

GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Guided valley, hill and mountain walking in the British Isles

This Generic Risk Assessment forms the key risk assessment document for all activities undertaken by TeamWalking and its Freelance Instructors, and must be read and used in conjunction with TeamWalking's Operating Procedures. It is essential that this is read through fully before any activity, and then a Specific Risk Assessment (including Site Specific Assessment) produced for that particular activity (if required) in conjunction with participant/group information, aims, route plan, weather conditions etc; this will then highlight the specific risks that must be managed and/or briefed to the group prior to the activity. **A Route Plan* MUST always be carried out.**

** A 'Route Plan' may vary from a discussion between Walk Leaders to an 'overview map' to a more formal written Route Plan. Route Plans must be viewed ONLY as guide, and the actual walk must be flexible and dynamic to take into account the group's needs, weather conditions, terrain, ability, fitness etc.*

When considering risk, it is important to note:

- **Who may be harmed** - participants, instructors, public
- **Likelihood of injury** - low, medium, high
- **Consequences of the risk of injury** - low, medium, high
- **Control and Action Points** - briefing, knowledge/education, giving responsibility, personal safety and/or protective equipment, training and practice
- **Review and reflection** - after each walk, then update the Risk Assessment and Operating Procedures as appropriate.

The risk of injury **MUST** be balanced against the nature of the activity, as hill and mountain walking involves a recognised level of unavoidable risk, that often forms part of the attraction of the activity. It must also be balanced against the benefits of learning and experience that comes from challenging terrain and conditions. All Walk Leaders must consider their responsibilities with respect to their **Duty of Care**.



PRIOR

Planning, research, training, knowledge of group, area, terrain and conditions

DURING

Terrain, weather conditions, group dynamics.

Managed by route finding/navigation, flexibility, dynamic approach, group management, wearing/carrying correct equipment and clothing, education, information, briefing, informed decisions.

THREE TYPES OF KEY RISK

HUMAN - managed through communication, planning, briefing.

LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN - route planning, navigation, briefing, training, education, avoidance

TIMING/WEATHER - planning, weather forecast, fitness levels

RISK

Briefing of the group - misunderstood or misinterpreted instructions during the Activity Safety Briefing or during the activity (including coaching, teaching, guidance, warnings and advice relating to walking activities).

CONTROL MEASURES

- Choose a location that is safe and away from distractions; ensure all participants have finished their pre-walk preparations.
- Brief the group in a semi-circle, and ensure a positive physical positioning within the group
- Assert control so the group are certain that the Mountain Leader is in charge
- Know your group - first names, fitness levels, medical history, aims etc
- Always go through the Activity Safety Briefing prior to the commencement of the activity
- Clear and concise instructions
- Check understanding of instructions through questioning, especially where the instructions relate to safety
- Always keep the participants as fully engaged and informed as possible throughout the activity.
- Hill and Mountain Walking, by its nature, involves an element of risk and such risks must be accepted by the participants. Ensure that the participants are made aware of potential risks involved with the activity.
- During the group briefing ALWAYS check if there have been any recent changes to the personal information provided on participant's Booking Forms, even if they have completed the forms recently. In particular, recent illnesses, changes to medical information etc. Ask participants to inform the Walk Leader quietly and confidentially prior to setting off on the walk.

RISK

All participants have correct clothing, equipment and gear

CONTROL MEASURES

- What to wear and bring is highlighted on booking form in detail.
- All participants must complete a Booking Form, indicating what items of clothing or equipment they wish to borrow.
- Walk Leader to have a 'gear check' before the walk to ensure participants are wearing/carrying all of the necessary clothing and equipment. Often participants say they have everything, when often they don't (particularly with regards to waterproof trousers and water), so if conditions are poor then it will be necessary to check each person's rucksack.
- Walk Leader to always bring spare waterproofs and outdoor clothing in a spare rucksack - jacket, trousers, gloves. Amount will vary according to the size of the group and weather forecast.
- The Walk Leader reserves the right to refuse to take a participant whom they consider is wearing unsuitable clothing.

RISK

Fitness levels

CONTROL MEASURES

- Participants must complete a Booking Form, which indicates fitness levels, regular exercise and medical conditions.
- All activities are based on a reasonable level of fitness, as stated in the Terms and Conditions.
- All participants are advised as to the type of activity they will be undertaking.
- The Walk Leader must make a quick assessment when they first meet the group in the morning, taking into account what individuals are wearing, their physical fitness, appearance etc and then take this into account when deciding which routes to follow.
- Route plans and walks MUST be flexible and dynamic to take into account varying fitness and energy levels throughout the day, with planned 'escape routes' and options to shorten the route.

- *The Walk Leader to observe and monitor individuals in the early part of the walk, to assess walking pace, balance and ability to deal with differing terrains. Wherever possible, have an easy ‘walk in’ for the first part of the walk on hill or mountainous days to allow this observation to take place.*
- *The Walk Leader reserves the right to refuse to take a participant whom they consider will be unable to complete the planned activity.*

RISK

Weather history and forecast

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Monitor MetOffice and MWIS forecast prior to the walk. Monitor river levels via the Environment Agency website, if appropriate.*
- *Plan a suitable route given the weather history and forecast; assess the weather conditions during the day, and change the route accordingly. Always plan walks with options to shorten the route or lower-level alternatives.*
- *Dynamic, flexible route choice throughout the day.*
- *Risks - wind, rain, cold, lightning, terrain, height, remote.*
- *Walk Leader to carry Group Shelter, emergency equipment, spare clothing and mobile phone*
- *No smoking due to fire risk, and also Walk Leader’s working environment.*

RISK

Thunder storms, lightning

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Obtain a weather forecast. If thunder storms are forecast, use a low-level route with lots of escape routes/ places of safety. Avoidance is the best course of action.*
- *Be aware of cloud and weather conditions during the walk. If thunder storms are likely or imminent, seek shelter in a pub, cafe or house if possible.*
- *No where is safe outdoors - the only safe place to be is a car or house with plumbing/wiring.*
- *If caught outdoors, head to low ground, space out 20 metres apart and squat down with hands on knees and feet together, stood on rucksacks. Do NOT stand beside/beneath tall objects such as trees, cliffs etc. Do NOT shelter in caves, barns or tents.*

RISK

Cold / Hypothermia (cold / wet weather)

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Be aware of the weather forecast.*
- *Ensure all participants carry correct clothing, and spare clothing.*
- *Ensure all participants carry food and hot drink.*
- *Walk Leaders to carry spare clothing, spare gloves, hats, survival bag and group shelter as well as extra high energy food and energy gels.*
- *Walk Leader to carry a stove for making warm drinks on cold days*
- *Monitor the group throughout the activity, with regular rest stops for food and drink, and to also check the physical and mental state of the participants through simple questioning and observation.*
- *Adjust the pace of the group if necessary, coupled with a flexible and dynamic route selection*

RISK

Heat stroke / dehydration (hot weather)

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Ensure all participants have plenty of water at the start of the walk.*
- *Ensure all participants drink water regularly (500ml per hour as a guide).*
- *Plan the route to pass water stops (houses, villages, pubs etc) along the way so participants can re-fill water bottles.*

- *Discuss going to the toilet outdoors; every 2 - 3 hours as a guide for a pee. Discuss the colour of urine (very pale straw colour); the risks of heat-related problems far outweigh the embarrassment of going to the loo outdoors.*
- *Ensure all have suitable sun hat, clothing and high factor sun cream. Cover all exposed skin with clothing or cream.*
- *Walk Leaders to carry spare sun protection clothing (hats and sun-creams), as well as extra high energy food and energy gels.*
- *Monitor the group throughout the activity, with regular rest stops for food and drink, and to also check the physical and mental state of the participants through simple questioning and observation.*
- *Adjust the pace of the group if necessary, coupled with a flexible and dynamic route selection*

RISK

Exhaustion due to poor conditions

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Understand the group before the walk commences - fitness levels, experience, medical conditions and whether they are wearing/carrying suitable clothing, footwear, provisions, gear and equipment.*
- *Monitor the group throughout the day for fitness levels and morale, with regular rest stops for food and drink and to also check the physical and mental state of the participants through simple questioning and observation.*
- *Adjust the pace of the group if necessary, coupled with a flexible and dynamic route selection*
- *Keep the walk within the ability of the group, and have alternative and escape routes.*
- *Ensure participants consume adequate food and drink, to maintain energy levels throughout the day.*
- *Walk Leaders to carry trekking poles, which will help someone who is tired to walk.*

RISK

Farm / wild animals / dogs

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Dogs - do not allow dogs on courses or walks. If the Walk Leader (Mark Reid) is accompanied by his dog, always have his dog on a lead and avoid fields with cows completely.*
- *Never walk between cows and calves; walk around the perimeter of the field and note any escape routes. If a situation develops, leave the enclosure as quickly as possible; if accompanied by a dog, let the dog off its lead and make your way out of the enclosure (the cows are interested in the dog).*
- *Do not allow anyone to stroke or aggravate farm or wild animals, for example horses or farm dogs.*
- *Do not allow anyone to stroke another walker's dog they may meet on the walk; dogs are unpredictable and may bite.*
- *Highlight the risks associated with ticks and Lymes Disease; ensure people check their skin for ticks, and advise how to safely remove them. Discuss symptoms of Lymes Disease including bullseye rash, which requires medical attention and treatment.*

RISK

Stiles, wet rock and walls

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Wet stiles and rock (limestone, slate, shales, granite) are slippery underfoot - this is a common slip hazard and one that must be briefed to the group about foot placement, using hands and keep hands out of pockets.*
- *Walk Leader to cross stiles, footbridges and other potentially slippery surfaces first, to assess the traction of the surface. Brief the group about: avoiding wet rock, particularly sloping rock with algae and/or lichen - step on grass instead; good foot placement with traction; testing rock first by moving boot across the rock to see how slippery it is.*
- *Brief participants about the correct way to cross a stile. Ladder stiles - face the stile and always maintain hand contact with the stile; be particularly aware of wet wood/rock. Wall/fence step-over*

stiles - always maintain hand contact, be aware of heavy rucksacks, step over not onto the top of the wall or fence.

- *Walk Leader to spot any high or slippery stiles, narrow paths across steep slopes or easy wet rock steps.*
- *No drystone walls should be climbed - always use stiles or gates - as drystone walls may collapse and cause injury to participants as well as damaging 3rd party property.*

RISK

Slips, trips and falls

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Brief the group about slips, trips and falls being the most common 'incident' in the outdoors.*
- *Highlight risks associated with wet grass and muddy ground as well as wet rock, all of which are very slippery*
- *Highlight the risk associated with slipping on wet grass whilst wearing Gore-Tex waterproofs, which are very slippery. Ensure people take waterproof trousers off if ascending/descending steep grassy slopes.*
- *Raise awareness of the issue, and discuss prevention - foot placement, watch where walking, hands out of pockets, wet rock and wet grass are slippery. Walk Leader to assess potentially slippery ground first, to assess the traction of the surface. Brief the group about: walking on thicker grass/vegetation to avoid thin wet grass (slip hazard); hands out of pockets walking across uneven terrain (rocks, woodland) etc.*
- *Brief the group that the most effective risk assessment they can personally take is to simply look where they are putting their feet to avoid a potential trip or slip hazard.*

RISK

Open Country - terrain

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Specific hazards of heather, bog, wet, rough, rocky or steep ground.*
- *Additional hazards of potential for poorer weather conditions and also burn more energy and use more water*
- *Ensure all group members are carrying sufficient food, water, gear and equipment, in particular extra high energy food, spare fleece, hat, gloves and head-torch*
- *Tread lightly and carefully as the moors and mountains are fragile landscapes that support rare wildlife.*
- *Discuss with the group the hazards with regards to terrain and how to avoid them; ensure people watch carefully with regards to their foot placement and keep hands out of pockets. Brief group about slips/trips/falls, hidden holes in heather, vegetation types that are likely to be wet/dry, crossing streams correctly (walk through it rather than hopping onto stones as may lead to slip), sphagnum moss to avoid (risk of getting soaked up to waist in bog).*
- *Brief group about correct way to ascend/descend steep ground (zig-zags, steady plod, small steps, balance, edging) and avoidance of wet, thin grass on mud, which presents a high risk of a slip*
- *Walking through boggy areas - the Leader to walk at the front and choose a safe route through the boggy area. Keep the group close together and in single file, following the leader's route. In difficult terrain or weather conditions, instruct the group to walk in single file following the Leader's footprints precisely. For particularly boggy areas or sunken flagstones, the Leader to use a walking pole to point to the safe foot placement points.*
- *In poor conditions (rain, wind, mist etc), the Walk Leader to brief and ensure everyone stays within close proximity of each other. If practical, have people 'buddy up' in pairs. If someone needs to stop or have a break, then they must ensure the group are aware that they require a break.*

RISK

Open Country - other users

CONTROL MEASURES

- Check Open Access website for closures.
- Discuss with group that moorland is a working environment that is managed for shooting, and to be aware of ground-nesting birds as well as other users (shooters, gamekeepers).
- Tread lightly and carefully across the moorland to avoid damaging the fragile habitats
- Be aware of predator traps when walking across moorland - stoat/weasel traps, snares etc
- If meet a shoot during the day, make yourself known and keep to Rights of Way or visible tracks/paths.
- Dogs (general public) - do not allow anyone to stroke another walker's dog they may meet on the walk; dogs are unpredictable and may bite.
- Large groups - the Walk Leader to be aware of other groups of walkers, and assess any risk they pose. Find a safe area to stand and wait for the large group to pass. On steeper ground, never stand below other groups in case of rock fall, slips etc.
- Mountain Bikes, Trail Bikes, Off-Road Vehicles. Be aware of the classification of the Right of Way (bridleway, byway etc), and look out for other users (horses, bikes etc). Brief the group that they may encounter other users. If other users are encountered (for example Mountain Bikes), then brief the group to stand together in a safe place on the path/track, and allow the other users to pass.

RISK

Remote supervision - navigation training

CONTROL MEASURES

- Ensure everyone knows the Separation / Lost procedure (see below).
- Maintain sight contact as much as possible.
- Issue whistles to each member of the group, and obtain their mobile phone numbers
- Ensure the area you are walking in is bounded by clear overshoot / collecting features, and brief these to the group.

RISK

Night navigation/walking

CONTROL MEASURES

- During night navigation exercises or night walking, ensure everyone in the group has a working head-torch. Walk Leader to carry spare batteries (AA and AAA) and a spare torch.
- Ensure everyone knows the Separation / Lost procedure (see below).
- Walk Leader to brief the group to stay within sight and sound of each other.
- Keep to easier terrain and tracks/paths wherever possible - avoid steep, broken or wet ground.
- Walking speed will be reduced; brief group about foot placement and to exercise extra care and attention to spot hazards
- The pace of the group will decrease - plan shorter routes with options to cut the route short if necessary
- It is colder at night - Walk Leader to carry additional spare clothing (fleece, hat, gloves) plus a hot drink in a flask.

RISK

Participants separated/lost from group in poor conditions

CONTROL MEASURES

- Ensure everyone knows the Separation / Lost procedure (see below).
- Brief the group to stay within sight and sound of each other (close proximity)
- Issue whistles to each member of the group

- Take note of each participant's mobile phone number, if they have one, and give the participants the Walk Leader's mobile phone number
- Ensure the area you are walking in is bounded by clear overshoot / collecting features, and brief these to the group.
- Brief group to inform Walk Leader if a participant needs to stop to adjust clothing, toilet, drink etc.
- Increased vigilance of Walk Leader in poor weather conditions to ensure group stays together. If practical, have people 'buddy up' in pairs.
- If appropriate, the Walk Leader will brief the participants to follow his/her line precisely.
- Emergency safety bearing briefing (easy to remember bearing that will get them to a clear linear feature, such as a road or valley).
- Appoint a responsible adult as a 'back marker'

SEPARATION / LOST PROCEDURE

- **Separation procedure** - Participants to stay where they are, stay together and stay on a footpath - the Walk Leader will re-trace & find you. The separated participant(s) to try calling the mobile phone number of the Walk Leader, also blow their whistle(s) as per the International Distress Signal and ensure they are in a prominent location so their head-torch(es) may be seen. If the participant is still waiting to be found after 30-minutes, see below Lost Procedure.
- Once Walk Leader realises a member of his/her party has become separated, then he/she to re-trace their route (along with the remaining group members) to the last known point that the group were all together. They will also try calling the separated participant's mobile phone. If the Walk Leader and his group reach the last known group location without a find, then they will then re-trace back to the location where they realised they had a separated walker, but this time spreading out in a line to conduct a 'sweep search'. Whistles should be blown as per the international distress signal, as well as vocal shouts and observation for head-torch lights
- **Lost procedure** - If the participant is still waiting to be found after 30-minutes and has tried calling the Walk Leader's mobile phone, then the separated participant should either (a) continue walking along the planned route (if confident to do so), (b) retrace their steps back to the start (if confident to do so), (c) follow the safety bearing if they are lost (whilst being vigilant for hazards and dangerous ground) or, in the case of children, (d) stay where they are but seek higher ground to make themselves more visible. They must continue to try calling the Walk Leader's mobile phone, as well as use their whistle and torch. If they reach safety it is essential they make contact with the Walk Leader, the Police (who will inform Mountain Rescue) or a responsible adult.
- The Walk Leader to call out Mountain Rescue team, giving details of the last known position, briefed safety bearing and contact details of the lost walker.

RISK

Steep ground (mountains)

CONTROL MEASURES

- Dangerous steep ground to be avoided, as part of the route plan and route finding/navigation.
- Routes that do include steep ground will be no steeper than a Grade 1 scramble (see below).
- All members of the group will be assessed as to their ability to tackle steep and mountainous ground; they will also be asked about their experience of mountain walking and scrambling.
- The Walk Leader will demonstrate appropriate skills and techniques to tackle steep ground, such as boot placement, edging, smearing, bridging, use of hands and route choice; the walk leader will demonstrate and check understanding of these techniques and skills.
- On steep slopes, the Walk Leader will demonstrate good foot placement (maximum friction), small steps whilst ascending/descending steep ground (to avoid straining muscles), good balance over boots (avoid leaning), 'hugging the hillside' to keep away from steep slopes whilst walking on narrow paths, zig-zags, edging etc. This will reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls.

- *Trekking/walking poles to be collapsed and put away when walking on steep ground, as it is essential for participants to use their hands for balance. Alternatively, Walk Leader to instruct participants to remove their hands from the loop straps so if they do slip or trip they can let go of their poles.*
- *On rock steps, the Walk Leader will need to spot participants to prevent a slip becoming a fall. The Walk Leader must brief participants that spotting may involve grabbing the participant's clothing or rucksack, or holding their body; the Walk Leader must explain that physical contact (pushing/ grabbing/holding) will only occur if they slip to prevent a fall.*
- *On steep, rocky or mountainous terrain the Walk Leader will brief the participants to follow his/her line precisely or, if spotting is required, to wait at a designated safe point above the rock step - the Walk Leader must always check a participant's understanding of where this safe point to wait is. The Walk Leader will ALWAYS: insist that participants follow their line; spot people on rock steps if there is ANY possibility of a slip/fall with consequence; spot everyone, not just nervous/novice walkers.*
- *In poor conditions (rain, wind, mist etc), the Walk Leader to brief and ensure everyone stays within close proximity of each other. If practical, have people 'buddy up' in pairs. If someone needs to stop or have a break, then they must ensure the group are aware that they require a break.*
- *If the Walk Leader is spotting a participant up a rock step, then they must ensure that they (Walk Leader) are always in a safe position, and not stood next to an exposed drop. The Walk Leader must also ensure that they do not climb up into a difficult position on steep/exposed ground, as it is easier to climb up than descend - never climb up something you cannot climb down.*
- *Walk Leader must be aware of the risk of rock/scree falls on steep ground, by ensuring no-one is above or below any member of the group, or other walking party in the mountains; this will be achieved by zig-zagging up/down a steep slope. Walk Leader must brief the group about the warning signal of 'Below' - this is to be shouted if a rock is dislodged and falls; brief the group about what action to take if they hear 'below' being shouted (move swiftly to avoid the rock(s), protect head with arms).*
- *Other people/groups - the Walk Leader to be aware of other groups of walkers, and assess any risk they may pose. Find a safe area to stand together and wait for the other group to pass; do not pass other groups on narrow paths and/or steep ground. On steep ground, never stand below other groups in case of rock fall, slips etc.*
- *The Walk Leader must carry a rope in the mountains.*
- *Ropes may be used for confidence, with a simple loop around a participant's waist to provide security and confidence on steep ground. This must only take place if the Walk Leader is confident on the steep ground.*
- *Emergency ropework (belay, abseil) should only be used as a last resort in an emergency situation (never the planned use of a rope), and then it must be used within the remit of the NGB ML Award. It is most likely that such ropework will be used to descend a rock step to safer ground.*
- *Walk Leaders must be competent and experienced leading on this type of terrain; it may be necessary for TeamWalking to check their Log Book to assess their competence and experience.*

RISK

Scrambling (Grade 1)

Grade 1 scrambles (such as Striding Edge) are within remit of the summer Mountain Leader (ML) award, as long as the ML is not PLANNING to use a rope, but a rope is only carried for confidence or emergency. The following must be taken into account if considering Grade 1 scrambles:

- 1) Purpose - is it the most suitable option for the group based on their aims and objectives?
- 2) Group ability - experience, how well do they move on steep group, pre-existing medical conditions, behavioural issues or challenging group dynamics?
- 3) Risks - ensure everyone is fully aware and understand the risks associated with scrambling.

4) Knowledge of route - ensure the Walk Leader is familiar with the route and is able to operate safely on steep ground. A good working knowledge of the intended route will equip you with a thorough understanding of potential difficulties, avoidable sections, escape routes and descent routes, among other considerations. *These four points have been taken from the Mountain Training website.*

CONTROL MEASURES

- *The Walk Leader needs to be confident that the route is a 'walking route' of no more than Grade 1 either through extensive research or route knowledge and experience.*
- *Rope must be carried by the Walk Leader for confidence roping or emergency use only.*
- *For novice groups or young people then it will be necessary to put helmets on them; this is a decision for the Walk Leader.*
- *Clear briefing about the risks, techniques and what Grade 1 scrambling involves.*
- *Brief group and check understanding about 3-points of contact, avoiding exposed sections, slips/trips/falls, ensuring hand and foot placements are sound before moving up or down steep sections.*
- *Brief group about spotting - some body contact may be necessary to prevent a slip becoming a fall (this is usually the Walk Leader's hands supporting their rucksack, although in the event of a slip contact may be anywhere).*
- *Assess the group on the walk-in as to their ability to tackle steep and mountainous ground; they will also be asked about their experience. The Walk Leader will demonstrate appropriate skills and techniques to tackle steep ground and Grade 1 scrambles, such as boot placement, edging, smearing, bridging, use of hands, balance and route choice; the walk leader will demonstrate and check understanding of these techniques and skills.*
- *Weather conditions must be favourable, with winds of less than 30 mph on the ridge; if there is rain forecast or it is wet underfoot, check the traction of boots on the wet rock.*
- *Ratios of no more than 1:8*
- *Careful group management essential - spotting, coaching, leading the group along the correct line, keeping group close together.*
- *Walk Leaders must be competent and experienced leading on this type of terrain; it may be necessary for TeamWalking to check their Log Book to assess their competence and experience.*

RISK

Water, streams and rivers

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Be aware of stream/river levels. Only cross rivers using footbridges.*
- *If stream in spate and unsafe to cross, find alternative route*
- *Avoid flooded land, riverside paths that are in flood and fast-flowing river/water.*
- *Be aware of weather forecast and history with regards to crossing upland streams - fast-flowing water is a significant hazard that must be avoided.*
- *If absolutely necessary to cross a stream or river, the river crossing must be managed by the Walk Leader in accordance with the NGB guidelines, and a 'dry run' carried out. Only cross a stream or river if no alternative or unsafe to use alternative route.*

RISK

Lunch stops / rest breaks (participants wandering off onto dangerous ground)

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Choose sites that are away from overhanging trees, crags, rocks etc, and are away from steep ground and cliffs wherever possible*
- *If any areas of out of sight or hidden, walk around to assess any dangers*
- *If there are any hazards or dangers within close proximity, brief the group about areas that are out of bounds, and give reasons why.*
- *Make everyone aware of where they can go to the toilet - ensure this is a safe area away from steep or loose ground.*

RISK

Tiredness at the end of the day/descent - slips, trips and falls

CONTROL MEASURES

- According to Mountain Rescue websites, many accidents happen during the afternoon and early evening, particularly on the descent, as people are tired, slightly dehydrated and low on blood sugar and so lose concentration and 'drop their guard' as the end of the day is within sight.
- Ensure that the group stops for a rest, food and water before heading 'off the hill' during the latter part of the walk.
- Brief the group the reasons why they are stopping for food and water and explain that many accidents happen on the descent; this risk can be reduced with knowledge about the body's physiology and how water and sugar can 'perk' their brains and muscles to aid concentration.

RISK

Camping in remote location (wild camping - mountains) & camping in organised campsites (valleys)

CONTROL MEASURES

- Be aware of group members at the end of the day's walk - tiredness, injury etc.
- Choose suitable location given the weather conditions (sheltered from wind, raised ground away from water-logging or flooding).
- Be aware of escape routes in case need to evacuate in the night.
- Discuss hygiene and water collection from fast-flowing streams (check upstream 100 metres for dead animals)
- Designate water collection points and discuss water purification (rolling boil for 5 minutes)
- Ensure all water is purified before consumption - no water to be drunk straight from streams or lakes without being boiled first.
- Ensure participants observe good hygiene procedures when cooking or preparing food. Always wash hands in a stream (below the water collection point) and use alcohol-based hand gels, particularly after going to the toilet.
- Toilet protocol - at least 50 metres away from water sources and paths; designate male and female toilet areas.
- Discuss and demonstrate use of stoves - away from tent, ventilated, stable flat ground. Brief group about risks of stoves toppling over or pans slipping off the stove, with potential for scolds/burns. Always use stoves at arm's length. Supervise initial cooking session. Cooking should be done in an agreed communal area with stoves grouped together, so that the stoves and boiling water are in one location. If the weather is poor, then cooking may be done at 'arm's length' out of the porch door away from the tent; ensure the tent fabric will not flap and touch the stove or flame. This will allow the person to remain dry inside the tent, whilst still keeping the stove away from the tent.
- Do not store or use stoves in or near tents due to fire and carbon monoxide risk; store fuel away from stoves and tents, and detach the gas cartridge from the stove.
- Carry burns dressings in First Aid kit, and water purification tablets.
- How to stay warm during the night - wear clothing, keep warm, have hot drinks
- Assess dangers around camp site (crags, steep ground, water etc), and brief the group about 'out of bounds' areas, particularly during the night.
- Brief group to stay near or next to their tents if need toilet during the night.
- No open fires allowed, and all rubbish must be carried out - leave no trace.
- Ensure all wet clothing is removed and dry clothing put on when retiring to the tent for the night; wet/damp clothing can be put back on in the morning on a multi-day expedition to ensure dry clothing for the next night.
- Pitch tents 5 metres apart, in case of fire.
- Campsites: Brief group about location of: fire extinguishers, fire alarm bell, drinking water tap, toilets, campsite shop, campsite facilities.

- *Campsites: do NOT pitch tents underneath large trees or beside streams, in case of wind or flood. Choose camping pitches that are sheltered and on slightly raised or higher ground. Pitch tents away from tracks that are used by vehicles.*
- *Campsites: If using a nearby pub during the evening for food and drink, brief the group about restricting alcohol consumption and minimising fluid intake, particularly if it is cold, as alcohol dilates blood vessels, and too much fluid will mean getting out of their sleeping bag in the night.*
- *Campsites: Leaders to bring bag of warm spare clothing, in case anyone is cold.*
- *Brief group about guy-line trip hazards when walking around the tents.*
- *Brief group about inflating sleep-mats correctly, 'plumping' up sleeping bags to loft the insulation, wearing base layers and hat in the sleeping bag to keep warm and keeping the inside of the tent a 'dry' area (all wet kit to be taken off before they get into the tent or in the porch).*

RISK

Backpacking - heavy rucksacks

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Send detailed information about what to wear and bring. Ensure all walkers are briefed prior to the walk about the potential weight of their rucksack.*
- *The Walk Leader to demonstrate what he/she is carrying in their rucksack.*
- *The Walk Leader to look at the contents of everyone's rucksacks in the morning to ensure they have all of the essential equipment. Recommend they leave behind unnecessary equipment.*
- *The Walk Leader to weigh everyone's rucksacks to ensure not too heavy. Ideally, all rucksacks to weigh between 12kg and 15kg. Above 15kg is too heavy; empty their rucksack and ensure they only take essential equipment. Share stoves and some equipment between the group if necessary.*
- *The Walk Leader to brief the group on correct lifting procedures for a heavy rucksack: bent knees and straight back.*
- *Stop walking after about 1 hour to allow people to adjust their rucksacks. The Walker Leader to assess and adjust people's rucksacks on their back - rucksack to sit straight down the back, resting on hips.*
- *Maintaining good balance with a heavy rucksack. Early in the walk, brief the group about good foot placement, balance (gravity) over boots, small steps etc, and demonstrate good practice on safe ground. Make group aware of their heavy rucksacks, and how they can cause them to go off-balance if they lean too much to the side or front/back.*
- *Good route choice - follow good, well-graded paths as much as possible to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls with a heavy rucksack. Avoid narrow paths, steep ground, narrow ridges, scrambling etc in strong winds or poor conditions, or after assessment of the participants ability.*

RISK

Road walking - being hit by vehicles

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Route planning and navigation to avoid roads wherever possible, particularly A and B roads.*
- *Pay particular attention for sharp bends and narrow roads when planning from the map*
- *Do not walk on roads at night*
- *Brief participants to walk in single file on the safest side of the road, ensuring that everyone is visible to traffic.*
- *Ensure the first and last in the group are wearing highly visible clothing or rucksack cover.*

RISK

Blisters

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Brief group to tell the Walk Leader about any hot spots in their boots BEFORE it becomes a problem, and then use blister plasters on the affected area.*

- *On multi-day walks, if someone has blisters then ensure that they keep the blister dry and clean, and regularly reapply blister plasters. The Walk Leader to assess blisters daily to avoid infection or loss of skin.*

RISK

Assisting other distressed walkers in the countryside (injured, lost, hypothermic, in distress etc)

CONTROL MEASURES

- *The Walk Leader's priority is his/her group.*
- *Before approaching other walker(s) in distress, assess for danger. The Walk Leader to instruct his/her group to remain at a safe distance together whilst the Walk Leader assesses the situation.*
- *The Walk Leader to provide reasonable assistance to the distressed walker(s), as long as it does not put his/her group in danger or jeopardy.*
- *The Walk Leader will offer advice or follow Emergency Procedures, if required.*
- *The Walk Leader will not use any of his/her gear or equipment (torches, group shelter, First Aid kit), unless in a medical emergency, as this will then deplete the Walk Leader's essential kit.*
- *Do NOT touch/hold other people's dogs.*

RISK

Site specific hazards

CONTROL MEASURES

- *Produce a specific Risk Assessment for each walk, highlighted hazards from the Route Plan (and management/action points), weather forecast, prior knowledge of the area and group.*

Dynamic risk assessment

- *The planned route, weather/ground conditions and group's ability will be constantly assessed as we progress to ensure that their group stays as safe as possible.*

The priority is to ensure all participants have a safe, enjoyable and rewarding experience that is within their abilities



Original Risk Assessment prepared: **3rd August 2013**

Updated

5th May 2015

11th January 2017

30th July 2018