

BRINDABELLA BUSHWALKING CLUB INCORPORATED
GUIDELINES FOR LEADERS & EMERGENCY OFFICERS

Liabilities and insurance

- 1 The BBC has **public liability insurance** against accidents on bushwalks.
- 2 **Current Legislation is very effective against frivolous legal action that may arise from accidents on bushwalks.**
- 3 As long as BBC club officials and walk leaders **act "reasonably"**, the club public liability insurance will cover club activities. "Unreasonable" acts include alcohol and drug abuse.
- 4 Walk leaders must give appropriate **risk warnings** and not "downplay" or contradict a risk warning given in the club program. Don't say things will be "easy" when they may not be for some people.
- 5 **"Good Samaritans"**, i.e. rescuers and first aiders, are protected by legislation.

Rules for Walkers

Leaders must ensure that the **Rules for Walkers** set out in the **Walks and Social Program** are observed but without conveying a sense of regimentation. Draw attention to the rules at the starting point so that, later, walkers will not think they are being reprimanded.

Preparation

- 1 **Walk plan.** Plan your walk. One way to do this is to pencil the proposed route on a map with expected times and compass bearings for key points. Another is to include this information on a planning sheet together with details of distances and climbs. Maps of popular areas are available on loan from the Walks Officer and can also be found at <https://maps.six.nsw.gov.au>. The Club's website has guidance on how to use this site.
- 2 **Permissions.** Obtain all necessary permissions. Check with the Walks Officer who can provide you with a contact name if the walk has been held previously.
- 3 **Emergencies.** Study the **Emergencies** section below. Carry a torch, waterproof matches, extra Band-Aids and a crepe bandage for sprained ankles, etc. Where practicable, plan for a quick way back to the cars or to shelter if the weather deteriorates or the party is unexpectedly slow. Telephone the relevant national park office for assistance (**Namadgi Visitor Centre 6207 2900** 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4:30pm Sat-Sun and public holidays. **Canberra Connect 13 22 81** 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, closed Sun and public holidays). The Club does not provide **mobile phones** but there have been emergency occasions when they have been useful. Those who have them on walks are asked not to use them except for emergency purposes.
- 4 **Weather.** Note the weather forecast on the morning of the walk. Walks **must** be cancelled if a day of **catastrophic fire danger** has been declared. Leaders may also cancel walks during total fire ban periods or if severe thunderstorms or heavy rain are forecast. If in doubt, seek advice from an appropriate authority, e.g. **rangers** or **police**, and follow that advice.
- 5 **Assistant leaders.** The Club needs more leaders. Experienced leaders can help train potential leaders by allowing an assistant to navigate. Plan the walk with the assistant at least a day before the walk is scheduled and discuss use of a map and compass. Let the assistant leader lead, keeping well back in the party and correct only when necessary. As the leader, you should maintain overall control of the walk.
- 6 **Change of destination.** If it is necessary to change the programmed walk, e.g. because of floods or fires, an **Emergency Officer** should be advised beforehand. If this is not possible, note the change clearly on the Walk Report form. The Walks Officer has two club-owned Personal locator Beacons available to leaders. They are for use in life-threatening situations or serious medical emergencies. Consider whether you would feel more comfortable with one in your backpack. Phone the Walks Officer and book it if you want it for your walk.

- 7 GPS receivers.** A GPS receiver is now a common piece of bushwalking gear, relatively cheap, getting smaller and becoming more "user friendly". When used properly they can pinpoint your position on a map to within 10 metres. Keeping a "way-point" log of significant points along your route is very useful in an emergency. GPS receivers are very handy if you think you are lost. The BBC Training Officer can organise instruction if necessary.

Immediately before the Walk

Ensure you have all the items you will need as a leader – walk report, incident report form, emergency numbers, mobile phone (charged), PLB, GPS, first aid kit, maps, compass, etc.

At the meeting place

- 1 Be at least 10-15 minutes early.** New members are usually early and appreciate a few words with the leader before the regulars arrive.
- 2** At the Meeting Point, **talk to new walkers** to ascertain their walking experience, fitness, medical history.
- 3 Walkers.** As leader, you may exercise **a right not to accept persons** for any reason.
- 4 Equipment.** Check that walkers are adequately clothed and have suitable footwear. On a hot day and/or a long or strenuous walk particularly, check that they have sufficient water and have sun protection.
- 5 Modification or Cancellation.** The leader may cancel, abort or modify, any walk either before or during the walk.
- 6 Degree of difficulty.** Make sure walkers know the degree of difficulty of the walk as described in the walk program.
- 7 Minimum number.** The minimum number of people on a BBC walk should be four. If fewer than four people are available for a walk, the walk cannot proceed as an official Club activity. The leader may take the walk privately at their own discretion.
- 8 Signing on.** Make sure all walkers put their details on the Walk Report form and point out any additional hazards that may be encountered.
- 9 Visitors** are to supply a contact phone number. They are allowed to go on a maximum of three walks before becoming members; leaders are to remind them of this.
- 10 Car route.** Advise all drivers of the route and starting point of the walk.
- 11 Passengers.** Encourage car sharing to reduce the number of cars.
- 12 Count cars** and appoint a tail where there are several cars.
- 13 Advise against travelling in convoy** and ask that cars leave sufficient room for other traffic to overtake.
- 14 Start time.** Try to leave the meeting place within a few minutes of the published start time after allowing a reasonable time for latecomers.

At the starting point of the walk

- 1 Signing on.** Make sure all walkers have put their names on the Walk Report form. Leave the form in your car but you are not advised to display it in case it invites a break-in.
- 2 Introductions.** Ask walkers to form a circle and introduce themselves by first name.
- 3 Describe the walk briefly and indicate the route on the map.** Mention any expected hazards or difficult sections, the expected lunch location and time of arrival. Indicate that stops will be made approximately every hour or less, depending on the terrain, view points, etc.
- 4 Count the number** in the party and check that the Walk Report form agrees.
- 5 Back marker.** Depending on the size of the party and the nature of the walk, consider asking for a reliable volunteer to act as a back marker. Change after lunch.

On the walk

- 1 **Maintain contact with the tail and the head of the party** and check on the condition of walkers, especially children and inexperienced walkers.
- 2 **Advise the party on progress** at intervals and encourage all in the party to take an interest in the route. This helps if you inadvertently get off the route and meet unexpected scrub, steep slopes, etc.
- 3 **Divided track.** If you are following a track and it divides, or you leave the track for an unmarked route through the bush, wait until all the party have caught up before you change direction.
- 4 **Check numbers** after each stop before proceeding.
- 5 **Note times at key points.** These are useful for future reference and can prove invaluable for coping with unexpected problems.
- 6 **Be flexible.** If some members are not coping with the walk and slowing down the party, be prepared to modify the walk, provide more rests, etc. If someone is distressed, be prepared to abandon the walk and return to the cars. Do not allow any person to return alone.

At the end of the walk

- 1 **Walkers finishing.** Do not leave until all walkers have returned.
- 2 **Encourage walkers to have a cup of tea or coffee** or share with others if they have brought a thermos, to help ensure drivers are rested before the drive home.
- 3 **Ensure that all cars get away from the parking area** and that all drivers can find their way back to the meeting point or their home.
- 4 **If any incidents have occurred** which may cause the authorities to become involved, or the walk has been so delayed that relatives may be worried, contact an **Emergency Officer** with details as soon as possible.
- 5 **Complete the Walk Report form and return it to the Walks Officer.** This is important for insurance purposes. Any comments, including details of any accidents, emergencies or unforeseen problems should be included.
- 6 **Record any injuries or illnesses on Incident Report form** including details of names of injured or ill person(s), time, place, nature of injury, witnesses, etc. If in doubt about the extent of injury/illness, you should complete the form. The form is to be sent to the Walks Officer.
- 7 **Return any borrowed Club maps, PLB** or other material with the Walk Report.

EMERGENCIES

It is not possible to write a procedure for every situation. The following are recommendations. The leader will need to make judgements at the time, possibly with assistance from other members of the group. Often the group will contain other BBC leaders with relevant experience to assist you.

Lost walker

- 1 **Stop.** Check your position on the map with a GPS or by checking features. If it is advisable to split the party, appoint an experienced walker as deputy leader for the remaining party. Observe the daylight time available. Then agree on a time for the search group to return and on the action the deputy is to take if the return time is not met. Action may include leading the remaining party out and notifying **police** and an **Emergency Officer**. See notes on split parties under **Immobilising Injury**.
- 2 **Discourage** keen but inexperienced walkers from starting their own searches.
- 3 **Retrace the route** to the last head count point with at least two other experienced and fit walkers. **Rules for Walkers** says, "Do not keep walking" if you get separated from the party.

Thus, the leader should retrace the walk route as a first step (GPS waypoints are handy). A lost walker following procedure should be waiting on or close to the route. If not found despite calling and listening, the walker is assumed lost and an organised and equipped search party is needed. Study the terrain and map and assess where a lost walker is likely to go.

- 4 **Time-limited search.** If plenty of daylight is available, assess whether a time-limited search is feasible. Record the grid reference of the area in which the person was last seen. Rejoin the rest of the party. Return to the cars and, if the walker is still lost, notify **Police Assistance** on **131 444** and an **Emergency Officer**. Do not dial **000**, as this is not yet a life-threatening incident.

Immobilising Injury

- 1 **Assess the situation**, see to first aid and split the group. If possible, leave at least three people with the injured walker. Do not leave the injured person unattended. Record the map grid reference for the location of the injured walker. Estimate the time needed for help to arrive. Leave food, water, clothing and equipment for the remaining group if the likely delay warrants it.
- 2 **Seek help.** A group of at least two led by an experienced walker with compass and map of the area must seek help. If death occurs, do not move the body. **PLB use.** If there is a serious injury in a remote locality, the activation of a PLB may be warranted. A life may be in danger. Internal and back injuries may become more complicated. This is a serious alert and emergency status. It will trigger a ground or helicopter search and rescue by **police** through **Emergency Management Australia** and an international satellite communications network.
- 3 **Call Police Assistance.** As soon as possible the leader of the seek-help group must contact **Police Assistance** on **131 444** and an **Emergency Officer**, possibly via a ranger. Advise police of the injury, condition and weight of the person to be carried. One of the seek-help group may be asked to guide the search party to the remaining group. Notify the **Emergency Officer** of the situation, of the action taken and whether any immediate action is required by the **Emergency Officer**.

Mobile injury

- If the injured person is mobile or can be carried and the return can be completed before dark, keep the group together. If not, consider stopping, sheltering and splitting the group. See notes on split parties under **Immobilising Injury**. The leader of the seek-help group must contact an **Emergency Officer** as soon as possible. The **Emergency Officer** may require a party to return to assist the delayed group. If so, one of the seek-help group will need to accompany the returning party.

Overdue group

- The leader of a group returning later than expected, and both leaders if the party has been split, must contact an **Emergency Officer** as soon as possible. The **Emergency Officer** can then notify those who have made contact to prevent a panic call to the police.

FIRST AID

The following notes about the treatment of **snake bites**, **heat exhaustion**, **heat stroke**, **hypothermia**, **sprains** and **broken bones** may be useful if the party does not include a person with first aid or medical qualifications.

Snake bites

- 1 **Snakes** are not normally aggressive and tend to bite only when they are threatened. Most snakes are venomous in Australia. Guide the party round a snake and have a stick to ward off a possible though rare attack. Otherwise, leave the snake alone.
- 2 **Treatment.** In the unlikely event of someone being bitten, always observe the following procedure. All snakebites must be treated as being potentially fatal (see PLB use notes above).
- 3 **Rest** and reassure the victim.
- 4 **Apply pressure immobilisation** over the bitten area and around the limb, using a crepe bandage about 15 cm wide. If a bandage is not available use clothing or a towel torn into strips. Apply the bandage firmly enough (as for a sprained ankle) to compress tissue but not so firmly as to restrict the flow of blood to the limb below the bandage.
- 5 **Bandage** from just above the fingers or toes and up the limb as far as possible.
- 6 **Immobilisation.** The limb must be kept as still as possible. Bind some type of splint to the limb, e.g. a stick or any rigid object, or bandage to the body or other limb.
- 7 **Bring transport** to the victim. Seek emergency help (see **Immobilising Injury** above). With quick emergency treatment and an unmoved patient, it can take days for the poison to travel through the body. Snake poison travels through the capillary blood vessels near the skin surface and not the main arteries and veins.
- 8 **Leave the bandages and splint on** until medical care is reached.
- 9 **Record a description of the snake** to assist medical aid.
- 10 **DO NOT wash the venom off** the skin as it may help in later identification.
- 11 **DO NOT cut the bitten area** or try to suck the venom out of the wound.
- 12 **DO NOT use a tourniquet bandage** that stops the flow of arterial blood.

Heat Exhaustion

- 1 **Cause.** The condition develops gradually and is caused by excessive heat and the loss of salt and water by sweating and evaporation from the surface of the body.
- 2 **Symptoms.** The victim feels hot with accompanying headache, dizziness, cramps, and nausea and has a **pale clammy skin**. **Rapid and weakening pulse and breathing** distinguish the condition from heat stroke. Unconsciousness may eventually occur if not treated.
- 3 **Treatment.** Rest the casualty in a cool, ventilated place and raise his legs. Give them plenty of water and follow with a weak salt solution (1 teaspoon per litre of water).
- 4 **Monitor and record** breathing, pulse and response every ten minutes.
- 5 **Call Police Assistance** on **131 444** or carry patient to a vehicle if the casualty's responses deteriorate. Notify an **Emergency Officer**.

Heat Stroke

- 1 **Cause.** The condition is caused by a failure of the "thermostat" in the brain. The body becomes dangerously overheated due to a fever or prolonged exposure to heat.
- 2 **Symptoms.** The victim feels hot with accompanying headache, dizziness, confusion and restlessness and has a **hot, flushed and dry skin**. **A full, bounding pulse** distinguishes the condition from heat exhaustion. Body temperature can rise above 40°C. The condition can occur suddenly, causing unconsciousness within minutes.

- 3 **Treatment.** Rest the casualty in a cool, ventilated place and remove outer clothing. Ideally wrap them in a cold, wet sheet but otherwise constantly fan or sponge them with cold water to reduce their temperature.
- 4 **Monitor and record** breathing, pulse and response every ten minutes.
- 5 **Call Emergency** on **000** as the condition is potentially life-threatening. Notify an **Emergency Officer**.

Hypothermia (over-exposure to cold)

- 1 **Cause.** The condition is commonly caused as a result of wind chill, wet clothing or insufficient warm clothing and is life-threatening if not treated promptly. It can also occur by prolonged immersion in cold water.
- 2 **Symptoms.** A cold feeling and **uncontrollable shivering**, excessive fatigue, problems with vision, faintness, cramps, slurred speech and stumbling. In severe cases, when the core temperature starts to drop, shivering may cease and the **pulse will become slow and shallow**. At around 30°C body temperature, unconsciousness is likely and the heart rhythm can dither with the possibility of heart arrest.
- 3 **Treatment.** Protect the casualty and yourself from wind, rain, cold and wet ground if possible. Remove wet clothing if inside. Wrap the casualty in warm and dry clothing. If possible, put the casualty in a warm sleeping bag. Use a space blanket or survival bag as further insulation from cold and wet. If the casualty is conscious, give warm fluids (not alcohol). **DO NOT** attempt to speed up the warming process.
- 4 **Call Emergency** on **000** as the condition is potentially life-threatening. Notify an **Emergency Officer**.
- 5 **Prevention.** Wear warm inner clothing and windproof and waterproof outer clothing. Have adequate sleeping bags and covers if planning to be out overnight. Eat enough food before departure and take sufficient food and drink (not alcohol) with you. If caught in bad weather take shelter early and watch for signs of cold exposure. Take steps to avoid more physical activity than is necessary when conditions are extremely cold.

Sprains and broken bones

- 1 Sprained ankles and knees and pulled leg and back muscles are perhaps the most likely injury on a bushwalk. Strap up with elastic bandage and be prepared to abandon the walk to escort the patient out to a car.
- 2 Broken bones and injured backs are a more serious injury if the patient cannot walk. Immobilise a broken limb and consider options for getting the patient to hospital, i.e. carrying out, calling **Police Assistance** on **131 444** or using a **PLB**.

Drinking water

Unfortunately some of the rivers and creeks in south-eastern Australia are no longer free from bugs (**E. coli** and **Giardia lamblia**). If in doubt about its quality, water should either be boiled (one minute rolling boil) or treated with an iodine-based purifier, e.g. 8 drops of Betadine per litre (shake and then allow the water to sit for 20 minutes before consuming). Not all filters cope with "everything", so do read the details carefully if you are using a filter.

If a walker has no water left, it is preferable for them to drink untreated water than risk dehydration and collapse. It takes 7 – 14 days for giardiasis to develop and it can be treated with antibiotics if symptoms later occur.

EMERGENCY OFFICERS

- 1 On being advised that a walker is overdue, record the caller's telephone number, name and whether the overdue person has a medical problem.
- 2 Assess the walk and leader from any prior knowledge and for possible causes of a late return.
- 3 Reassure the caller as best you can. Causes for late returns include minor injury, a lost or delayed group, vehicle breakdown or stopping for a meal on the way home. If one member of the group is lost or injured there should be a split group walking out to obtain assistance. The leader should be trying to contact an **Emergency Officer**.
- 4 Contact the other **Emergency Officer** and the **Club President** to see if they know there is an emergency or to advise them that there is one.
- 5 If the overdue walker has a medical problem, or if a split group has advised of an emergency, immediately telephone **Police Assistance on 131 444**. The police will need to know the starting point, the expected route, the experience of the group, the expected time of return and whether, to your knowledge, any of the group has a health problem.
- 6 The leader should have the list of walkers in one of the cars at the start point. From this, searchers can determine the size, composition and membership of the missing group and whether there were any changes to the route before the party started walking. Leaders are advised not to display the list, so the searchers will need to know what vehicle to break into to get at it.
- 7 If the overdue walker has no medical problem and weather conditions are benign, allow a reasonable time for the overdue group to return. 'Reasonable time' has to be assessed by the **Emergency Officer** from the type and length of the walk and the drive back to the meeting point. If in doubt, assume a worst case situation and notify **Police Assistance on 131 444**.
- 8 Once contacted, stay by the telephone until the situation is resolved. Contact and delegate a club member with experience of the walk to be available to advise police, accepting that police and emergency services do not always seek such advice.
- 9 Each year the **Emergency Officers** will need a list of members, addresses and telephone numbers from the Secretary.

Further Information

Further copies and information on these notes can be obtained from the Walks Officer or the Training & Development Officer (see the current Walks and Social Program for contact details).