



**RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
BUSHWALKING VICTORIA
MEMBER CLUBS**

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DISCLAIMER

This document is intended to assist Bushwalking Victoria member clubs to systematically apply risk management to all their activities. Bushwalking Victoria Inc. A0002548Y does not accept responsibility for errors or omissions in this document or for the manner in which the information contained in this document is interpreted or implemented.

These guidelines are for voluntary application to the activities of member clubs and will not cover each and every circumstance of a club's activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information about managing risk associated with bushwalking club activities please contact the secretary of Bushwalking Victoria; secretary@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au or 8846 4131.

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INTRODUCTION

Bushwalking clubs in Victoria can rightly be proud of their safety record over the years. It would be fair to say that clubs take care to ensure that their activities are sufficiently well planned and conducted so as to be enjoyable - even challenging- without mishap to person or property. Clubs are already, formally or informally, putting their minds to risk management.

Bushwalking Victoria has a risk management policy to:

- Introduce walkers to the principles, concepts and practices of risk management in the context of a bushwalking clubs' activities
- Give clubs the guidelines to help them develop good risk management practices.

These guidelines are designed to help clubs be systematic about risk management and to implement a risk management program suitable for their range of activities.

There is a link between risk management and insurance in that a risk management program aims “*to implement actions that reduce the likelihood and consequence of undesirable events. Insurance is the safety net that provides financial protection in the event that something goes wrong.*”

These guidelines are only to do with risks to health, safety and damage to property, that is, those events that fall within the ambit of public liability. There are other risks that clubs may wish to consider and decide if controls are appropriate. These include risks to the environment, and risks to the public image and standing of bushwalking itself. The “Walksafe” booklet provides excellent guidance about all these issues (as well as about health and safety).

Duty of Care

Duty of care has been described as follows:

“You must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which you can reasonably foresee would be likely to injure your neighbour. Who, then, in law is my neighbour? The answer seems to be – persons who are closely and directly affected by my act that I ought reasonably to have them in contemplation as being so affected when I am directing my mind to the acts or omissions which are called in question”

Liability occurs when a duty of care was owed and that duty was then breached. Public liability is when the loss, injury or damage is to person or property.

In terms of bushwalking clubs, the test of a walk leader’s duty of care could be:

What a reasonably prudent walk leader would do to take reasonable care to avoid exposing fellow walkers (having regard to their age, experience, skill and other individual matters) to unreasonable risks of injury or loss.

Reading the description of duty of care, it’s clear that we all have a duty of care. In terms of bushwalking, all walkers need to take reasonable care to avoid exposing any person including other walkers to unreasonable risk of injury or loss.

¹IEA Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd. “Insurance Manual” presented as part of a Practical Risk Management Workshop co-sponsored by Vicsport.

²Donoghue v. Stephenson, 1932 AC 562 (per Lord Atkin).

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is a three step process used to effectively control risks. At the end of this section Table 1 gives bushwalking examples to illustrate this process. The process steps are:

Step 1: Identify hazards

Step 2: Assess risks

Step 3: Control risks.

Step 1: Identify hazards

A hazard is a situation with the potential for harm to life, health or property.

The first column of Table 1 on page 6 lists some hazards relevant to bushwalking. (There may be more hazards or other ways of categorising them - this is just one approach.)

Step 2: Assess risks

The risk is the chance of this potential for harm being realised. Risk can be assessed using a formal scoring method based on likelihood and consequences. While this is not absolutely necessary, it helps the club put its collective mind to identifying the hazards relevant to its activities and deciding on the appropriate risk controls.

A simple way of obtaining a risk rating is to plot Likelihood and Consequence into a matrix like this:

Likelihood	Consequence			
	Critical	High	Medium	Low
Almost certain	High risk	High risk	Medium risk	<i>Low risk</i>
Likely	High risk	High risk	Medium risk	<i>Low risk</i>
Moderate	High risk	High risk	Medium risk	<i>Low risk</i>
<i>Unlikely</i>	<i>Low risk</i>	<i>Low risk</i>	<i>Low risk</i>	<i>Low risk</i>

Look across the columns for the consequence that matches your hazard. Then look down the rows for the probability of the hazard occurring for the particular activity you are considering. Where the column and row meet gives you the risk rating. The risk rating is a guide to what degree of control action is required.

Columns 2 to 4 in Table 1 contain examples of risk assessment for certain bushwalking hazards.

Step 3: Control risks

Once you have identified hazards and assessed risks, you next decide on what is an appropriate control of that risk.

For bushwalking clubs, the controls are likely to be agreed club rules about how the club's activities are planned and undertaken; about checklists of appropriate gear; about participants' behaviour; and agreed procedures for particular situations.

Many bushwalking clubs already have a set of rules or agreed behaviours that, consciously or unconsciously, were designed to control risk. In other words they have identified hazards, assessed the risks, and decided on appropriate ways to control those risks.

A club may decide that certain hazards, while they may have a very high consequence also have such a low likelihood that overall there is low risk and formal controls are not warranted. Other hazards may be high likelihood but sufficiently low consequence to be low risk and again the club decides it would be unnecessary restrictive to introduce formal controls.

The thought process goes something like this:

Is it reasonable to accept the risk as is? (That is, it is a low risk?). Should there be controls to lessen the likelihood or mitigate the consequences? Or, is it an unacceptable risk under any circumstances - so that the control is a total ban?

Take the risk of snake bite:

- *Gaiters or long trousers are a control that lessens the likelihood of harm occurring*
- *A properly applied snake bite bandage is a control that mitigates the consequence*
- *But certain locations may be of such high risk that we just don't go there.*

(This example does not exhaust the ways of controlling the risk of snake bite.)

Low risks can be addressed with some simple precautionary measures such as:

- advisory notes;
- verbal reminders;
- checklists; or
- simple training.

The higher risks might require more definite actions such as:

- compulsory gear checks before a trip,
- a required training qualification or proven competency;
- a certain level of fitness;
- perhaps a decision to call off or abort a trip.

The right hand column in Table 1 contains examples of controls that might be appropriate for the various situations listed. The actions (or controls) are suggestions only. Each club has its own particular mix of skills, activities and types of locations of activities, which will influence what it decides, are reasonable controls for the activities it undertakes.

For example, not all clubs or all walks may have "Leader" as a designated role. A group may jointly plan a walk and be jointly satisfied that their combined skills and abilities are appropriate for the planned activity. In this case all participants would assume responsibility for the risk controls.

Walksafe is a good source of information about how to minimise risks in bushwalking.

Walksafe is a Bushwalking Victoria publication that can be downloaded from www.bushwalkingvictoria.org.au or hard copies are available from Bushwalking Victoria office.

TABLE 1: RISK MANAGEMENT BUSHWALKING EXAMPLES

Hazard	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating	Some examples of controls (Not exhaustive)
Building (premises) fire or other emergency	Unlikely	Critical	Low risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club meetings start with a reminder about emergency exits and evacuation procedures
Bush fire	Moderate (Mid summer - walk in remote bush for example) (Each time will be different)	High	High risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk leader must check with local park ranger before starting a walk in a forest area during fire season. • A radio and mobile phone must be carried on extended walks during the fire season to check daily fire status • Overnight walkers to take food that doesn't require a stove. • Research the walk area in terms of fire zone, emergency exit routes • Consider cancellation • No day walks in forest areas on a total fire ban day.
Extreme cold	Likely (overnight forecast below 0°C for example)	Critical	High risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing checklist for remote areas, mountain areas. • Gear checklist for overnight walks. • Leader must confirm that party members are carrying minimum clothing requirements (include day walks if cold conditions and off trail). • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education
Extreme heat				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing checklist. • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education
Dehydration				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear checklist (all types of walk) includes water bottle. • Leader (remote and extended walks) must make every attempt to confirm water availability and inform party members if special measures required.eg. carry extra water • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education
Extreme terrain or activities				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club has a grading system for activities so that participants know what to expect. • Leader must inform party members of the nature of the activity and terrain • Leader must be satisfied that participants have the appropriate skills and abilities • Leader must ensure appropriate equipment is carried.
Snake bite				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear checklist includes gaiters, snake bite bandage • Club provides health / safety emergency response training /education

Hazard	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating	Some examples of controls (Not exhaustive)
Flooded rivers, seas, tides				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a walk involves river crossings after heavy rain in catchment areas, leader must make every attempt to check status of rivers and bridges and plan an alternative route. • Leader must check if the safety of a coastal walk is affected by tide or local weather conditions. • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education.
Electrical storm				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education.
Property damage				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club protocols about private property, gates, animals, vehicles, control of children etc.
Vehicle accident				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club protocols about driving distances, sharing driving, finish time of walks.
Search & Rescue costs				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader must ensure there are sufficient people with navigational skills and sufficient navigation equipment (maps, compasses, gps etc) appropriate to the remoteness, terrain and conditions of the activity. • Club protocols to regroup at track junctions, maintain sight contact on untracked or poorly marked routes, larger groups to appoint a whip as well as a leader, etc • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education • Leader to ensure communication devices appropriate to the remoteness of the area are carried eg mobile or satellite phone, EPIRB.
Health condition or disability				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants must inform leader in advance of any condition or disability that may affect their ability to participate safely in the activity.
Children				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are responsible for children's behaviour and safety • Parents must inform leaders in advance if they wish to bring children on certain activities.
Medical emergency				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum number of 4 walkers • Carry a mobile or satellite phone or EPIRB as appropriate to the remoteness of the area • Plan trip to include quick exit routes • Club provides health / safety emergency-response training /education. •

SETTING UP A RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

As well as deciding how to best control risks, a systematic approach makes sure that:

- All club members understand their roles and responsibilities
- All club members know the risk controls that have been decided
- New members receive induction
- There is an agreed way to deal with club procedures or rules not being followed
- Incidents – (or “near misses”) where something could have gone wrong - are reviewed to learn from and possibly revise club practices
- The risk management program is regularly checked for ongoing relevance and effectiveness
- There are emergency procedures.

These aspects are discussed in the following sections.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Trip Leaders

Clubs are likely to have a particular set of risk management guidelines for trip leaders

Club members

Clubs might include a policy statement in their risk management guidelines that each and every club member has a duty of care to other club members and the public at large.

Clubs might define members' responsibilities about, for example:

- Children's attendance on club activities
- Individual's health or fitness being suitable for the activities attended

Clubs might assign particular risk management roles about, for example:

- Training
- Induction
- Incident review

Visitors

Clubs could consider:

- Designated person or standard procedure to ensure visitors undertake suitable activities and are aware of club procedures
- Acknowledgement of risk. Visitors are covered under Bushwalking Victoria's current public liability insurance policy as “temporary members” of a club as long as they sign an Acknowledgement of Risk. The main aim of this is to ensure that visitors are aware of the possible risks associated with bushwalking and their responsibilities. See page 12 for form.

Office Bearers

Clubs might assign particular risk management responsibilities to office bearers such as:

- Annual review of risk management program

Minimum numbers

Clubs might consider making a minimum number of participants mandatory for walks. A generally accepted minimum is four people

COMMUNICATION

How will your club communicate its risk management program to all members?

Working through the process of hazard identification, assessment of risk and decision about controls, as a club, will help make everyone aware of the risk management program.

Clubs may already have rules, protocols, procedures and checklists which include risk management measures.

Most likely, the club will document a set of rules, protocols and checklists which can be collated into a single manual. The manual or various checklists and forms might be distributed to all members, and included in an "induction" package for new members.

Specific documents a club might produce are:

- Description of grading system (easy, medium hard etc)
- Gear and clothing check lists for various grades and types of activities
- Protocols for day walks
- Protocols for overnight or extended walks etc
- Leaders checklist – various activities
- Attendance list *pro forma*
- Visitor's registration and acknowledgement of risk form.

A club may designate someone to manage the documentation, including recording who has received what document or training, so that no-one is overlooked.

Prominent use of checklists by leaders, for example at the start of a walk, or reference to protocols, will keep the program live in people's minds.

Clubs should consider formal or informal talks on safety-related topics, perhaps concentrating on a particular club rule or protocol for discussion; or members exchange experiences, display clothing and equipment and provide reminders of club rules and procedures.

Regular "Show and Tell" sessions at club meetings are an opportunity to relate discussion about gear to safety and risk management.

ADHERENCE & IMPROVEMENTS

Once a risk management system has been set up, how will your club maintain it? Will it be just another dusty manual on a shelf – a "good idea at the time"?

One method is to formalise a way of noting and reporting when:

1. the rules or protocols are not followed; or
2. to alert the club when the rules or protocols are not appropriate and need to be changed.

A simple form could be used, combined with a protocol for a committee or some designated club person to regularly check and act on the matters raised.

Another way is to have a standing agenda item in club or committee meetings to check member's views or concerns about the club's risk management program - whether the club's rules and protocols are still relevant, effective and being followed.

Clubs could consider formal or informal discussions on topics related to risk management where members exchange experiences, display clothing and equipment and provide reminders of club rules and procedures.

INCIDENTS

Occasions when things almost went seriously wrong are great learning opportunities. A formal method of considering these occurrences ensures the club gets the full benefit out of these “near misses”.

As above, a simple form could be used combined with a protocol for a committee or some designated club person to regularly check and act on the matters raised.

Consideration of incidents might be a standing agenda item in club or committee meetings. They usually excite lots of discussion!

The end result may be a change to club procedures, training or some other action that reduces the risk of such an event happening again.

REVIEW

Any management system can get out of date or drift into irrelevance as requirements change. To preserve the good work of the club in setting up a risk management program, it's a good idea to schedule regular reviews, maybe once a year, to check that the program is achieving its purpose.

This is the time to consider if the club's activities, membership or focus has changed to the extent of requiring new risk management strategies.

TRAINING

Much risk management is achieved through skills and knowledge. First aid and navigation are obvious skills relevant to most bush walking clubs.

Working through the risk management process will help clubs identify the skills and knowledge they need for their activities, to effectively manage risk. Clubs may decide to provide training in-house, or might encourage or require certain external training and have a training plan appropriate to their activities.

Clubs may identify existing training resources that can be used. The booklet “Walksafe” provides excellent information on the best accepted practice for safe and responsible walking in the Victorian bush.

Part of the induction of new members might be to give them a copy of Walksafe.

Some clubs keep records of who has what skills and who has been trained in what, as part of their risk management strategy.

EMERGENCY PLANS

Even with the best risk management, accidents and unforeseen events can happen.

Being prepared for an emergency will help to minimise any damage, injury, trauma or other consequences. Effective emergency response is a fundamental aspect of fulfilling one's duty of care.

An emergency situation will be much better managed if you are prepared. Some clubs have a rule of a minimum number on a walk (four is the generally accepted minimum) to be able to manage an emergency.

A lot of clubs have an emergency contact person and require that an activity plan or route plan is left with an appropriate person. It's also a good idea for clubs to make sure that they have emergency contact details for visitors ("temporary members").

Clubs might make a rule that consideration must be given to taking an EPIRB or satellite phone for trips in remote locations.

Most clubs include emergency response in their training plan.

"Walksafe" discusses prevention and action plans for a number of potential emergency events. It is an excellent resource for clubs in developing their emergency plans.

Bushwalking Victoria subsidises first aid training for members.

SAMPLE FORMS & GUIDELINES

The following pages contain some sample forms and guidelines.

Acknowledgement of Risk form

Incident Report form

Participant's Emergency Contact and Medical Information form

Bushwalking club Emergency Contact System

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

<i>Walksafe</i>	Bushwalking Victoria Inc
<i>Adventure Activity Standards</i>	Outdoor Recreation Centre Vic Inc
<i>Managing Risks in Outdoor Activities</i>	New Zealand Mountain Safety Council
<i>Bushwalking and Ski Touring Leadership Manual third edition 2000</i>	BMTAB - Distributed by Victorian Outdoor Education Association Inc
<i>Australian/New Zealand Standard Risk Management (AS/NZ 4360: 1999)</i>	Standards Australia

Sample

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISK FORM

Name of Club:

Leader's Name:

Type and Grade of Trip:

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISKS AND OBLIGATIONS OF TEMPORARY MEMBERS
AND MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN CLUB ACTIVITIES.**

In voluntarily participating in an activity of this Club, I am aware that my participation in this activity may expose me to risks that could lead to injury, illness or death or to loss of or damage to my property. Those risks include, but are not limited to, slippery and/or uneven rocks, rocks being dislodged, cliffs, exposure to weather and winter conditions, falling and hypothermia.

To minimize these risks I have endeavoured to ensure that

- (1) This activity is within my capabilities.
- (2) I am carrying food, water and equipment appropriate for the activity.
- (3) I have advised the activity leader if I am taking any medication or have any physical or other limitation that might affect my participation in the activity

I will make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity and accept the instructions of the leader of the activity.

I have read and understand these requirements. I have considered the risks before choosing to sign this acknowledgement of risk. I still wish to join this activity. I accept that in signing this form I will take responsibility for my own actions.

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	SIGNATURE	DATE

Leader: Submit this form with other trip documentation to

Sample

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

To be completed by activity organizers / walk leaders as soon as practical after the incident. This report should be kept by the club secretary as a formal club record.

In the event of any serious injury (an injury requiring medical treatment) copies of the incident report must be forwarded to the BWV Insurance Convener insurance@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au or mail to Bushwalking Victoria, PO Box 1007, Templestowe Vic 3106

Part 1

Report Prepared By	Date Prepared
Date of Incident	Time of Incident
Type of Event: <i>Day walk, canoe trip, bike ride etc</i>	
Location	
Type of Incident: <i>Injury, missing person, damage to property, theft, fire, etc.</i>	
Incident Details	
Actions Taken	

Part 2

External Involvement: Were authorities or other agencies notified at the time? If so who, by whom, and how? Did they then take a role in managing the incident? If appropriate have the Insurers been notified?

Final Outcome: What was the final outcome of the incident? When was it resolved?

Future Prevention: Can this incident be prevented at future Club activities? If so, how?

Supplementary Information: This section can include a list of attachments, such as a map, witness statements etc.

Privacy Note

The inclusion of the names of individuals and their contact details in this report must be done in accordance with relevant Privacy laws.

Sample

PARTICIPANT'S EMERGENCY CONTACT & MEDICAL INFORMATION

This information is for emergency use only and is to be carried in your pack at all times in a sealed plastic envelope. It is your responsibility to update this information if there is a change in details.

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

_____ Post Code _____

Telephone: Home: _____ Mobile: _____

Medical Information:

Medical Condition: _____

Current Medications: _____

Allergies: _____

Do you have current immunisation against: Tetanus Y/N HepA Y/N HepB Y/N

Medicare Number: _____

Private Health Insurance Fund (name): _____

Ambulance subscriber Y/N

Emergency Contact:

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

_____ Post Code: _____

Telephone: Home _____ Mobile _____

Relationship: _____

Signed: _____ Date _____

—

Privacy Statement:

The information contained in this form is for emergency use only and will be used if you are ill or injured whilst participating in an activity of your bushwalking club. The information will only be accessed by the walk leader or their delegate and given to the relevant medical and/or emergency services personnel.

Sample

GUIDELINES FOR A BUSHWALKING CLUB EMERGENCY CONTACT SYSTEM

In the interests of safety, it is well recognised best bushwalking practice to leave detailed trip intention information with a responsible person. ie information that would enable suitable action to be taken in the event of a serious accident or unexpected delay in a party's return from a walk. Bushwalking Victoria recommends that all clubs have in place an efficient emergency contact system for all official club trips.

A suitable system would ensure that:

- The club creates a roster of volunteers to act as club emergency contacts, each of whom is advised of procedures for alerting police when a search or assistance is judged to be needed by a club walking group

Before a trip:

- Walkers on a club trip are made aware of the name and phone number of the rostered emergency contact and the expected time of return by the leader.
- Each walker may then forward this information to a personal contact with the advice to ring the club contact for information if concerned about an unexpected delay in return.
- The leader provides the rostered club contact with a trip itinerary and expected time of a phone call notification of safe return.*

On return:

- Leader advises the club contact as soon as possible of a safe return.
- Walkers advise their personal contact person of safe return.
- If no contact is made within a reasonable time of the arranged return call by the leader, the club contact establishes where possible that the call has not simply been forgotten, and begins the established procedure which will usually include alerting police of a possible need for assistance.

* This is the minimum of information required with respect to safety of the walking group as a whole.

Additional information that involves further documentation but could in certain circumstances be useful are:

- Names and personal contact details for all group members
- Vehicle registration numbers
- Special conditions with respect to weather, terrain or equipment expected
- Confidential details of medical conditions or special requirements of members