and Search-and-Rescue professionals. As each story unfolds, Kick and his sources in the SAR community offer a retrospective analysis to help readers discover for themselves what went wrong and how disasters, big and small, might be averted in the future. Route maps and photos further bring each misadventure to life. Readers who immerse themselves in these near misses, methodical searches, and the gut-wrenching clarity of hindsight will be better prepared for whatever the wilderness brings.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Peter W. Kick is a native of the Catskill Mountains, is a New York State licensed guide, and author of several hiking and cycling guides. His previous books with AMC include *AMC Catskill Mountain*

Guide, AMC's Best Day Hikes in the Catskills & Hudson Valley, and Discover the Adirondacks. Kick's work has also appeared in Backpacker, Sailing, Cruising World, and Adirondack Life. He is a life member of AMC and an AMC trip leader. He lives in Saugerties, New York. Previous books: AMC Catskill Mountain Guide, 3e (978-1-934028-94-0); AMC's Best Day Hikes in the Catskills & Hudson Valley, 2e (978-1-934028-45-2); Discover the Adirondacks (978-1-934028-31-5); 25 Mountain Bike Tours in New Jersey (978-0-881503-86-9); Backroad Bicycling in the Hudson Valley and Catskills (978-0-881505-78-8)

The first chapter was published in the Appalachian Mountain Club magazine, and it was so compelling that I purchased the book. As another reviewer stated, every chapter is riveting. I'm a search and rescue volunteer, and appreciated the in-depth analysis of how each mishap occurred, what the search and rescue response entailed, and lessons learned. The book clearly required a major investment of time and energy to thoroughly research each incident. A must-read for anyone who enjoys wilderness pursuits.

This book, "Desperate Steps", exceeded my expectations for a vicarious true life adventure experience. As an RN and retired EMT and firefighter who took just one emergency care, rescue and survival course at Pinkham Notch with Mountain Medicine Ed, Inc, and was left mystified by the allure of these harsh places, these stories of real people burst off the page and kept me reading through the night until this book was read, cover to cover. The author brings to life the reasons some people seem drawn to go to mountains to face the unknown. This book is all about examining the process of advance planning and in-the-moment choice making. Almost clinically, Mr. Kick uses a formula of sympathetically introducing the adventurer and the environment they have entered. The circumstances that impacted the outcomes of each of the situations reported are brought to life with maps and clear descriptions of weather, snow, mountain and trail features. There are no typos or clumsy wording to distract from these tales of adversity. Mountains are the main characters of this story. Human choices provide the action. Learning from the experience of others is the moral. Evaluations of what happened, how the situation was responded to, and impacts upon lives and rescue policy follow each story. The rescuers who put themselves in harm's way, and the rescue systems that have evolved to try to save people from the consequences of their own actions is another interesting insight provided by this book. The reader does not need to be an expert to find interest in these stories, but those experts who do pick up this book will likely find meanings beyond the understandings of those of us who prefer the low lands. This book is for anyone who believes in

the value of planning ahead. This book is for anyone who can put aside their arrogance in order to learn from the experience of others so that they might be forewarned about what could happen to themselves. This precise report of accident, survival or death in the mountains is a good read and I'm giving my copy to my favorite Appalachian Trail trekker to take to heart.

If you just hike for the day or are a thru hiker, I recommend knowing these tragic stories that others have experienced. This is how we learn. Some people or documents may say "always do this or that".....sometimes it's just words we hear. This book brings incidents that involve people, feelings, loved ones and real consequences to the front of your consciousness so the next time you go out, you bring the bivy. Why? Not because a certain list told you to, but because you will remember what happened to someone who didn't. All the stories have excellent lessons to learn from and the author does a good job summarizing the lessons as well.

Whether you are a novice or a seasoned expert, this book makes it very clear that the backcountry can be very unforgiving, and that proper preparation and common sense are essential to experiencing the wilderness. "Desperate Steps" gives well developed lists of what to consider, as well as making one realize that there is no substitute for experience, and that stretching beyond one's physical limits and skill sets, can prove extremely hazardous at best, and fatal at worst. And what is even worse, is the jeopardy that people can put others in, because of their over zealousness. A great read for anyone who enjoys the great outdoors, and it will leave you with a whole new definition of "respect".

I enjoyed this book thoroughly! As I read through the book, I thought about my own excursions in similar territory and how fortunate I had been. This book is written well with many factual details that were well-researched. The author organized the incidents according to sections classifying risks into categories such as poor planning, etc. Good lessons to be learned for anyone who is a hiking junkie. I am re-reading sections to help me avoid any such risks for planned future endeavors. Would recommend this book for anyone interested in serious hiking anywhere!

Well written. The book is divided into categories according to the cause of the accident. The end of each accident gives a critique on the mistaken decision that led to the accident and what could be done to prevent it. However, there were instances where no mistakes or miscalculations were made; high-risk activities inherently contain dangers. Well worth your time if you often hike or ski. I

came away with great respect for the people who risk their own lives to rescue others.

Terrific, especially if one learns some lessons on preparations and actual hiking. I was hiking on Mt Katahdin in the summer of 1963. We met the Ranger stationed there. He was a terrific guy, who needlessly died because a woman didn't have the sense to stay on the trail. He couldn't save her, got caught in a blizzard, and just sat down and died after his futile efforts. I am so glad there are now fines and expected payments from those who disregard all the warnings, (see 2d story), and bring out a dozen others in a horrendous storm, and then do NOT even make a contribution for the efforts of these wonderful guides. These stories make everything real, and can promote good habits. I became a Girl Scout leader, a Den Mother and was very careful with my own family, after reading of "our" Ranger back in 1963.

Lots of great history and tales of caution.

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