



SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Every member of the club is expected to comply with the club's safety operating procedures given in the three sections of this document, namely:

- Responsibilities of Club Members
- Risk Assessments
- Incident Management Procedures

When joining the club, members will be asked to verify that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the procedures.

If a member of the club does not comply with the club procedures, club office bearers will express their concerns and obtain the member's agreement to comply in future. If the member repeatedly does not comply, further informal and formal discussion will take place to ensure that the member fully understands the reasons for the concerns and the consequences of further noncompliance, namely withdrawal of membership of the club. Any actions taken will be in line with the principles of 'natural justice', i.e., absolute fairness to both sides.

The club will provide members with the opportunity to heighten their awareness of safety issues by including at least one training evening a year in the evening talks programme.

For example: first aid; navigation; incident management; equipment.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLUB MEMBERS

Including information on equipment, clothing and footwear

Clubs have the common-law duty of care that every member of society has to all other members of society, that is, the obligation to exercise a reasonable degree of prudence and caution while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others. This responsibility is reciprocal, in that each person is responsible for him or herself, and should also ensure that his or her actions do not put others at risk. Duty of care is not diminished because of involvement in a hazardous activity such as mountaineering.

The "Participation Statement" of the UIAA (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme or the International Climbing and Mountaineering Organisation) states that:

"Climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement."

On any walk, we are responsible for ourselves.

Ellon Hillwalking Club walks are not led by a club member who takes responsibility for the safety and welfare of the group. The group is led by the group.

A committee member is designated as the 'focal point' for a day walk or weekend outing. This person is not a walk leader. He or she fulfils the administrative role of collecting names for the outing and ensuring that a walk report is written but does not necessarily take part in the event.

Members are responsible for their own conduct and safety. The club has, however, expectations of anyone taking part in a walk which are expressed through the following guidelines.

You should be sufficiently fit and well to take part in the planned walk.

A reasonable level of fitness is required to take part in any of our outings and some of them are very demanding mountain walks. You should find out about the planned walk and be realistic about your ability to undertake it.

If you are unwell, you should not take part in a hillwalk.

If you have a medical condition which could, in certain circumstances, become an issue on a walk, this must be disclosed to the secretary who will ensure that the focal point on a walk is aware of it

If these guidelines are ignored, it could lead to the outing having to be modified because of your inability to undertake it or worse, a crisis arising during the outing.

You should have a reasonable level of competence in hillwalking skills

It is necessary to be competent in the use of map and compass, and to carry them with you on the walk. Many people now use GPSs and phones for navigation. These are useful but it is still necessary to carry a map and compass as technology can malfunction and batteries run down.

You should be able to walk safely and comfortably on different sorts of terrain and weather conditions. Walks will use tracks much of the time but will on occasion go over rocky ground and through areas of bog or heavy undergrowth. Rain, snow and ice can make walking difficult. It is vital that footwear suitable for the terrain expected is worn, preferably hillwalking boots.

If you do not feel that you are competent in hillwalking skills such as navigation, route finding or winter walking and are using your membership of the club to improve such skills, you should make the group aware of this and ensure that you do not get separated from the group during the walk. If you do, you are going to have some difficulty taking responsibility for yourself and must accept that you are taking a serious risk. To improve your hillwalking skills during a walk, let one of the more experienced members of the club know, and he or she will generally be very happy to work with you.

You should be appropriately dressed and equipped for the walk.

The clothing and equipment required for a hill walk will clearly depend upon the nature of the walk, time of year and prevailing weather conditions.

In general, clothing should be loose fitting and comfortable. The 'layer principle' is the usual way of providing warmth whilst retaining the flexibility required in the Scottish climate. Air trapped between the layers and within the fibres of the cloth provides insulation. (See later)

Appropriate footwear, preferably hillwalking boots, should always be worn

The following items should always be carried as personal equipment:

- Spare clothing (type and amount will depend upon conditions).
- Hat;
- Gloves;
- Waterproof jacket and trousers;
- First aid kit. This should include basic first aid materials and items such as midge protection and sun cream when appropriate;
- Map and compass -see above;
- Torch with spare bulb batteries;
- Whistle for summoning help in an emergency;
- Bivvy bag or personal shelter for keeping warm and dry in an emergency.

In addition, an adequate supply of food and drink, including some emergency rations, should also be carried. Whilst it is always wise to carry a mobile phone for use in an emergency it cannot be relied on for communications in the hills as there is often no reception.

Specialist equipment such as ropes, ice axes and crampons will not generally be required on programmed outings.

You should walk with the group and, at all times, maintain an awareness of other members of the group and their needs.

Club outings are group activities. Some outings may split into sub-groups but if you have chosen to be part of a group, you should be in a position to communicate with other members of the group at all times. The group should accept a responsibility to look after each other. If someone becomes unwell or starts to struggle for some reason, support will be needed. This cannot be given if the group is spread out over a few hundred metres and the people at the front are not aware of what is happening at the rear of the group. Likewise, if someone wanders off from the route being followed, and is out of sight of the group, help will not be available if it is needed.

Further information on clothing and footwear

Base Layer

The base layer should transfer moisture away from the body and retain a dry microclimate next to the skin. Thermal underwear, usually made from synthetic materials, gradually transports moisture away from the body through a wicking process.

Mid Layer

The mid layer provides most of the insulation. Wool is still very effective but a wide variety of fleeces, also usually made from synthetic material, are now available.

Outer Layer

The outer or shell layer keeps wind and water away from the insulating layer. Gore-Tex revolutionised waterproof garments as they allow water vapour to escape while shedding water. There is now a wide range of materials available which do this.

Footwear

Footwear is obviously very important. As our walks could always venture off main tracks, boots are essential to provide support and protection for the foot when travelling over rough terrain. Ideally, these should have a stiffish sole and waterproof uppers. There is an enormous range of boots available and all of the good outdoor shops will provide advice on what to buy. Boots generally require a few outings before they mould to our feet.

Gaiters, though not essential, help to keep feet warm and dry in soggy conditions.

Risk Assessments

Issue DateReview Date.....

HAZARD	RISK	LIKELY HOOD Low Medium High	IMPACT Low Medium High	CONTROL M EASURES
Club member on outing which is beyond his/her capabilities in relation to competence, level of fitness and/or state of health	Exhaustion /Illness	L	LMH	Detailed description of walk including distance, ascent, nature of terrain and map published in newsletter prior to walk. If necessary, 'buddying' can be used, so that more experienced folk are paired up with the less experienced. Members agree to comply with responsibilities of club members which include being sufficiently fit and well to take part in walk and to disclose any relevant health issues to club secretary. Club secretary will ensure that Focal Point is aware of these.
Club member inadequately clothed and equipped for the walk.	Member becoming cold/wet leading to hypothermia. Member unable to deal with situations which arise on walk e.g., navigation, poor light	L	LMH	Detailed description of walk including distance, ascent, nature of terrain and map published in newsletter prior to walk. If necessary, 'buddying' can be used, so that more experienced folk are paired up with the less experienced. Members agree to comply with responsibilities of club members which include being appropriately dressed

				and equipped for the walk as detailed in club equipment list.
Adverse weather conditions	Risk of Hypothermia, particularly if delayed/lost due to poor weather and/or cloud (inc. high winds). Heat exhaustion; sunstroke; sunburn in warm conditions. Injury due to lightning strike.	L	LMH	Specialist mountain weather forecasts, and local weather reports, obtained by members and discussed by group prior to outing. Members agree to comply with responsibilities of club members which include being appropriately dressed and equipped for the walk as detailed in club equipment list.
Steep, broken terrain, slippery rock or grass, muddy or loose paths	Possibility of injury due to slips, stumbles or falls in ascent/descent. Risk of injury due to stone fall, either natural or caused by club members or other walkers/cyclists.	M	LMH	Members not expected to take part in walks which are beyond their level of competence. Members understand and accept element of risk in hillwalking.
Water hazards such as burns, rivers, snow bridges and marshy ground	Burns/rivers in spate may occasion lengthy detours leading to risk of exhaustion and hypothermia in club members. Possibility of slipping or falling into water resulting in immersion hypothermia. Risk of drowning. Risk of physical trauma.	L	LMH	Specialist mountain weather forecasts, and local weather reports, obtained by members and discussed by group prior to outing. Route changed if necessary Implications of burns/rivers in spate taken into account during route planning and members prepared to take appropriate avoiding action during outing if necessary.

Getting Lost/Navigational Issues	Late Return Possibility of exhaustion	L	LMH	Club members are expected to be competent in use of map and compass, to carry them on walk and not rely completely on phones and GPSs. The group should make collective navigational decisions. A group member without navigational skills is expected to ensure that they do not get separated from the group and is expected to make an effort to acquire these skills. If necessary, 'buddying' can be used, so that more experienced folk are paired up with the less experienced. A specified person who is not on the walk will have a walk route, list of walkers and expected finish time so that if the group is significantly overdue action can be taken
Lyme's Disease	Risk of contracting Lyme's Disease from a tick bite	M	LMH	Ensure that all club members are aware of the signs and symptoms of Lyme's Disease by looking at NHS website (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/) and carry a tick removing hook in their first aid kits

Incident Management Procedures

These are required when control measures haven't worked, and during the walk there is an incident when someone is unable or unwilling to continue or the group thinks he or she shouldn't continue.

A laminated copy of this document will be carried by the focal point on each walk.

Non serious incident. If the person concerned is able to walk back to the transport and does not require immediate medical attention, there is an expectation that he or she would be accompanied off the hill by at least one other club member.

The group will make the decision as to whether this is sufficient or, following the principle that 'the group is led by the group,' some other measure would be more appropriate.

If there has been a **serious incident**, the following is the advice from Mountaineering Scotland and Scottish Mountain Rescue with a couple of additions.

How to deal with an emergency

Mountaineering Scotland has worked together with Scottish Mountain Rescue to provide this simple advice for how to manage in the event of an incident:

- Stay calm. Take time to assess the situation and decide what to do.
- Check that you, the casualty and group aren't in immediate danger. If you are, seek to make the situation safe.
- If anyone is injured, remember **ABC** – airway, breathing and circulation (look for signs of life or blood loss)
- Treat any injuries (remember the first principle: 'do no harm')
- Insulate the casualty from the ground, add extra clothing. Place any unconscious casualties in the **recovery position**.
- Determine your exact position on the map and consider the options for:
 - a. **Descent to safety.** What will the terrain be like? How far to reach safety? Are you sure you can carry the casualty? Will the casualty's injuries be made worse by travelling?
 - b. **Finding shelter.** Don't use up valuable time and energy unless you are sure about finding shelter.

c. **Staying put.** Will your situation be resolved if you stay where you are?

d. **Seeking help.** Remember that even when a rescue team has been alerted, help might not arrive for several hours.

- Try to conserve mobile battery life by having all the details to hand before phoning for help. A list of the details needed is shown above.
- If there is no mobile coverage at your location, consider whether it might be worth moving to another location to phone from in which case, if possible, a minimum of two members should stay with the casualty and two go to phone.
- Check who else in your party has a mobile phone (and coverage) and evaluate the amount of battery life available in the event of additional calls being necessary.
- If all other forms of communication fail, the internationally recognised emergency signals are **six blasts on the whistle** or **six torch flashes repeated every minute**

Calling for mountain rescue

If you require assistance on the hill call 999 or 112 and ask for Police and Mountain Rescue.

Essential information to have at hand:

- The location of the incident (ideally a six figure grid reference and a named feature).

The 'what3words' App is increasingly being used to identify a location.

- The number of casualties
- What is wrong with the casualties
- Are the casualties deteriorating?
- Details of the equipment in the group i.e. group shelter
- Your contact telephone number and any other mobile numbers in the group

Mobile phone reception in the Highlands can often be intermittent or non-existent. If you are involved in an incident on the hill and need to call assistance but cannot make voice calls, there may be enough signal to send a text message. You can contact the 999 emergency services using a text from your mobile only if you have already registered with the emergency SMS text service.