

**Oxford University Walking Club Risk Assessment**

**DATE: 25/11/08**

**Activities usually carried out by the Club:**

"Local Walks" involve walking in the countryside around Oxford (reached by public transport) and "Club Trips" ("Minibus Day Trips" and "Weekend Trips") involving walking in hilly, coastal or mountainous areas, often National Parks (reached by minibus). Occasionally a Club Trip may involve scrambling or wild camping.

| <b>HAZARD</b>           | <b>CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE</b>   | <b>RISK FACTOR</b> | <b>FURTHER CONTROL MEASURES</b>  |
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| <p>Minibus accident</p> | <p>Minibus drivers on Club Trips must have passed the University Minibus Course in order to be allowed on the insurance for a minibus from the hire companies, Hotsons Eurodrive and Target Vehicle Rentals.</p> <p>Good practice guidelines are given in the Minibus Drivers' Advice Sheet and in the Trip Leaders' Notes. Trip Leaders should inform Participants to wear their seatbelts to comply with the law. Minibus drivers are told not to drink alcohol on the days in which they are driving, and to drink sensibly the night before driving. In the light of inappropriate speed being a contributory factor in many accidents, drivers are reminded that they must keep at or below the statutory speed limit, depending on the conditions. Their attention is drawn to the fact that the national speed limit is lower in a minibus than in a car on both single carriageway and dual carriageway roads, and on motorways. Trip Leaders and Drivers are reminded not to overload the minibus and to store luggage safely.</p> <p>The Walking Club insists that Club Trips where the total driving time for each leg of the journey exceeds 2 hours should have at least 2 minibus drivers, so that drivers don't become too tired. The club recommends that drivers carefully consider whether they are happy to be the sole driver on trips where</p> | <p>Medium</p>      | <p>The Walking Club possesses copies of both "The Highway Code" and "Roadcraft", which are available for drivers to borrow. Both books contain important information about road safety and best driving practice.</p> <p>The Trip Organiser completes a Trip Registration Form before each Club Trip and these are submitted to the Area Safety Officer for Sport by the appropriate deadline. In the event of an accident or incident, advice and assistance can be sought by contacting the University Security Services.</p> <p>Major accidents and injuries and near misses are reported to the Area Safety Office for Sport by completing an Accident Report Form.</p> <p>Full details of the accident/incident procedures are given in the Incident Card, the Minibus Drivers' Advice Sheet and the Trip Leaders' Notes. These documents are taken on every minibus and the Incident Card is in every First Aid kit.</p> |

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|  | each leg of the journey is less than two hours and prefers all trips to have 2 minibus drivers present if possible. The club also advises drivers on longer trips to not drive continuously for more than two hours. If a Trip Leader thinks that a driver is driving in an unsafe manner, because of tiredness, speed or any other reason, then (s)he is encouraged to ask politely for him or her to stop at the next sensible point in order to take a break or let another driver take over.                        |        |   |
| Being struck by a vehicle while walking along a road | Trip Leaders should avoid taking a group along busy roads. Trip leaders should encourage the group to walk in single file on the right hand side of the road, if that is the safest option. If this situation arises in the dark (e.g. in the search for a public house in the evening) then the Trip Leaders should encourage Participants to use torches.   | Low    | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training program to increase the experience of Trip Leaders in planning routes that minimise walking along roads.                                     |
| Being struck by a vehicle while crossing a road      | Trip Leaders should stop at a chosen crossing point, and pause to allow everyone to gather together in a tight group, then cross the road together when safe to do so.  | Medium | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training program to increase the experience of Trip Leaders in planning routes that minimise crossing roads.  |
| Being struck by a train                              | Trip Leaders should avoid taking a group across a railway at an unprotected level crossing, where a reasonable alternative is available. If it is unavoidable with the planned route, then Trip Leaders should open the gates on both sides of the crossing before allowing the group to cross. All gates must be shut again after use, with the last person to cross the line shutting the gates.  | Low    | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training program to increase the experience of Trip Leaders in planning routes that minimise the crossing of railways at unprotected level crossings. |
| Food poisoning                                       | Trip Leaders usually shop for Weekend Trips on the day the trip departs, so the food is generally fresh. Not all barns have fridges but food can be left outside in winter or in a stream in summer. Trip Leaders should make an additional shopping trip if the weather is warm and there is no access to a fridge or stream. The Club possesses a cool box and ice packs for storing chilled food items for short periods of time, for example during the journey. When Participants are preparing their food and the | Medium | None  |

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|             | <p>communal meal, Trip Leaders should encourage common hygiene practice, such as washing hands before handling food, and especially after being in contact with raw meat. Participants are encouraged to bring plenty of water on walks so that there is no need to drink water from streams.</p> <p>When wild camping, any water from streams should be purified, preferably by boiling, before drinking. Particular attention should also be paid to toilet hygiene. Trip Leaders on Trips involving wild camping will have taken either a Mountain Leader or a Walking Group Leader training courses which include such topics,</p>   |        |  |
| Hypothermia | <p>For each trip, Participants are given the Club's Equipment List, and the Participation Statement. Participants sign to say that they have read the equipment list and have appropriate equipment, including effective waterproofs and sufficient warm clothing for the likely conditions. If Participants fail to do this, then the Trip Leaders have the right to refuse them participation in the walks. All Trip Leaders have taken part in a suitable First Aid course as part of the leader-training program. This means that they will be better equipped to recognise the signs of hypothermia and treat a casualty in the event of a severe case. Survival bags and/or Survival Shelters are taken on all Trips, to provide shelter in the event of a case of hypothermia. For walking in remote areas, Trip Leaders should plan some escape routes so that a group can go and raise the alarm to get assistance from Mountain Rescue: dial 999 and ask for the Police.</p> <p>There is an increased risk of hypothermia when wild camping. Trip Leaders will be aware of this and select the camp location to minimise this risk. Trip Leaders on Trips involving wild camping will have</p> | Medium | Continue to develop the Club's First Aid training program to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in recognising and dealing with cases of hypothermia. |

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|  | taken appropriate training courses which include the topic of camp site selection.  |        |  |
| Heat exhaustion and heat stroke            | Participants are encouraged to bring plenty of water (at least one litre, preferably two) to drink on a warm day. They are told this via the Club's Equipment List and Participation Statement, which is distributed to all Participants before the walk. Trip Leaders should allow plenty of rests if Participants appear to be exhausted in warm weather. If the rests are restraining the rest of the group then it is good practice to split into two groups if there are enough Trip Leaders to do so. All Trip Leaders have taken part in a suitable First Aid course. This means that they will be better equipped to recognise and treat the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. | Low    | Continue to develop the Club's First Aid training program to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in recognising and dealing with cases of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. |
| Burns<br>Sunburn:                          | Trip Leaders should get an accurate weather forecast on the morning of the walk, including details of the Sun Index in summer if possible. The Club distributes a list of required equipment to all Participants before the trip, and walkers are obliged to sign an agreement to show that they have read the equipment list. This ensures that all Participants will have their own supply of sun cream if leaders consider it a suitable precaution to take. Trip Leaders should carry spare sun-cream in case someone forgets to bring some. In cases of severe sunburn, medical attention should be sought.  | High   | Continue to develop the Club's First Aid training program to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in dealing with burns.  |
| Other burns and scalds (e.g. from cooking) | Trip Leaders should try to ensure that cooking areas do not become overly crowded. When camping particular care should be taken. For example, cooking should not be done in a tent. An integral part of the Club's leader-training program is a suitable First Aid training course, meaning leaders will be better equipped for dealing with burns, and knowing when medical attention should be sought.  | Medium |  |

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| Struck by lightning  | <p>Leaders of Trips in exposed areas will have taken part in appropriate training courses, the syllabuses of which include appropriate course of action during thunderstorms, for example: not sheltering under trees. Participants should have sufficient waterproofs to carry out the walk or else the Trip Leaders should arrange a shelter situation for those who cannot cope.</p> <p>When wild camping the camp location should be selected to minimise the risk of a lightning strike. Trip Leaders on Trips involving wild camping will have taken appropriate training courses which include the topic of camp site selection.</p>   | Low    | None   |
| Falls from high places                                     | <p>Before the start of a walk Trip Leaders should brief the whole group of the walk in question, trying to explain the terrain as vividly as possible. Trip Leaders should describe the specific risks involved in a chosen walk (e.g. inform Participants to stay on the paths for coastal walks, because going near the cliff-edge could result in the land giving way, resulting in a fall) as well as pointing out the fun aspects of the walks. Ridges must be avoided in winter conditions and in strong winds. Ropes are available to take on higher risk walks, for use by leaders who have appropriate training. For walking in remote areas, a Trip Leader should plan some escape routes so that an injured Participant can be escorted back to the minibus, or so that a group can go, raise the alarm and get assistance from Mountain Rescue: dial 999 and ask for the Police. Trip Leaders should get an accurate weather forecast on the morning of a walk, especially if it involves ridges or cliffs.</p> | Low    | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training and First Aid training programs to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in planning routes to minimise the occurrence of and dealing with severe injuries. |
| Bone and joint injuries: fractures, sprains, strains, etc. | <p>Participants are told via the Club's Equipment List and Participation Statement to bring worn-in walking boots, which will greatly lessen the chances of slipping and of ankle injuries. Trip Leaders have the right to refuse members participation if they fail</p>  | Medium | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training and First Aid training programs to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in planning routes to minimise the occurrence severe injuries.                     |

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|          | <p>to do this. All Trip Leaders have taken part in a suitable First Aid Course, and First Aid kits are taken on walks; therefore Trip Leaders will be better equipped to deal such injuries. For walking in remote areas, Trip Leaders should plan some escape routes so that (s)he can escort an injured Participant back to the minibus, or so that a group can go and raise the alarm to get assistance from Mountain Rescue: dial 999 and ask for the Police.</p>   |      |   |
| Blisters | <p>Participants are told via the Club's Equipment List and Participation Statement to bring worn-in walking boots, which will greatly lessen the chances of blisters forming. Trip Leaders have the right to refuse members to participate in walks if they fail to do this. First Aid kits are taken on walks so that plasters can be given out if blisters occur. The hazard from blisters arises because they cause the Participant to walk slowly, increasing the risk of hypothermia among all Participants. For walking in remote areas, Trip Leaders should plan some escape routes so that (s)he can escort an injured Participant can be escorted back to the minibus.</p> | High | <p>Continue to develop the Club's leader-training and First Aid training programs to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in dealing with severe cases of blisters and taking appropriate action if Participants are being endangered.</p> |

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| <p>Insect bites</p> | <p>Whilst most stings from a bee, wasp or hornet are usually painful as opposed to dangerous, there is the possibility of an allergic reaction. Participants are told to and agree to declare known allergies on the participation statement. . All Trip Leaders have taken part in a suitable first aid course, which should better equip leaders to deal with cases of severe allergic reaction, and the safe removal of feeding ticks.</p>  | <p>Medium,</p>                                      | <p>Continue to develop the Club's First Aid training program to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in dealing with cases of insect bites.</p> |
| <p>Tick Bites</p>   | <p>A small, but increasing risk in recent years, is the possibility of the contraction of Lyme Disease from a sheep- or deer tick bite, which in a small number of cases can have severe health implications. Trip Leaders should ask Participants to check their skin at the end of a day's walk for the presence of feeding ticks, especially after walking through bracken uplands. If a tick bite has been sustained, Trip Leaders should warn the Participant to be vigilant of any rash that develops, in which case medical attention should be sought.</p> | <p>Low, but in some areas (e.g. Exmoor), medium</p> | <p>Continue to develop the Club's First Aid training program to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in dealing with cases of tick bites.</p>   |

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| Tripping or slipping over  | While walking along any path it is possible that people will lose their balance and trip over. This becomes more of a concern when the path is close to a ledge or it occurs in a high place (see Falls from high places). The chances of tripping or slipping over are increased when the path is uneven, polished or wet and Trip Leaders should warn Participants of uneven or slippery sections encountered during the walk. Trip Leaders should aim to assist with the crossing of obstacles (e.g. small streams) when appropriate.   | Low    | None  |
| Not having a first aid kit, survival bag (Minibus Day Trips) or survival shelter (Weekend Trips) in one of the groups when a group splits. | Trip Leaders should ensure that first aid kits, survival bags or shelters are redistributed if necessary when a group splits.  | Low    | None  |
| Accident with a group in a remote area with no-one knowing where you are   | Leaders should consider whether leaving a route card at base with basic route plan and proposed return time would be advantageous, especially in bad weather or when walking in a very remote area.  | Low    | Continue to develop the Club's leader training program to ensure that the route planning skills of Trip Leaders are improved.             |
| Poorly planned walk  | Leaders on trips to an exposed area are obliged to take an appropriate training course which coaches all trainees in a wide range of hill-walking skills, such as good Trip planning. The Club aims to provide 2 leaders per 13 or 17 Participants, depending on the terrain, so that there is one leader for roughly every 6 to 8 non-leaders. A similar ratio is enforced on larger trips. This ensures that each Participant is able to communicate with a Trip Leader. Each leader is given a copy of the Club's Trip Leader's Notes which advises them that "The Trip Leaders for each trip should meet before the Free Tea to discuss details of some walks that may be carried out on the trip, so that they are prepared to describe the nature of the walking that will be experienced to potential Participants. | Medium | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training and First Aid training programs to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in planning routes. |
| Injury while Scrambling  | (See also "Falls from high places" and "Tripping or slipping over" above.)   | Medium | Continue to develop the Club's leader-training program to increase the skills of Trip Leaders in recognising routes                       |

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|   | <p>Trip Leaders are responsible to ensure that they are aware of which routes involve graded scrambles. Only Trip Leaders of Level Four or Five experience may lead Grade 1 scrambles. One Trip Leader may lead up to four Participants. The Trip Leader(s) must be aware of the serious nature of this activity. Guidelines for Trip Leaders and details of their responsibilities are given in the Trip Leader Safety Document. Information on the scramble to be undertaken should be sought from relevant guide books.</p> <p>Scrambles of grade two or three must only be undertaken on Club Trips as a Group of Equals. In these circumstances there is no leader and each individual takes responsibility for his/her actions.</p> |            | <p>which involve scrambles and good practice and responsibilities when leading scrambles.</p> <p>The Club will consider the purchase of scrambling guide books for use by Trip Leaders.</p> |
| <p>Incident arising from guidelines set out in the Risk Assessment not being followed</p> | <p>Trip Leaders are required to sign a form to say that they have read the Risk Assessment (as well as the Code of Practice, Trip Leader Safety Document and Trip Leaders' Notes) and will adhere to the guidelines laid out. It is the Trip and Safety Coordinator's responsibility to ask trip leaders to carry out this procedure.</p>   | <p>Low</p> | <p>None</p>   |

*Last updated by David Keiller, Trip and Safety Coordinator, 25th November 2008*