

Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club

Guidelines: Participant Becomes Separated from the Group

BACKGROUND

It is possible that a participant in a Club activity could become separated from the group and result in it being delayed and becoming overdue. It may be necessary to implement the Club's Emergency Response Guidelines and to prepare to assist Police in a search for the missing member.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Club's **Emergency Response** Guidelines and the **Walking Group is Overdue** Guidelines.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDELINES

The objectives of these guidelines are to ensure, as far as practicable that:

- The risk of a participant becoming lost or separated from a group activity is minimized.
- Participants are aware of the action they should take if they become separated from the group.
- Leaders and Club officers know what they should do to locate a lost group member.

and if necessary,

- the Club's Emergency Response Guidelines are implemented, the member's Contact Person is advised and the Police are informed.
- Finally, that ongoing training is provided to Leaders and members of the Club.

RESPONSIBILITIES PRIOR TO AND DURING THE ACTIVITY

Leader

- Where groups are larger than 12 persons the Leader should nominate a deputy leader and/or 'Tail End Charlie' to bring up the rear of a party. The 'Tail End Charlie' should always be the last person in the group, or have the last person in sight at all times.
- The Risk Assessment conducted prior to the activity commencing should state the need to stay together. The Sign-on Sheet should be filled in completely to include participants' mobile telephone numbers and the number plate details of those vehicles used in the activity or to get to the meeting point for the activity.
- Do not allow the group to string out or have faster walkers in advance without your knowledge.
- Give instructions for participants to wait at the next intersection or land mark.
- The group should generally walk at the pace of the slowest walker, and pause frequently enough to allow slower walkers to catch up and have a rest if necessary.
- Where there is a change in direction or alternate route, check that all participants are on the right track.

Participants

- Keep in sight of the person in front and behind. Do not proceed in advance of the Leader without the Leader's knowledge and do not proceed past any track intersection without first checking with the Leader. Wait for the group to catch up.
- Do not allow yourself to get too far behind the group through photography or other activities. Tell the Leader or someone if you are going to get behind for toileting or any other reason.

- Take note of people telling you that they are going to fall behind the group.
- In addition to a first aid kit, participants are encouraged to carry a mobile telephone, pen and paper, and to make a note of the Leader's phone contact details.
- Make sure your personal Contact Person is aware that there are Overdue Guidelines and knows how to contact Club Officers.

RESPONSIBILITIES IF A PARTICIPANT BECOMES SEPARATED

Leader

- Return to the location where the participant was last seen.
- Attract attention by calling out, or by blowing your whistle (three times) and listen for a response.
- Look for signs from the missing person, eg, paper notes, cairns, arrows or words on the ground.
- In searching from that location there may be a number of options depending on the group, its size, experience and capability. You may decide to split the group, give explicit instructions and achieve a greater search coverage.
- The duration of the search should be at least one hour. Consider leaving some of the group at the search location and send part of the group for help.
- If the participant has not been located after an hour, it is possible that he or she has decided to find their own way out. On the other hand the participant may be injured and unable to respond to calls.
- Consider lighting a fire to serve as a beacon for the lost walker.
- Above all, have regard for the safety of the group. When all reasonable efforts have been made to find the missing person, the group should return to cars/transport.

Participant

- Return to the location where the group was last seen if that is possible, otherwise stay put in a safe location, and **stay calm**. Turn your mobile phone on.
- Otherwise, do not walk around, wait for the group to return and find you.
- **Be aware that if you move on, you may be going in the wrong direction and move out of the initial search area, making it much longer and harder to locate you.**
- Attract attention by calling out or by blowing your whistle (three times) and listen for a response. Try using your mobile telephone to contact a member of the group.

If after a reasonable time, or by dusk, you have not been located, the options are

- Make yourself comfortable and prepare for a longer wait. You may have to light a fire and prepare to stay the night. You may even have to get some form of shelter or set up a camp if your wait is long, towards nightfall or in bad weather.
- The next morning, if you have a map and compass and are confident you can find your own way out, leave prominent trail marks for searchers to follow (paper with a stone on it, cairns, arrows etc).

If you do find your own way out, make sure that you contact the Leader, or other Club officer or the local Police station as soon as possible and tell them you are safe.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Club's emergency response procedures are stated in the **Emergency Response Guidelines**.

If a lost participant has not been located, Club Officers would after discussion, arrange for a search group to try and find the missing person. This would be arranged in consultation with Police and may involve the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs' Wilderness Rescue Service.

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 station on the Club's behalf). Be prepared to provide details of the person's name, age, address, when and where last seen, map references, physical and mental condition, outdoors skills, knowledge of area, clothing worn, equipment and food, and the member's contact person.

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs' Wilderness Rescue Service is a secondary contact that is 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 with you.

References

Bushwalking and Ski Touring Leadership – Bushwalking Mountaineering Training Advisory Board

Remote Area First Aid – Field Guide – St John Ambulance Australia

New South Wales Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs Website – FAQ's