

Guidelines: Emergency Response

BACKGROUND

It is possible that during the course of participating in a Club activity a member of the group could become separated from the group, fall seriously ill, suffer severe injury or die. (Training for dealing with illness or injury is provided in the Remote Area First Aid Training courses.) A group may discover a body or come across evidence of an illegal activity.

These events could become the subject of a police investigation and media speculation and reporting. They could also be the subject of formal enquiry and litigation involving the Leader, other members of the group, and the Club.

This guideline addresses the Club's response to an emergency. It should be read in conjunction with the Club's Guidelines **Group Overdue** and **Participant becomes Separated from the Group**.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDELINE

The objectives of the guideline are to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- The Police are informed.
- If a Club member is involved, his or her Contact Person is notified.
- Accurate and timely information is provided to the media and others.
- Documentation of the emergency is completed at the time or as soon as possible afterwards.
- Finally, that ongoing training is provided to Leaders and members of the Club.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Leader (or alternate)

- Notify the Leader's Contact Person for the walk or activity. If unable to do this, and the matter is serious, the Leader should contact one of the other Club office bearers, or the Police,
- At the first available opportunity or progressively, document what has occurred.
- Carry out any other responsibilities as advised by the contact person.
- In the situation where a body is found or there is evidence of an illegal activity, **do not disturb the site in any way and avoid any person at or near the site**. Record details of the location, photograph the site, and report to the Police as soon as possible. Also brief the Club's President as soon as practicable.

Club Emergency Contact (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer)

- Inform all available Club Committee members and discuss the circumstances.
- Access Club records and ascertain the personal contact details of any members involved.
- Brief the member's personal contact person and arrange assistance and support as required. Depending on the circumstances the Police may be better able to carry this out.
- Document details of the emergency and the actions that have been taken.
- Select a spokesperson for the emergency event, normally the Club President.
- Refer all media enquiries to that spokesperson.
- Provide assistance to other members of the activity group. This may include counseling and debriefing.
- If a member of the Club is involved, advise the Club insurance broker and Confederation, and seek further advice.

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Club Members

- Refer all media and other inquiries to the nominated Club spokesperson.
- Refrain from speculation and do not make media statements.
- Assist as requested by the Club Officer.

Club Spokesperson

- Be available to make a statement of facts only.
- Do not speculate about cause or liability. If the situation is being investigated and the details are unclear at the moment, say so.
- Offer to provide details when they become available.
- Take advice from the Police in these matters.
- Do not lie or cover up. The true facts will eventually emerge through police inquiries or coronial inquest. This could take some time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- The Club Officers are listed on the Club Program and should be contacted in relation to this Guideline.
- Newcastle Police 02 4929 0999 (who will contact the appropriate local Police station on the Club's behalf).

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs Wilderness Rescue Service may be able to provide advice and assist in any search efforts. To contact phone 132 222, ask for pager number 6277 321 and leave your name and contact phone number with a brief message. BWRS personnel will make contact to collect all relevant information and discuss a course of action.

REFERENCES

Bushwalking and Ski Touring Leadership – Bushwalking Mountaincraft Training Advisory Board
Remote Area First Aid – Field Guide –St John Ambulance Australia
New South Wales Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs Website – FAQ's