

RESCUE PLAN

What is a rescue plan?

Quite simply, it is the plan that you will put into use if a competitor does not return from their course, or cannot return without assistance.

You will rarely have to even start putting it into action; when you do put it into action, you are highly unlikely to have to follow it all the way through.

Weather conditions and daylight might require you to condense timescales.

Think through your plan carefully, make sure the practicalities hang together.

Vehicular access

Before the event, consider how you can achieve vehicular access to different parts of your area. Get keys to gates that will be locked – or know how to get hold of them quickly. The best way to get a vehicle close to a particular point might not be via the nearest gate.

Equipment

Maps showing the lost competitor's course, and the whole area.

Depending on the time of year, it might be wise to have headtorches available.

Emergency food and drink.

First aid kit – and someone who knows what to do with it (usually your First Aid provider)

Radios or mobile phones (do they work in the area?)

Take entry forms to the event – you just might need the contact phone number on one.

Manpower

If a competitor needs to be rescued, this is likely to be required late in the day. You must make sure that enough people remain at the event until everyone is accounted for. Identify these people by name, tell them what might be required of them. These people must:

- Be fit (they might have had a long run already)
- Be reliable navigators
- Have had food and drink
- Have a change of clothing – perhaps waterproofs etc.

It is essential that your search party does not put its own members at additional risk. How many people you have will depend on many factors; quality is more important than quantity.

Your rescue plan

Compile a sheet that contains all the information required for the above headings. Print it and the remainder of this document, and take the entire bundle to the event. Keep it handy.

Now read the rest of the document.

Scenarios

The two major scenarios are:

1. the injured competitor, reported by another competitor
2. the competitor who does not report to the finish, or who is reported missing

Scenario 1 – injured competitor reported by someone else

Methodical approach

1. Keep calm and take control.
2. Dedicate yourself to handling the situation; identify a deputy to look after the rest of the event.

Obtain information

Obtain – and note – as much information as possible. Precise location is essential, nature of injury or illness would help. Identify casualty if possible: name, age. Do NOT allow desire for detail to delay rescue.

Alert First Aid provider

Discuss with First Aid provider and decide whether to call ambulance immediately. Give them all relevant information. If First Aid provider is handling, confirm with them how you can contact them (radio, mobile phone) while they are rescuing the casualty.

Remember the helper

Get someone to take care of the person who reported the casualty; (s)he may be in shock, tired, cold... but his/her work is not yet over. Give him/her food and extra clothing, comfort and reassurance. Support might need to be continued after the event.

Send out the rescue team

Send a good navigator (preferably the person who found the casualty) – with compass and a map – with the rescue team. Keep notes of who goes to the casualty, how and when. Keep copy of map showing location of casualty.

Maintain contact

Keep regular contact with rescue team so you know what is going on and can pass on information to relatives, ambulance etc.. Respond promptly to any requests from rescue team.

Inform friend/relative

Find casualty's friend/relative (if necessary, phone their home); take care to avoid raising alarm unnecessarily, but find out any medical conditions or history that might be relevant. Do not allow this to delay rescue of the casualty. Pass relevant information to rescue team.

Keep friend/relative informed of developments, and tell them how to contact you.

Hand over to emergency services

Depending on the nature of the injury, hand over to the emergency services at the appropriate stage. Give them as much information as possible.

Afterwards

Keep copy of all notes of the incident, and report to SOA/BOF as appropriate. Learn from the incident; feed back comments on the usefulness of this document.

Scenario 2 – missing competitor

Methodical approach

If a competitor is overdue, do NOT go into a frenzy of activity. Do one stage at a time, and record details. A worried friend or relative might be urging you to take hasty action. Be sympathetic but firm. Involve the worried person.

Before embarking on any stage, check that the person is in fact still missing. Do not allow a search to put others at risk.

PRELIMINARIES

How do you know that a competitor is missing? What constitutes definite indications of a missing competitor? What should be carefully checked but can probably be ignored (eg. stub remaining but no cars, bikes or bags left, AND no worried relative). If weather is bad or darkness is falling, you should consider condensing timescales.

STAGE 1 – Collect information

Start by collecting information – from friend/relative if possible. Find out – and note – as many details as possible in the appendix.

Before you move to the next stage, double check that the competitor has not now returned – check at finish, car park, first aid, enquiries tent, registration etc..

STAGE 2a – Basic searches (to be done simultaneously)

1. Do the course backwards

Send a small group (3 or 4) round the competitor's course in reverse. Stay basically together, but vary routes to controls and re-group at each control.

2. Perimeter

Send other individuals, probably each on their own, round the perimeter (2 in opposite directions, meet in middle then return direct) of the competition area.

3. Line features

Send appropriate numbers of individuals along major line features – in vehicles or on bicycles if possible, for speed.

All search parties should:

- each have a whistle, compass and map showing the course
- have a waterproof pen to mark map
- be briefed on details of the lost competitor
- take emergency food and spare clothing for the lost competitor
- report back within an agreed time
- have a means of reporting back if they find the lost competitor
- move briskly and look only for the obvious. This is not the time for a painstaking search.

**REMIND SEARCH PARTIES TO APPROACH THE LOST COMPETITOR GENTLY –
SEE OVER**

ALSO:

- ✓ Keep clear notes of who is doing what, and when they set out.
- ✓ While this is going on, you should dig out the lost competitor's home contact details.

When you find the competitor

What you do when you find the competitor depends on a number of factors. There is a strong chance that (s)he will be

Worried, frightened, upset, disorientated

Tired and hungry

Cold and wet

The group of strangers approaching him/her must be sympathetic and reassuring, use his/her name – don't add to the fear and do not chastise.

If he/she is injured, you should only move the casualty if you can do so without exacerbating the injury AND without increasing the risk to yourself. It might be preferable to call for help – using radio, mobile phone, or the fastest runner. If you're sending a runner, mark on his/her map exactly where the casualty is. Leave one or two people with the casualty if possible.

STAGE 2b – Review searches

Review areas covered in searches and consider repeating or widening to include other areas.

Depending on weather conditions, daylight, time of day etc., you might choose not to repeat searches.

STAGE 3 – PHONE CHECK

Phoning the competitor's home might cause alarm, but it is probably wise now to check that (s)he isn't there – or to give other information.

STAGE 4 – INFORM THE AUTHORITIES

If you found nothing on your reasonable search of the area where the lost competitor was likely to be found, you should now alert the authorities – phone the police. They will decide whether to involve mountain rescue and/or coastguard.

Give them:

maps

the information you collected

notes of what you have done so far

Let the police take over, but provide as much assistance as possible. Your skilled navigators might be required to help, but they might be getting tired by now.

STAGE 5 - AFTERWARDS

Keep copy of all notes of the incident, and report to SOA/BOF as appropriate. Learn from the incident; feed back comments on the usefulness of this document.

APPENDIX

DETAILS OF MISSING COMPETITOR

Name Nickname

Age

Course, start time

Approx. height, build, appearance

Distinctive clothing

O experience/skill level

Recent injury/illness/medication?

RECORD OF SEARCH ACTIVITY

Course backwards

Team:

Time out:

Time back:

Perimeter

Team:

Time out:

Time back:

Main line features

Team:

Time out:

Time back: