

Safety and First Aid: Club Notes for Members

General

Although walking is a low risk and very enjoyable activity we need to be prepared for unexpected incidents and the following section highlights a few relevant aspects to support your and your fellow walkers' safety.

We all know that weather forecasts can be 'slightly out'. The weather can be wetter/colder than forecast but also hotter and drier. The forecasts can also be accurate, and we walk in a wide range of conditions.

As well as dressing and packing to match the weather and terrain conditions, we need to pack to cover things not going to plan as well as to match the weather forecast and walk description. We may need to help somebody. This can lead to us being out longer than expected and standing/sitting around or walking slowly. We may therefore be exposed to the weather for longer than planned. It can get very cold under such situations. In the shorter day months, we should also carry a torch (ideally headtorch) 'just in case' especially on our remoter walks (obviously with charged batteries...!). We should also remember that walks also take place in hot, sunny conditions, and we also need to consider protection and drinks for those days.

Members walk at their own risk. Every effort is made to support members' safety. However, neither the Club nor the walk leader can accept liability for any accident.

- You should be dressed, packed and equipped for the weather and environment for the walk and should feel free to contact the walk leader to discuss what might be appropriate. The walk description is intended to help you with your equipment decisions. Do carry additional layers in the colder months. Exposure is a risk that should be managed, personal 'bivvy bags' should be considered for remoter and more exposed routes. Don't just pack for comfort but also for safety.
- Also, in turning up for a walk, you are judging that you are well and fit enough to make and complete the walk as it has been described. Do let the leader know if you take life-saving medication, in case something happens to you.
- Leaders are entitled to refuse a walker who in their opinion could not safely complete the walk. (To our knowledge this has never happened).

First Aid

- All leaders are given first-aid kits including foil blankets (but they do not carry any medication), and the Club may occasionally offer a first-aid training course to members. Individual members should carry a few personal first aid items e.g. a few plasters, your preferred pain relief, blister plasters, antihistamine, sunscreen and tick removal devices.
- Leaders consider in advance any risks on their planned route, such as rocks, cliff edges, etc

- The Chair keeps the Club's Incident records. Please let him/her know of any incident, including what advice and action was taken at the time, with dates. (An incident report form is available to download from the Club's website or may be completed and submitted on-line).

Livestock

- We walk through many fields with livestock grazing quite contentedly. However, we know not all members are comfortable around cattle and horses. The walk leaders will do their best, but cattle are moved around, so a pre-walk may not identify a field with cattle. You should let the walk leader know at the beginning of the walk if you have any livestock concerns. They may be able to adjust the route, but often this may not be practical. The advice below is based on information provided by Ramblers.
 - *Firstly, cases of injury to walkers by animals are rare. The majority of the most serious incidents involve the presence of a dog. Cattle may approach you simply because they are curious; remember you are in their living room.*
 - *Before entering a field of livestock take a moment to note where they are and how they are behaving. Contented cattle usually graze in silence. Signs that the herd are agitated are repeated vocalisation and running around the field. If cows with calves are doing this it is a particular warning sign. If you feel uncomfortable do not enter the field and find another route.*
 - *Groups should keep together while crossing the field with the more nervous members in the middle of the group. If possible, go around the outside of the herd rather than keeping strictly to the line of the right of way. Never pass between a cow and her calf. If you feel threatened, do not run. Stop and spread out your arms to make yourself appear as big as possible.*
 - *Do not feed horses or any other animals; they may be on a special diet.*
 - *Finally, remember that landowners are required by law to protect Right of Way users from animals that may be aggressive and serious incidents should be reported to the HSE. (The news recently has been carrying items prompted by NFU updating its guidance to farmers and producing useful information sheets to link to the Countryside Code).*
- The walk leaders will be able to organise the grouping of fellow walkers and may also be able to organise a small group that will encourage the livestock to move from the route.

Emergency Contacts

We recommend that everyone carry a card with contact information in case of emergency (sometimes called 'ICE'). This information should be durable and weather-proof and attached/held somewhere obvious on a rucksack loop.

Use of Mobile Phones

- Many mobile phones provide the option of calling the emergency services (999) without having to login, i.e. without knowing someone's passcode. Look for 'emergency' on the first screen.
- Phone owners can usually enter emergency contact & medical information on their phone, and this can be accessed by others as described above.
- Even if your phone shows 'no service', when you dial 999 the phone will check all networks, not just yours. Moreover, we recommend that you register your mobile phone for emergency services, so even with terrible or zero signal you can *send a text* to 999. See <https://1firstaid1.co.uk/calling-999-with-no-phone-signal/> . The text should provide the expected information – location, casualty/ies, status, and group information.
- 112' is an alternative to 999. In the UK it's no different from 999, but it's the emergency number across EU and many other countries, so it is easy to remember.
- We encourage walkers to install the 'What3Words' app (<https://what3words.com>) on smartphones - this gives a precise position even in any remote countryside. You should also install the Grid Ref OS app provided by Ordnance Survey. Rescue teams prefer a grid reference.

Apps and Websites with guides

- For a guide to first aid procedures for walkers, please see <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice> . However, to have a guide handy on your phone, we recommend that you download an 'App', such as 'St John Ambulance First Aid' or 'First Aid by British Red Cross' from your app store.

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