

GUIDE FOR WALKS AND ACTIVITY LEADERS

June 2011



Introduction

This guide is intended to inform leaders of the Club's requirements and to share some experience from other leaders to help you run successful walks and other activities.

Becoming a Leader

If you are interested in leading trips with the club please discuss this with the Walks Coordinator or another experienced leader. There may be areas of your knowledge or skills you would like to improve before leading a trip and they will also explain the forms that need to be completed. The Walks Coordinator will recommend you be accepted as an activity leader to the committee once they are comfortable that you can meet the Club's requirements.

Safety and Risk Assessment when Planning a Walk/Activity

The main issues to be considered are:

- Vehicle accident - road safety, driver fatigue
- Getting Lost - one person or whole party overdue
- Extreme Climatic Conditions - Hypothermia or heatstroke
- Bushfire
- Difficult Terrain or Activities e.g. arduous or very steep ground (injury or fatigue)
- Participant requiring First Aid
- Flooded Rivers, ocean tides (drowning or swept off rocks)
- Medical Emergency – e.g asthma, heart condition, diabetes

A Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment & Control Table is attached which details controls for each hazard listed. Leaders should consider if any of these hazards apply to their activity and incorporate the controls in their planning. A short discussion with another club leader who has already done the trip/activity will also help identify any other potential problems you may need to consider.

Club members are responsible for bringing sufficient and appropriate gear/equipment for the trip being undertaken and for following the leader's directions whilst on the walk/activity. They should also carry their "Emergency Contact and Medical Information" form in a sealed plastic envelope in their pack/bag.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Generally, the leader should have a skill level sufficient for the trip/activity and it is recommended that leaders have done a first aid course at some time. Most leaders have acquired their skills by going on trips and constantly seeking to improve their skills particularly in leadership.

However, a leader needs to be aware of many things: planning, identification of hazards and how to control them, weather, equipment, first aid and group management. For nominated trips this also includes the club's Emergency Contact System and emergency response and for some trips, campcraft and navigation. Contact the Walks Coordinator if you feel you need to improve your skills. The BMTAB Handbook also has more details on these topics.

Trip Planning

Before the Trip

- Discuss your plans with the Walks Coordinator/ Program Committee, agree on the grade of the trip, description and dates for inclusion in the Walks Program. Include details for the Emergency contact if this is relevant.
- Learn all you can about the area you are visiting. The best source is other club leaders who will be happy to help you. Ideally, you will know the area already.
- Be sure all of your party is capable of the trip. Ask about any medical conditions.
- Obtain any permissions or permits from land owners or National Park staff.
- Participants are responsible for their own transport arrangements. However, in the event of car pooling, passengers are expected to contribute towards fuel costs.
- Plan for the possibility of an emergency, consider the number of participants, how many are experienced and any escape routes and alternative plans. Consider what first aid items might be needed and taking a mobile phone or the club PLB.
- Use the Trip Participants sheet to record details of participants.
- Inform all participants of details of the trip, any special gear, water points and meeting times. You may wish to distribute an information sheet, including a copy of the map. (if relevant) Remind participants of the expectation that they carry their up-to-date "Emergency Contact and Medical Information" form in a sealed plastic envelope in their pack.
- Check the weather forecast and any warnings.
- Check for any warnings related to Fire Danger Ratings.
- Do not hesitate to cancel an event if the conditions are not safe to proceed.

On the Trip

- Bear in mind that the car travel is probably the most dangerous part of the trip.
- Check everyone is together, brief the party before setting off.
- Ensure visitors sign the "Acknowledgement of Risk and Obligations of Temporary Members" Form.
- Keep the party together as far as practical and appoint a whip if necessary. Very large parties may be split into smaller groups, each with their own leader.
- Do regular head counts
- On walks, encourage Minimum Impact Bushwalking by example.
- Be prepared to consult with, and assign another experienced member to assist others during the activity if any difficulties arise.

At the end of the Trip

- Make certain everyone has arrived.
- Check that all vehicles will start before anyone heads home. It is usually the last to leave who has problems.
- Notify the Emergency Contact (if one has been appointed) of your safe completion of the Trip.
- Arrange a trip report for the next meeting and the Newsletter.
- Give a copy of your Trip Participants Form and any "Visitor" Forms to the Walks Coordinator for filing.
- Discuss any incident of concern, such as an injury, with the Walks Coordinator and complete the "Incident Report Form".

Legal Questions and Insurance

All good leaders have a responsible attitude and apply common sense. In law this is expressed as a duty of care: “The duty of care on the part of a leader is to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which he/she can reasonably foresee would be likely to injure persons who are closely and directly affected by them. The standard of care is that of a reasonable or prudent leader.” Our best guide on this point is to imagine what another competent leader would do in the circumstances.

Leaders should also note that they are not guarantors of safety. That is, an accident is not automatically the leader’s fault. The injured party must prove that the leader was negligent in their duties and that the negligence led to the injury.

The Club has Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance through Bushwalking Victoria. The insurance company will not provide cover for certain activities such as rockclimbing. These exclusions may change from time to time, so check current BWV documentation for details. The insurance also covers visitors. Visitors (referred to as “Temporary Members”) are required to sign an “Acknowledgement of Risks and Obligations of Temporary Members” Form *for each trip undertaken*. An “Acknowledgement of Risk” form is also required to be completed *annually* by members and by new members at the time of joining the club.

Any incident of concern should be raised with the Walks Coordinator, for the benefit of all leaders. In the event of an incident on a trip such as a serious injury, write down all the details in case of an insurance claim. There is an “Incident Report Form” for recording these details.

Participants

The trip leader should check, to the extent possible, that participants have the skills and equipment appropriate to the level of difficulty of the trip, and have the right to refuse participation if it is their opinion that this is not the case. A trip leader must report his or her decision to preclude a participant from a trip to the Walks Coordinator, stating the reason(s).

If during a trip it becomes apparent to the trip leader that a participant has

- been inadequately equipped for the trip being undertaken OR
- behaved in a manner detrimental to the group (such as wandering off or ignoring the instructions of the leader)

the trip leader must report this situation to the Walks Coordinator and complete an “Incident Report Form”.

The club will support a leader’s right to refuse to accept anyone on a trip.

For Extended Walks or where an Emergency Contact has been Nominated

- You must be familiar with the Emergency Contact System.
- The names of the participants and their emergency contact phone numbers must be given to the nominated Emergency Contact one week prior to the walk together with a copy of the Trip Intentions Form. Refer to the Emergency Contact System for the details.
- Specifically check - campsites, water, times, tracks, escape routes and hazards.
- Travel times can be estimated –“As a rough guide for the average party allow 1 hr for every 3-4K on a smooth flat track, 1-2K in rough terrain. Add an additional hour for every 500m ascent and 1000m decent” (refer BWV booklet ‘Walksafe for more details or “Bushwalking & Ski Touring Leadership – 3rd edition 2000”)

Navigation and Communication Equipment

The club has a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon), that is available for Club activities and for hire by Members.

Hire Equipment

The club has several items of camping equipment available for hire to members.

Forms and Guides for Leaders

- Trip Planning Checklist for Leaders
- Trip Participants Form
- Acknowledgement of Risks and Obligations of Temporary Members Form
- Incident Report Form
- Emergency Contact System
- Trip Intentions Form

Samples are attached - current editions are available at club nights or from the Walks Coordinator or via the 'Downloads' tab on the club's website, www.sgwaac.org.au.

Leadership is a large topic and there are many books on the subject. The excellent Handbook of the Bushwalking and Mountaineering Training Advisory Board, "Bushwalking and Ski Touring Leadership" is a recommended text for further reading. Bushwalking Victoria's brochure "Walksafe" contains basic information and checklists. Copies of both are in the club library.

The Committee wish you a good trip!