

## Risk Assessment for Walking Groups (Generic)



### Introduction

Walking groups provide an excellent opportunity for social interaction, physical exercise, and enjoyment of nature. However, as with any organized activity, inherent risks must be managed to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants. This risk assessment aims to identify potential hazards, assess the level of risk, and outline measures to mitigate these risks for the walk group leader.

### Identified Risks and Mitigation Measures

#### 1. Environmental Risks

Hazard: Uneven or slippery terrain, adverse weather conditions, and natural obstacles can pose risks to walkers.

- Risk Level: Low to Medium

##### Mitigation Measures:

- Conduct a pre-walk reconnaissance to identify potential hazards.
- Check weather forecasts and plan routes accordingly.
- Provide participants with clear instructions on appropriate footwear and clothing.
- Carry a first aid kit and ensure leaders are trained in basic first aid.

#### 2. Participant Health and Fitness

Hazard: Participants may have varying levels of fitness, health conditions, or disabilities that could affect their ability to complete the walk safely.

- Risk Level: Low to Medium

##### Mitigation Measures:

- Collect health and fitness information from participants before the walk.
- Encourage participants to disclose any medical conditions or physical limitations.
- Plan routes that are suitable for the fitness levels and abilities of the group.
- Have a contingency plan for emergencies, including access to medical assistance.

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### 3. Navigation and Route Planning

Hazard: Getting lost or taking a wrong turn can lead to delays, increased fatigue, and potential safety risks.

- Risk Level: Medium
- o Mitigation Measures:
  - o Use reliable maps and GPS devices to plan and navigate routes.
  - o Familiarize yourself with the route before the walk.
  - o Ensure that all participants are aware of the planned route and meeting points.
  - o Appoint a back marker to ensure no one gets left behind.

### 4. Group Dynamics and Behaviour

Hazard: Conflicts, disruptive behaviour, or lack of cooperation among participants can affect the group's cohesion and safety.

- Risk Level: Low to Medium
- o Mitigation Measures:
  - o Set clear expectations for behaviour and group etiquette before the walk.
  - o Encourage a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.
  - o Address any conflicts or issues promptly and diplomatically.
  - o Ensure that leaders are trained in conflict resolution and group management.

### 5. Wildlife and Insects

Hazard: Encounters with wildlife or insect bites can pose health and safety risks to participants.

- Risk Level: Low
- o Mitigation Measures:
  - o Inform participants about local wildlife and potential hazards.

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- Advise on appropriate precautions such as insect repellent and protective clothing.
- Carry a basic first aid kit, including treatments for insect bites and stings.

### **6. Dehydration and Fatigue**

Hazard: Long walks, particularly in hot weather, can lead to dehydration and fatigue.

- Risk Level: Medium
- Mitigation Measures:
  - Encourage participants to bring sufficient water and snacks.
  - Plan regular breaks and ensure shade is available on hot days.
  - Monitor participants for signs of dehydration or fatigue and take appropriate action if necessary.

### **7. Emergency Situations**

Hazard: Unexpected emergencies such as accidents, injuries, or sudden illness.

- Risk Level: Medium to High
- Mitigation Measures:
  - Ensure all leaders have access to a mobile phone and emergency contact numbers.
  - Provide training in first aid and emergency response procedures.
  - Have a clear plan for contacting emergency services and directing them to the location.

## **Conclusion**

All outdoor activities carry a level of risk that is greater than the risks associated with daily life. This document is not a definitive list of hazards; however, it details the most common. All walks are led by a qualified and competent leader. They will continually assess the risk, based on group ability and prevailing weather conditions, and will where necessary alter, abandon, or cancel the walk.

The safety of all involved is paramount and as such The Group Leader will be carrying out a Risk Assessment before the walk starts and throughout

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if conditions change.

