

## Introduction

Mountain running attracts runners with a wide range of ability and experience. Those who are unfit, inexperienced or unfamiliar with mountain terrain and potentially changeable weather conditions are at greatest risk of personal harm. However, anyone participating in a mountain race can have an accident, the consequences of which may be extremely serious. The safety of all runners must be treated as a priority in every race.

This document sets out IMRA's policy with respect to Race Safety.

Note 'He' is used to represent both genders.

## Safety Policy

The general philosophy behind safety in mountain running is that the runner must take primary responsibility for their own safety in the mountains. However, the Race Director is responsible for making sure that the race is as safe as it can be. He must ensure that the nature of the race and the rules relating to safety are communicated to the runners, and that if an incident does occur, arrangements are in place so that help is directed to the needful party quickly.

IMRA holds Public Liability insurance to indemnify the organisation against legal liability for damages in respect of accidental injury to any person and accidental loss of or damage to material property which arises in connection with its business.

## Race Officials/Marshals

- a) Those involved in the organisation of a race should be experienced and familiar with the sport of mountain running.
- b) Those marking a course or manning a checkpoint/turnaround point should be experienced runners/walkers with the capability to manage in adverse weather conditions in terms of equipment/clothing and other skills.
- c) Where possible, marshals should have the use of a mobile phone while getting into position and during a race. If there is a marshal at a turnaround point he should have phone contact with the Race Director at the start/finish area.
- d) Where a junior course is provided, a marshal should be in place to man the turnaround point.
- e) Where feasible, a marshal should carry a basic first-aid kit to assist if an injury is sustained in the course of the race. This should contain: bivvy bag, foil blanket, hat, chocolate, latex gloves and a couple of bandages.

## Registration and Race Entry

- a) All runners must be registered members of IMRA and will be required to complete a registration form, once per calendar year. Runners are required to declare on the form that they have no physical or medical condition which would inhibit them from the sport of mountain running.
- b) To enter a race, runners must provide the required details on an official race sign-on sheet. No runner will be allowed to start a race until he has recorded his entry on the official race sign-on sheet (this should include new registrants also). The runner's signature on this sheet is the formal indication that he is aware of the general mountain running safety information, their obligations and requirements, and all details pertaining to the specific race.

## Runners Obligations

Runners must be made aware of their obligations with regards to safety:

- Arrive at the venue with as much kit as the organiser is likely to require them to carry on the day. This means windproof full body cover, other body cover appropriate for the weather conditions (e.g. waterproof full body cover, hat, gloves etc.), map, compass, whistle, emergency food (long races).
- Have the necessary skills to cope with any navigational problems they may encounter, whatever the weather.
- Have sufficient experience to compete in a race of this duration and challenge.
- Be able to recognize the signs of hypothermia and hypoglycaemia in themselves and others.
  - Hypothermia: not responding to conversation; uncoordinated movement and speech; inability to think clearly; wanting to carry on in adverse conditions; skin cold where normally warm, such as under armpit. Immediate action: wrap in warm clothing.
  - Hypoglycaemia: confusion, ill co-ordinated movement and speech; weakness, hunger. Immediate action: drink glucose solution or suck sweets.
- Know what the organiser's 'drop-out' procedures are and comply with them. As a minimum, if they retire they MUST notify the officials at the finish (and the nearest check-point marshal, if appropriate) before they leave the area.
- If they see someone in trouble: HELP, even if it costs them the race.
- Be aware that, by the nature of Mountain Running, first aid may not be readily available.

## Size of Field

This should be limited to a number that the race organisation can monitor and control and will not create an undue risk of accidents to runners because of overcrowding.

## Junior Runners

IMRA has a comprehensive policy in respect of junior runners. Details of this policy are available from the Junior Affairs Officer, or from the Committee. This policy sets out the particular arrangements which must be followed, where juniors participate in an IMRA race.

## Event Information

To ensure runners are fully informed and can make a choice about their own capabilities to partake, the following information about the event should be provided on the website and at the start of each race:

- Distance
- Height gained
- The 'TAD' rating
- Map showing the race route (if available)
- Advice as to whether navigational expertise is required
- Equipment/clothing recommended for the race

## Race Route

- a) Race routes should not be unnecessarily dangerous.

- b) Any part of a route which cannot avoid dangerous terrain, without impacting the essential character of the race, (e.g. steep drops, loose rocks, etc.) or is otherwise hazardous, must be highlighted to runners before the race begins.
- c) On routes where runners come down on the same route as they went up, descending runners always have the right of way. Runners should be reminded of this requirement at the start of such races.
- d) In the event of adverse weather conditions consideration should be given to using an alternative, possibly shorter, race route if appropriate.
- e) Where the race is deemed suitable for a junior route, this should be provided in accordance with IMRA's Junior's Policy.

### ***Marked Race Routes***

- a) Where a race has been identified as being 'Marked' the route should be marked in accordance with the Route Marking guidelines.
- b) The organiser should highlight any part of the route where care will be required by runners to follow the correct route.

### ***Unmarked Race Routes***

- a) On un-marked races only competitors with navigational skills should be allowed take part. This requirement will be stated on the Events Page for the race.
- b) Depending on the nature of the race, additional mandatory safety kit may be specified. It is the runners responsibility to ensure they carry this kit. A random inspection should be enforced before and/or after the race to ensure compliance with this requirement.

## **Weather Conditions**

- a) Should weather conditions be of such severity as to endanger runners, the race must either be abandoned, curtailed or an alternative route used. The main factor in making such a judgement must be the safety of the runners and the Race Director must be prepared to take firm decisions which may prove unpopular at the time. The IMRA Committee has an overarching responsibility to monitor decisions and actions in this regard.
- b) An up to date local weather forecast may help the Race Director arrive at a decision in marginal cases but it should always be remembered that a general forecast does not always accurately reflect the conditions that might pertain on higher ground, e.g. wind conditions, temperature. There are a number of sites e.g. [www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com), which may assist in determining weather conditions.
- c) It is preferable that conclusion is reached by more than one person but the Race Director's decision is final and runners must comply.
- d) On long races, in hot weather conditions, runners should be advised to carry water and if possible informed about any source of water on the route.

## **Race Monitoring and Rescue Procedures**

- a) When a race starts the number of runners starting the race must be recorded on the sign-on sheet. This should include new registrants also.
- b) If there is a marshal at a turnaround point, the number starting the race must be communicated to the marshal by phone.
- c) If other manned checkpoints are being used, any marshals who are in contact with the start must also be informed.
- d) If a runner fails to reach a checkpoint his whereabouts must be confirmed as quickly as possible. Remember, other runners may be able to establish the whereabouts of a 'missing' runner.

- e) If he has retired and reported to the finish or to an IMRA official, then this must be communicated to the marshal at the turnaround point and any other contactable marshals on the course, as quickly as possible.
- f) Obviously, if the whereabouts of the runner is not known this must also be communicated as quickly as possible.
- g) If a runner cannot be located the organisers must decide on a course of action which will depend largely on the specific circumstances e.g. weather, time of day, experience level of runner.
- h) Generally those involved in organising the race will be able to locate the missing runner. However, under no circumstances should anyone put themselves at risk but rather the official rescue services should be engaged.
- i) The flow charts in Appendix A provide guidance on the decision making process to be followed in the case of a missing runner or an injured runner.
- j) If an Incident occurs an Incident Report Form as per Appendix B, must be completed.
- k) When a race has finished all runners must be accounted for by the finish marshal.

## **Emergency Phone Numbers**

- a) For every race the Race Director must ensure that runners are aware of the IMRA Emergency Number.
- b) The Race Director must also ensure that the Emergency Number has been re-directed to his mobile phone for that race.

## **Retirement Procedure**

- a) If a runner retires it is imperative that he reports to the finish marshal or an IMRA official as soon as possible. If a runner does not report in person this can lead to confusion and uncertainty about the whereabouts and safety of the runner. In these circumstances the Race Director may be unnecessarily concerned and put the emergency plan into action.
- b) If a runner strays off the route significantly the onus is on him to contact the organisers as quickly as possible on the emergency number.

## **Equipment**

To address safety requirements, the Race Director should ensure that the following equipment is available at the start every race:

- First aid kit in a weatherproof container
- Mobile phones or two-way radio for start and checkpoint/turnaround marshals
- Map of the area with race route and access points (for rescue services) marked
- Keys for access
- Compass
- Torch (winter or late evening races)
- Whistle
- Crutches and walking sticks
- Ice packs

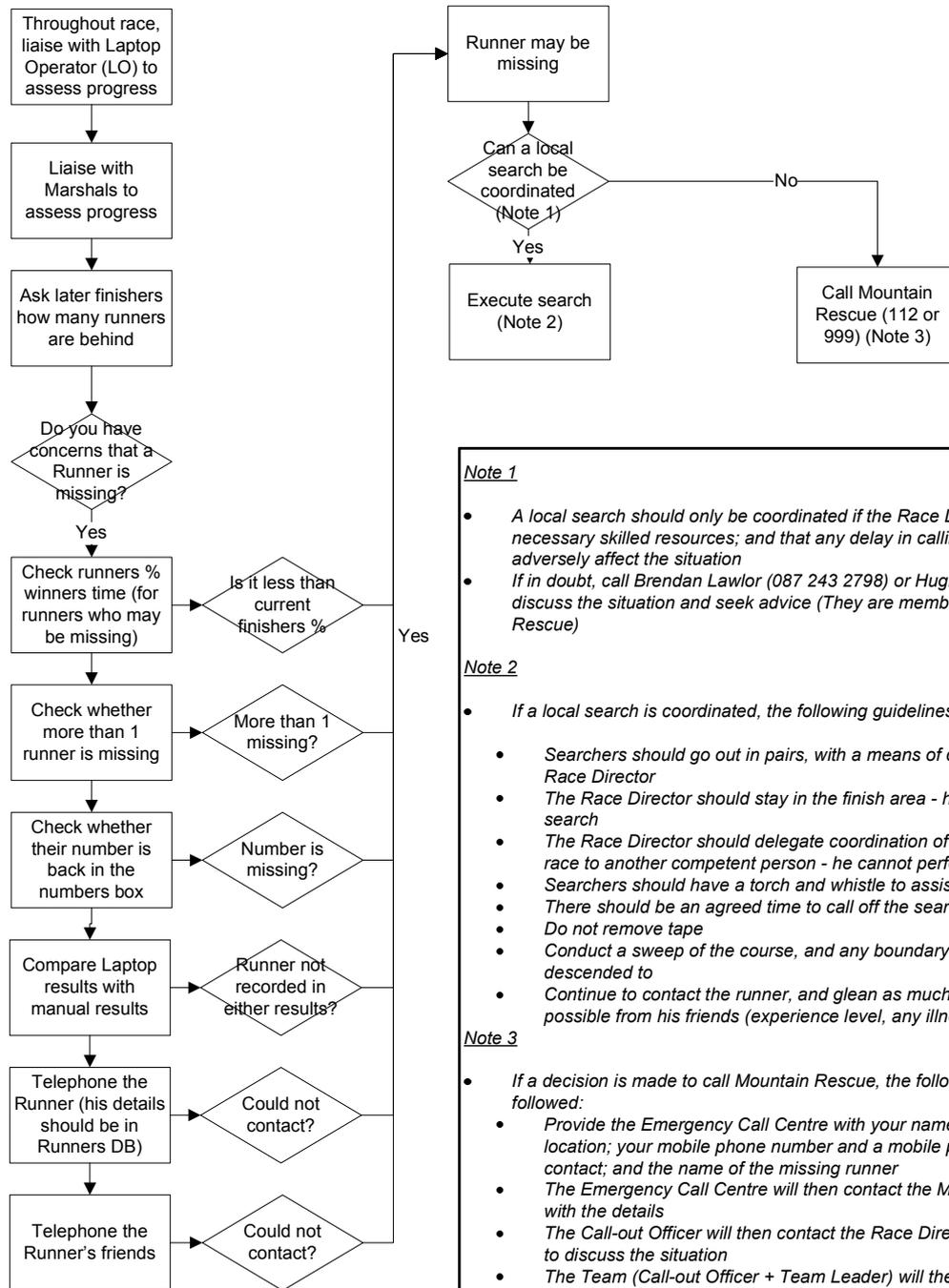
Runners must be advised of recommended equipment requirements for certain races , taking into account the race route/distance and likely weather conditions. These recommendations must be communicated to runners before the start of the race. Requirements to be considered should include:

- Windproof whole body cover

- Waterproof gear
- Map and compass suitable for navigating the course
- Whistle
- Emergency food

# Appendix A: Emergency Response Plans

## Missing Runner



### Note 1

- A local search should only be coordinated if the Race Director is satisfied that he has the necessary skilled resources; and that any delay in calling out Mountain Rescue will not adversely affect the situation
- If in doubt, call Brendan Lawlor (087 243 2798) or Hugh McLindon (086 852 0962) to discuss the situation and seek advice (They are members of both IMRA and Mountain Rescue)

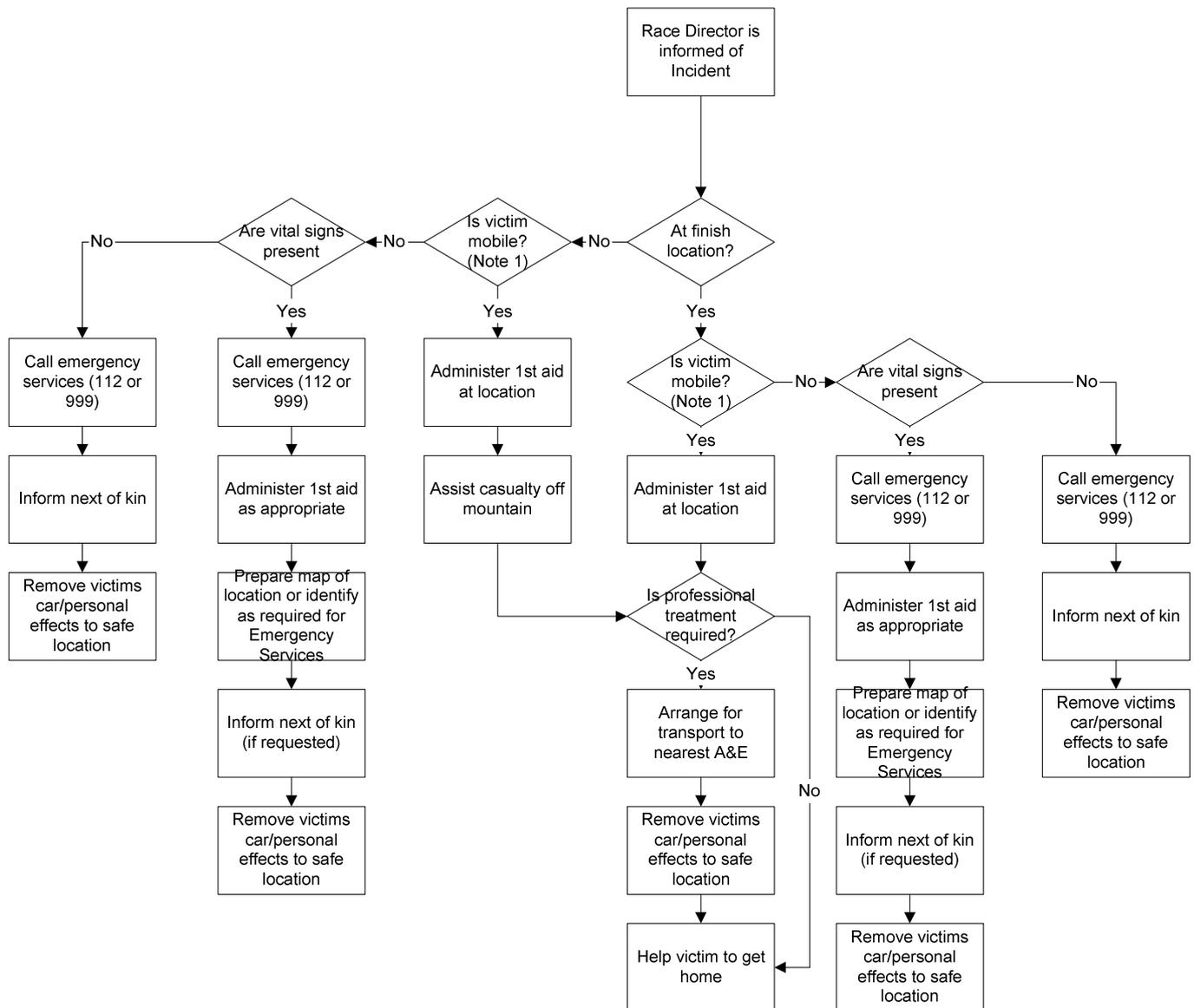
### Note 2

- If a local search is coordinated, the following guidelines should be followed:
  - Searchers should go out in pairs, with a means of contact between them and the Race Director
  - The Race Director should stay in the finish area - he should not take part in the search
  - The Race Director should delegate coordination of the search; or of directing the race to another competent person - he cannot perform both duties
  - Searchers should have a torch and whistle to assist in locating the runner
  - There should be an agreed time to call off the search
  - Do not remove tape
  - Conduct a sweep of the course, and any boundary roads the runner may have descended to
  - Continue to contact the runner, and glean as much information about the runner as possible from his friends (experience level, any illnesses, injuries etc)

### Note 3

- If a decision is made to call Mountain Rescue, the following guidelines should be followed:
  - Provide the Emergency Call Centre with your name; the exact race registration location; your mobile phone number and a mobile phone number for a second contact; and the name of the missing runner
  - The Emergency Call Centre will then contact the Mountain Rescue Call-out Officer, with the details
  - The Call-out Officer will then contact the Race Director (or whoever invoked the call) to discuss the situation
  - The Team (Call-out Officer + Team Leader) will then decide whether to go for a limited response (3 or 4 Mountain Rescue personnel who might be in the area), or a full team call-out
  - Prepare a map indicating the race route and possible location(s) of missing runner

# Injured Runner



Note 1

- If a runner is seriously injured in any way (lower leg break, concussion, serious cut etc) then Mountain Rescue should be called out immediately
- Moving a seriously injured runner without a stretcher or helicopter can make a bad situation worse

## Appendix B: Incident Report Form

<p>IRISH MOUNTAIN RUNNING ASSOCIATION</p> <p>INCIDENT REPORT FORM</p> <p>(must be completed on the day of the incident)</p>		
Event:		Date:
Name of casualty:		Time of incident:
Location of incident: (Describe location on race route, or off race route if appropriate)		
Description of incident: (Describe what occurred and injuries sustained):		
Weather conditions:		
Description of action taken: (Details of actions – in chronological order – include approximate times)		
Signed:	Date:	Time:
Agreed:	Date:	Time:
(Report must be agreed by a second person. Familiar with the details of the accident):		
Review comments:		