

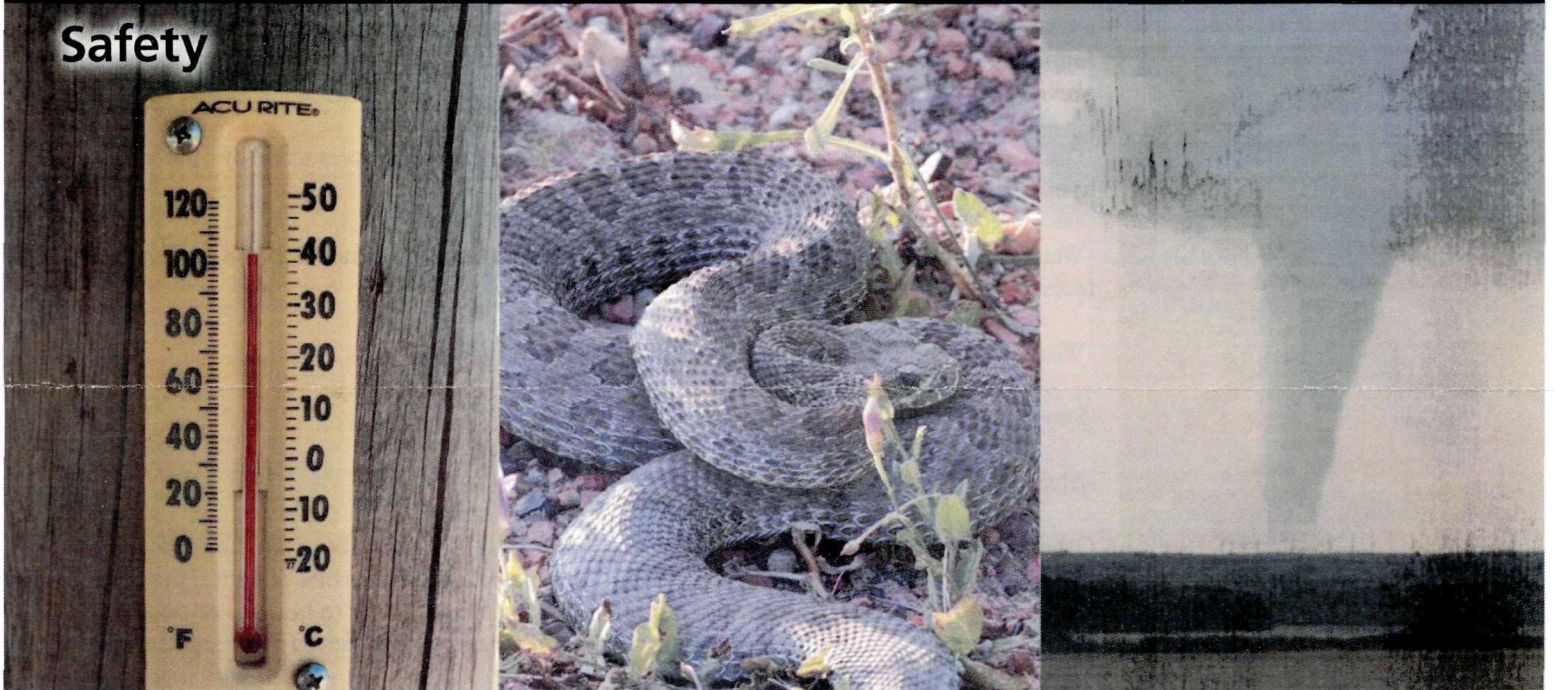
Sand Creek Massacre

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historic Site
Colorado



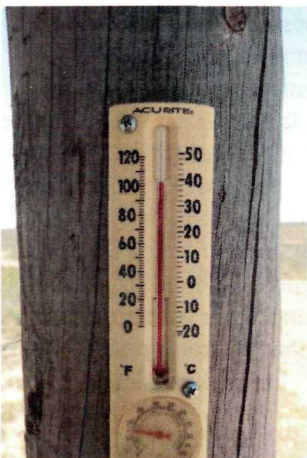
Safety



Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site is a place where visitors can learn, offer respect, and find quiet contemplation while walking the trails. But just like other national parks, there are things visitors should be mindful of as they explore. Heat, animals, and weather are elements of the site that can be dangerous if you are not prepared. Being aware of your surroundings, knowing what to look for and how to react when needed will help make your visit safe and pleasant.

Heat

In the height of summer, June through September, temperatures at Sand Creek are routinely over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Being on the plains, there is also little shade to provide relief from the sun. In these conditions, even on a short hike to Monument Hill and back, it is easy for Dehydration and Heat Exhaustion to occur if you are not prepared. These conditions can be dangerous if not addressed immediately. Here are some of the symptoms to look for:



NPS PHOTO

Dehydration
Extreme thirst
Dark-colored urine
Confusion

Heat Exhaustion
Muscle cramps
Nausea
Cool, pale, clammy skin

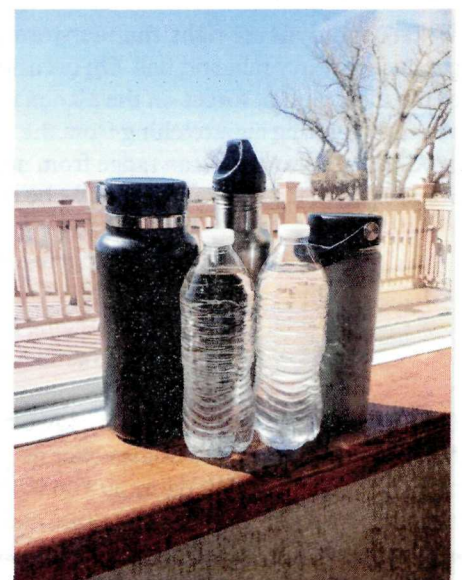
Some symptoms are similar for both conditions: Dizziness, weakness/fatigue, headache

If you or a member of your group start experiencing these symptoms on the trail, stop and rest, loosen clothing, fan the person, and take frequent sips of water. If you or someone in your group has extra water, pour a little on the person's head and neck to help cool off. Once they've rested, head toward your car or the closest park building, making sure to rest again if needed.

One of the best ways to deal with dehydration and heat exhaustion is prevention. Following these steps can help make your hike safer and more enjoyable:

- Take plenty of water and drink it consistently throughout your hike.
- Avoid coffee, soda, and other caffeinated drinks.
- Dress appropriately by wearing a hat and light-colored clothing.
- If you can, hike in the morning when temperatures are cooler.

Also, if you bring your pets with you, remember they are wearing a fur coat and can experience dehydration and heat exhaustion too. The sandy gravel on the trails can be painfully hot on your pet's paws. Make sure they also have plenty of water. Consider driving to the upper parking area to shorten the time your pet is out in the heat, or if possible, visit in the morning when it's cooler.



NPS PHOTO

Animals



PRAIRIE RATTLESNAKE - NPS PHOTO

Sand Creek is home to many different animals. While some species commonly associated with national parks like bears, elk, and wolves are very rare at Sand Creek, there are others to watch out for. The most common animal to pay attention to is the Rattlesnake. Rattlesnakes are venomous and their bites require medical attention. At Sand Creek, they are commonly found either crossing the trails or lying under benches and other shaded locations. Thankfully, preventing rattlesnake bites can be easy:

- Don't reach into holes in the ground. Snakes will sometimes use holes made by other animals to escape the hot sun.
- Watch your feet as you walk and always look under and around benches, rocks, and picnic tables before sitting down.
- Wear close-toed shoes or hiking boots, and loose-fitting long pants.
- Stay on established trails.
- Always keep your pets on a leash.

Other animals at Sand Creek may not be venomous but they should be given their space too. Deer, rabbits, gophers, lizards, birds, and insects will sometimes bite or fight if they feel threatened. In addition, animals may carry diseases that can transfer to humans or pets. If you see animals during your visit, make sure to watch them and take pictures from a safe distance. NEVER try to approach, touch, or feed a wild animal!



One animal that will go out of its way to come to you at Sand Creek is the black fly. When the female black flies are ready to lay eggs, they need to eat blood. They will bite both people and animals to get it. Bug spray sometimes helps keep them away, but not always. Wearing light colored, long sleeved shirts and long pants with socks that cover your ankles is the most helpful method of avoiding them. If you bring your pets with you, try to keep moving so the flies have less opportunity to land on and bite them.

Weather



LIGHTNING - CREDIT CHRIS SPANNAGLE NOAA

“When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!” Bright, hot sunshine is not the only kind of weather that occurs at Sand Creek. In summer, thunderstorms are occasionally seen moving across the horizon. Sometimes though, they can form right above your head in less than an hour. It is never safe to be outside during a thunderstorm because of the lightning that comes with it. A typical lightning flash is hotter than the surface of the sun and carries 300 million volts. Your house only has 120 volts. Lightning can also strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall. If you see the flash of lightning, or hear a distant rumble of thunder, it is time to seek shelter. An enclosed building, preferably with plumbing and electrical wiring, or a hard-topped car with the windows closed, are safe places during a thunderstorm. After the storm passes, wait for 30 minutes after the last flash or rumble before going back outside.

When conditions are right, thunderstorms on the plains can turn severe, producing heavy rain and hail. On occasion, severe storms can also produce one of the most violent forces on the planet: tornadoes. A tornado is a column of violently rotating air stretching from the base of a storm to the ground. Winds produced by a tornado can range from nearly 100, to over 200 miles per hour. Some signs that a severe storm might be producing a tornado are:

- A dark or green-colored sky
- Large hail
- A low-hanging dark cloud that is rotating
- A loud roar like a freight train

If you notice these signs, get to the lowest floor of a solid building or a basement. Mobile or manufactured homes offer no protection. Tornadoes can travel over 50 miles per hour, so don't try to outrun it. If you are outside and no structures are near you, lie flat in a ditch or low area and cover your head.



TORNADO - NOAA-NSSL SEAN WAUGH

If you experience an emergency while visiting Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, call 911. The physical address at Sand Creek Massacre NHS is:
55411 County Rd W, Chivington CO 81036.