

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

A VERY BRIEF SUMMARY

Plan the activity – identify the risks, are you competent, who knows first aid, are there track closures, how many people, what is degree of difficulty (easy, medium, hard etc.)?

List the activity on the Activities Program; provide enough detail if a search is needed. Members will book on-line and should email you.

Respond as soon as practicable and provide your mobile number. Send a group email a couple of days before the activity and provide more information.

At the start of the activity, everyone signs the Activity Waiver and you take it with you, do introductions, explain where you are going, any hazards and the expected pace, anticipated stops, ask if there are relevant medical conditions. Assure yourself that everyone has adequate gear, water, food. Appoint a tail end Charlie, and identify a potential alternate leader.

On the activity, keep the party together, indicate hazards, deal with problems early rather than late, promote social interaction, watch for unexpected risks - environmental, equipment, clothing and people risks.

In accident or emergency write down details, take photos. Phone 000 if needed, contact Club emergency numbers (on the Activity Waiver).

At the end of the activity, check all are there, sign Prospective Members' forms, send the Activity Waiver to the Activities Officer, inform Committee of any injury, remind that insurance claims have to be made within 30 days.

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NEW LEADERS

If you are a new leader perhaps you'd like to have a 'mentor' along on your first trip as a leader. Contact the Activities Secretary or the Training Officer to discuss this.

PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

- A key objective should be to get everyone home in one piece! Identify the risks associated with the activity, and consider whether the risks are acceptable in view of the activity's objectives and the club's rules.
- Are you competent to lead all parts of the proposed activity? If you have concerns, think about inviting a more experienced member to help with navigation and/or as a co-leader or mentor.
- Do you have First Aid skills? If not, it is wise to see that someone else in your party does.
- Think through the possible emergency situations that might arise during the activity (adverse weather, bushfire, flooding, injury, slow person, person separated, etc) and consider your response to those situations (getting help, escape routes, First Aid requirements, etc).
- Check that the area/track is currently open:
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/FireClosure.aspx>
- For information about hazard reduction burns: <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au>
- Set a grading and group size for the activity in accordance with SBC By-Laws. See the SBC document – [Activity Gradings & Party Sizes](#). If uncertain about the grading or party size, discuss it with the Activities Secretary.
- Identify extra equipment that you might carry, as the leader - such as extra First Aid equipment, navigation aids, whistle, PLB, handline, spare thermals, spare snacks, etc
- For more information refer to the SBC documents relevant to your activity, which can be found in the "Documents" tab on the SBC website after you log in:
 - [Responsible Bushwalking,](#)
 - [Responsible Abseiling,](#)
 - [Responsible Canyoning,](#)
 - [Responsible Camping,](#)
 - [Responsible Cycling,](#)
 - [Responsible Water Based Activities.](#)

LISTING THE ACTIVITY

List the activity on the Activities Program using the Club website. Provide enough detail for a potential participant to understand your activity, and in the unlikely occurrence of an emergency, for

a searcher to make a reasonable appraisal of your intended route. All proposed activities are reviewed by the Club Committee before they can proceed.

There are several activity types – “Normal”, “Short Notice”, or “Expression of Interest”, etc. See [SBC Documents – Activity Definitions](#).

MEMBERS’ BOOKING PROCESS

Members wishing to participate in your activity will book on-line and provide their mobile phone number (if they have one). You should receive an email saying that this member would like to join your activity.

LEADER’S RESPONSE

- You should respond as soon as practicable advising that they are confirmed on the activity or placed on a waiting list.
- You may wish to ask any Members you are not familiar with, about their fitness level, past experience, clothing and equipment.
- If people book by direct contact with you, by phone, or by direct email, you should add these bookings to the Activity Waiver on the SBC website. Then the Committee will have all necessary details about your activity and party in the case of an emergency.
- If you maintain the participant list manually on the Activity Waiver, leave a copy of the form with a “responsible adult”, and please advise this person when you have returned from the activity.
- If there are more applicants than the advertised limit, compile a waiting list in case of drop-outs. Club rules require that at least 50% of participants are full members.
- The participants’ mobile numbers should be on the Activity Waiver. **Make sure they have your mobile no. in case of late cancellations, delays, emergencies.**
- It is good practice to send a group email one or two days before the activity, providing any additional details about the route, gear required, expected finish time, finish day, meeting time and location, transport arrangements (such as car pooling) and the arrangements for any last-minute cancellations or changes due to inclement weather, bushfires, etc. (eg leader will SMS your mobile by 7am in the case of cancellation or postponement of the activity).
- Remind prospective members to bring their Prospective Member Record form along on the day.

EXTENDED OR POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS ACTIVITIES

- All outdoor activities pose hazards, but such activities as multi-day walks, long alpine walks, canyoning, etc require more detail in planning.
- Advise each participant by email: the description of the activity and its location, the intended route, and any relevant details such as parking location for the start of the activity, (and parking location for the finish if different), proposed campsites, etc – this information is critical in the case of a search and rescue mission and must be provided for all “hard”, “very hard”, “exploratory”, and multi-day activities.

- The name and contact details of the leader. If relevant, the name and contact details of the leader's "responsible adult" (a reliable person not participating in the activity).
- Any special or safety equipment the party will be carrying (eg PLB).
- Indication of the time when the activity should have been safely completed.
- Indication of when an emergency "call-out" should occur (usually this is the next morning for day walks, and at least 24 hours after the expected contact time for multi-day activities).
- Details of the SBC Emergency Contact Officers (listed on Club website), with instructions for the participant's "responsible adult" to contact a committee member if the leader or others on the activity cannot be contacted at the emergency "call-out" time.
- Any particular things that might be risky, or you think might be seen as risky by the applicant, such as use of roads with busy traffic.
- Food and water requirements.

SPECIAL SKILLS AND SPECIAL GEAR

If special skills are required (such as abseiling or swimming), satisfy yourself that each person is competent - do not accept someone if you have serious doubts. Club rules give leaders the right to refuse aspiring participants. Specify any special clothing or equipment requirements (such as harness, helmet and descending gear for abseiling, wetsuit for swimming, etc).

AT THE START OF THE ACTIVITY

- If concerned about the weather or other adverse factors, don't hesitate to cancel or alter the walk.
- Cancel if extreme bushfire danger conditions have been declared, or if bans have been placed on entry by NPWS or other land managers.
- If the location of the activity is changed immediately prior to or during the activity the leader should, if possible, inform two members of the committee (may be done by SMS) who will update the activity details using the club website. This will automatically inform other committee members of the walk change.
- Check that participants have your mobile number.**
- Ask if there are medical conditions that may affect their performance on the activity.
- If you are taking people on the activity that have not been entered via the Club website, leave a copy of the Activity Waiver and a detailed copy of the route and emergency contact details with the responsible adult. This list may prove to be crucial if there is a significant delay or emergency.
- Take the Activity Waiver with you on the activity and a charged mobile phone.
- Brief the group: Introduce yourself, and have each person briefly introduce themselves.
- Ensure that everyone has signed the Activity Waiver. Mark No Show or Cancelled on the Waiver against relevant names. Do not leave any blanks. This information is used to report to insurance companies and for any activity competitions the club may have running.
- Outline your plans for the activity, including your intentions for stops, for morning tea, lunch, special features, etc.
- Remind everyone about the things to be encountered that involve risk (real or perceived), and tell them how those things will be dealt with.

- Make sure the risks are listed on the Activity Waiver.
- Verbally check that each person has appropriate warm clothing, food, drinking water and equipment, especially any specialised equipment required for the activity.
- Explain how you want to manage the party, your expectations about keeping together, your expectation that each person will look after the person behind them, appointment of tail-end Charlie.
- Identify someone who can take over the leadership if you are incapacitated during the activity.

PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS, VISITORS, UNBOOKED NON-MEMBERS

- Ask Prospective Members to produce their Prospective Member's Record form, with the 'Date Fees Paid' section completed and initialled. Pay special attention to prospective members and visitors.
- Turn away any person: who turns up without prior booking, who, in your judgment, is unfit or inadequately equipped, or may be a risk to themselves or other party members, or who refuses to sign the Activity Waiver.
- If anyone has last minute second thoughts about doing the activity, do not pressure them to proceed - consider making arrangements for them to drop out.

ON THE ACTIVITY

- Keep the party together, check with head-counts. Allow faster members to go on ahead only if clear instructions have been given about waiting points and whistle signals (three blasts means trouble or return to the leader).
- Facilitate social interaction between members of the party, particularly during morning tea and lunch breaks.
- Pay particular attention to ensure safety, progress and opportunity to socialise for Prospective Members, visitors, and the less experienced.
- Draw each person's attention to hazards along the way and provide help where appropriate. Ask other party members to do the same for others.
- Avoid taking any risks that the participants were not forewarned about. Avoid pressuring anyone into doing anything they don't want to.
- Keep watch for any unexpected risks that may arise from environmental factors; equipment and clothing factors; and people factors.
- If an adverse situation arises (accident, lost person or group, slow person, hypothermic person, overdue, etc, even blisters), deal with it sooner rather than later - to delay may worsen the situation.
- In case of emergency or other problem, don't be afraid to ask for help from any member of the party or to ask for more experienced participants to help or take charge.

ACCIDENT OR EMERGENCY

- If there is a significant accident or other mishap, as soon as possible write down details and if possible make a photographic record of what happened, and encourage other party members to do likewise.
- If search or rescue is required, your first responsibility is to contact the police (call 000).
- Also contact a Committee member so that the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad can be notified. (BWRS contact information: Phone 132 222 - Ask for pager number 6277 321 - Leave a brief message including a return phone number - One of the BWRS people will phone back).
- If medical assistance is required contact the Ambulance service (call 000). Carry all emergency phone numbers in your wallet or pack. Keep a copy of the Activity Waiver with you as it has emergency numbers.

ETHICS

Ensure that the group carries out all their rubbish, and where possible rubbish generated by others. Report any matter requiring maintenance to the relevant land manager (NPWS, BMCC, etc).

In keeping with the conservation objectives of the Club, we should all adopt ethical practices to do with the conservation of flora, fauna, rock formations, water quality and archaeological sites. We should also behave with regard for the quality of experience of other people and groups.

Appropriate practices are detailed in the [Bushwalker's Code of Ethics](#) which is available on the [Bushwalking NSW website](#).

AT THE END OF THE ACTIVITY

- Check that all participants complete the walk and all cars get safely back to a main road.
- Check whether the group wish to meet at a café or pub to 'debrief'.
- Remind participants to help avoid the spread of phytosphthora (die back) by scrubbing the soil from the soles of their footwear (in a sewer drain), and to pay any travel expense contributions and/or rope fees.
- If a Prospective Member was on the walk, sign their Prospective Member Record form.
- Send your completed Activity Waiver to the Activities Secretary within 30 days, either in hard copy by hand or by scanning & email, mail (PO Box, 126 Springwood NSW 2777).
- If someone has been injured to the point of needing medical attention, advise them about the requirement to make an accident insurance claim within 30 days. A committee member should be contacted for further details.
- In the case of a significant injury, illness, death, or damage to property, an Incident Report should be prepared by the activity leader, or by the leader's nominee. The report should be completed as soon as possible after the incident and forwarded to the SBC Activities Officer or a committee member. Any incident referred by a Club member to our insurers must have an Incident Report prepared. For guidelines on the preparation of an Incident Report see: [SBC Documents – Insurance, Incident Response Guidelines, and Incident Report Form](#).
- Finally, if something occurred which is troubling you, don't hesitate to contact a committee member or other senior member of the Club to discuss it.

CLUB RULES LEADERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

- If an activity doesn't fall within the Club's rules, or is not entered on the Club Activities Program on the SBC website, you and the other participants may not be covered by the insurance policy.
- The only exception: if a walk is a reconnaissance for a future walk it need not be advertised, but details must be provided in advance to the Committee.
- Activities which are not covered by insurance such as horse-riding, using motorised equipment, parachuting or skindiving must be clearly indicated on the program. See [SBC Documents – Insurance](#). If you have any doubts about this, discuss it with the Activities Secretary.
- An activities grading system, and party size limits has been adopted, based on NPWS regulations, quality of experience, objectives, and party management considerations. For more information see [SBC Documents – Activity Gratings and Party Size Limits](#). A leader is at liberty to adopt a lower limit, but the minimum is 3.
- **Who can go on an Activity?** There must be at least three people in the party. The leader must be a paid-up Member. Each participant must be a paid-up Member or paid up Prospective Member. Invited visitors may participate if they have signed the Activity Waiver and have attended no more than two walks in the past year and is either: a child or genuine friend of a Member also attending the walk, and/or a person invited by the leader because of his/her special skills. At least half the participants (including the leader) must be either a Member (not Prospective Member) of the Club or of other clubs affiliated with Bushwalking NSW. For a party of three people, all must be either a Member (not Prospective Member) of the Club or of other clubs affiliated with Bushwalking NSW. Every member of the party or their legally recognized parent or guardian must sign on the Activity Waiver before participating.
- **Prospective Members** Someone new to the club must become a paid-up Prospective Member before going on a walk. Prospective Members are not necessarily inexperienced - they are just new to the Club. However, as a leader you need to pay close attention to their needs. The process that they have to undergo (Induction Course and three activities) is a familiarising and socialising one, rather than a training program or proficiency test. The aim is to help the newcomer integrate into the Club. The Club is too large for leaders to be familiar with all the Members, let alone Prospective Members. Hence, each Prospective Member is issued with a Prospective Member Record form that serves as a record of the Induction Course and three activities that must be undertaken to qualify for full Membership. It also has a 'Date Fees Paid' section that provides evidence that the person is paid up. If a Prospective Member attends one of your walks, please remember to ask for and sign their form as evidence that they attended your walk.

LEGAL ISSUES

As a leader you have a responsibility to take due care of your party. Under common law, you are expected to maintain the standard of care of a reasonable or prudent leader. If a person suffers damages or injury as a result of an action you shouldn't have taken (or lack of an action you should have taken), and those damages or injury would have been 'reasonably foreseeable' to a 'reasonable person', you may be found negligent. That could mean having to pay damages. The fact that you are a volunteer does not affect your duty of care. While participants must accept the inherent risks

associated with bushwalking and other outdoor activities, we cannot escape the duty of care as long as we have new members, or participants who are relatively inexperienced in what they are undertaking. Even if all participants are highly experienced, if something goes wrong - a belay fails for instance - someone could well be held responsible. But the good news is you are very unlikely ever to find yourself in court if you: are thoughtful and aware, only undertake things within your competence, and follow the advice in these notes and generally follow other club guidelines. Club documentation is based on what are agreed to be best practices, at time of writing, by the club's most active and experienced leaders and participants. They are guidelines and cannot apply in every circumstance, hence the need for sound judgement and consideration of multiple factors or risks. Where circumstances allow, party consultation and consensus is appropriate. Leaders and those providing First Aid who act responsibly and in good faith are provided with legal protection through the [Civil Liability Amendment \(Personal Responsibility\) Act 2002](#).

Electronic Devices Reliance on phones, radios, PLB's and GPSs seems to contradict the traditional bushwalking ethos, which emphasises self-reliance and wilderness values. But there is growing community expectation (with legal implications) that outdoor recreationists will carry phones or other communication devices.

The Club's position on the matter is as follows:

- Mobile phones, PLBs and GPSs should not be regarded as a substitute for sound navigation, bushcraft and First Aid skills.
- Every walk should be planned on the assumption that electronic devices may fail.
- It is recommended that a fully charged, regularly checked, mobile phone and Activity Waiver with emergency contacts be carried in the party. They will likely be useful at some stage in an emergency – especially to send and receive SMS.
- All electronic gear should remain on silent, vibrate only, or switched off except in an emergency.
- It is Club policy that leaders (or a member of the party) carry a PLB on all activities graded hard, very hard, exploratory, multiday and exploratory activities, and all activities that have an increased element of risk such as abseiling, remote locations, water activities or poor weather. The Club owns a number of PLBs that are available to leaders. Police stations have these available free of charge. Katoomba police can refer you to other locations (such as the tourist info at Echo Point) that also loan out PLB's.

[SBC Documents – Guidelines for Using PLBs](#)

INSURANCE

Bushwalking Australia operates a National Insurance Scheme providing Public Liability, Personal Accident and Associations Liability Insurance cover. Members of the Springwood Bushwalking Club are covered by these policies through SBC's affiliation with Bushwalking NSW. There are three forms of insurance cover - Personal Accident, Public Liability, and Associations Liability. The Personal Accident and Public Liability policies cover the following club related activities: bushwalking, recreational walking, walking, track/hut construction and maintenance, canyoning/liloing, alpine walking (summer & winter), canoeing/kyaking, boating/rafting, swimming, cycling, rock scurrying and use of hand held ropes and safety belay equipment as part of a bushwalk, snow skiing, abseiling, caving, orienteering/rogaining, leader training and other related instructions, rescue training activities, voluntary work for various charities and not for profit organisations, and for Property

Owners/Occupiers, the provision of canteen, social and sporting clubs, first aid and any other occupation incidental thereto. Cover may not be provided for activities not listed above. As there is a time limit of 30 days for submission of claims, if you think that an incident may give rise to a claim the potential claimant should be advised of the situation and the matter discussed immediately after the walk with a Committee member. For more information see: [SBC Documents – Insurance](#).

CRIME SCENES

It is possible, particularly when you are on an off-track walk, that you may come across a crime scene such as a deceased person, bones, dumped vehicles, or illegal plants. All bushwalkers, and in particular leaders, should be aware of some simple guidelines to fulfil their legal obligations: do as little as possible, and avoid touching anything, however a photographic record of the site may be useful for the police, as soon as possible inform the Police of the location (preferably Lat./Long) - (call 000). Avoid contact with the media. Remember, the media don't like silence. If you are put on "the spot" the safest thing to say is "no comment". Sometimes you may be guided by the Police in what can be said. Fines can apply when evidence has been tampered with.

ACTIVITY WAIVERS FOR MULTI-DAY CAMPS, SKI-LODGES, BIKE WEEKS

Multi-day activities where the leader/s and group participate in a single approved activity that runs over multiple days are managed in a similar way to day activities. Special protocols have been developed by the Committee in relation to those multiday activities (such as car camping, staying in ski lodges etc.) where day walks or other significant sub-activities are conducted which may be led by other leaders. These day activities are often organised spontaneously, therefore the Committee has delegated authority to the overall activity leader to approve (or not approve) all such day activities. Accurate records of all such day activities must be provided to the Activities Secretary. It is recommended that the overall leader takes a number of blank Activity Waiver forms and uses them for those booking into day walks. It is the responsibility of the overall leader to ensure that the completed forms are submitted to the Activities Secretary. The rules relating to such activities should be similar to normal program activities:

- The activity should be made available to all possible participants at least the day beforehand.
- The leader and route should be identified.
- A grading and party size limit should be nominated.
- It must involve at least three participants.

A "significant activity" would involve at least a half day and generally be one continuous walk/cycle ride, or a bundle of short walks. An accurate list of participants in these activities should be kept at the campsite or lodge. Leaders of day walks are reminded that the overall leader of the multi-day activity has overall responsibility and authority throughout the event. Day walks or other sub-activities should not be placed on the program and should not proceed without the prior approval of the overall leader.

CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES

A child (other than a Junior Member) must be in the care of a member who is either a parent or legal guardian. If this is not the case, the child must be in the care of an Ordinary or Life Member who has signed the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act (1988) Declaration to indicate their responsibility for the child's safety. If a parent or legal guardian Member is not participating in the same activity, there should be at least two adult Members participating. The Activity Waiver should be signed by the Member responsible for the child.

TRAINING

The best way to train is to participate in lots of activities, but all leaders should look to ways of brushing up their skills. For instance, you might try the following books, all held by the Club's librarian:

[Brown, Ian; Paddy Pallin's Bushwalking and Camping, Paddy Pallin, 1996.](#)

[Victorian Bushwalking and Mountaincraft Training Advisory Board - Bushwalking and Mountaincraft Leadership, Sport and Recreation Victoria, 1994.](#)

[Phillips, R., et al; Rogaining - Cross Country Navigation, International Rogaining Association, 2000.](#)

You are also encouraged to undertake practical training in the following areas, depending on the sorts of walks you are leading: Navigation, Abseiling, First Aid, Remote Area First Aid, Search & Rescue. The Club runs or organises training courses from time to time that are advertised in the walks program. Courses are also organised through Bushwalking NSW. These are advertised in their magazine The Bushwalker. Subsidies may be provided by the Club for courses run by external organisations. Search and Rescue Accreditation: if you wish to be part of bushwalker search teams you must attend the weekend courses which are run by Bushwalker's Wilderness Rescue twice each year - watch out for dates in The Bushwalker.