

**IRISH MOUNTAIN RUNNING ASSOCIATION
(IMRA)**

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Approved by the IMRA Committee : _____ Date: _____

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1. 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.

2. Risk Analysis

In determining the safety requirements defined in this document a Risk Analysis has been carried out and the details are shown below. It is not possible to identify all possible hazards and risks which could impact runners in a mountain race. However, the most common hazards and related risks are identified below under four main headings. The collective requirements which must be adopted to minimise the risks at mountain races, are described in sections 3 to 17 below.

Mountain Running Risk Analysis

RACE OFFICIALS	
Hazards	Risks
Inexperienced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not foresee dangers Poor route marking Get lost on mountain Inadequately prepared
Start/ finish officials remote from turn around marshal or other marshals on the route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot communicate in the event of an incident
RUNNERS	
Hazards	Risks
Juniors or inexperienced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get lost Under estimate effort required
Unfit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to complete the route therefore out on the mountain for a long time
Medical condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runner affected by condition during race
Large number of runners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcrowding on race route
Not recorded as having started the race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injured or lost on mountain and not detected by race officials
RACE ROUTE	
Hazards	Risks
Route not obvious (unmarked)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deviation off intended route and into dangerous terrain Get lost
Dangerous terrain (cliffs, bog holes, loose rocks etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall / slip and get injured
Distance / climb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some runners unable to complete the route therefore out on the mountain for a long time
Barbed wire on the route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuts / infection
Up and down same route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runners descending collide with runners ascending
WEATHER	
Hazards	Risks
Wet / cold / Windy weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hypothermia
Windy weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runners blown over steep drop or cliff
Misty weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get lost in poor visibility
Hot weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat exhaustion / dehydration

3. **Safety Policy**

The general philosophy behind safety in mountain running is that the **runner must take primary responsibility for his/her own safety** in the mountains. However, the organisers are responsible for making sure the race is as safe as it can be. They 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.

4. **Race Officials / Marshals**

- a) Those involved in the organisation of a race must be experienced and familiar with the sport of mountain running.
- b) Those marking a course or manning a checkpoint/turn around point must 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/ two way radio while getting into position and during a race. If there is a marshal at a turn around point he/she must have radio or phone contact with a race official at the start/finish area.(see also Sec.14 and 17)

5. **Registration and Race Entry**

- a) All runners must be registered members of the IMRA and will be required to complete a registration form, once per calander year. Information about the runner's health is requested on this form and if the organisers have any concern about an individual competing this must be communicated to the runner.
- 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/she has recorded their entry on the official race sign-on sheet. The runner's signature on this sheet is the formal indication that he/she is aware of the general mountain running safety information and requirements and all details pertaining to the specific race.

6. **Size of field**

This must 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.

7. **Juniors / Inexperienced Runners**

Although juniors are expected to consider their safety in the same way as senior runners, the inexperience and greater vulnerability to bad weather, of junior runners require that the **organisers take primary responsibility for safety**. This may involve taking decisions on behalf of juniors that would normally be taken by the runners themselves in the case of senior runners. The same principle applies to new and inexperienced runners of any age.

8. **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 must be provided at the start of each race.

- Distance
- Height gained
- Map showing the race route (if available)
- Advice as to whether navigational expertise is required.
- Equipment/ clothing recommended (at medium/long races)
- Up to date local weather forecast (at medium/long races)
- Emergency phone number for runners to use (See also sec. 15)
- General Mountain Running Safety Information and Requirements

A template for the provision of this information is provided in ***Appendix A***

9. 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 must 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. (See also Sec.13)

10. Marked Race Routes

- a) Most long or medium distance race routes will not be marked but on shorter events (which are most likely to attract inexperienced competitors) marking will be used where possible.
- b) Bearing in mind that even on short races visibility in bad weather can be reduced to a few yards, organisers must never describe a course as obvious or marked without also providing an explanation of the route.
- c) The organiser must highlight any part of the route where care will be required by runners to follow the correct route.

11. Unmarked Race Routes

- a) On medium/ long races where the route is not marked, only competitors with navigational skills will be allowed take part. This requirement will be stated on the 'Race Information' Notice.
- b) Runners on these routes are advised to carry a whistle for use in the event of an emergency.

12. Fences on the Race Route

Routes which involve crossing barbed wire fences should be avoided if possible. However, if it is necessary to cross such a fence as part of the race route, a crossing point must be designated either where there is a gate, the fence has been removed or the fence has been covered to protect the runners.

13. 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 race organisers must be prepared to take firm decisions which may prove unpopular at the time.
- b) An up to date local weather forecast may help race organisers to 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 etc.
- c) It is preferable that conclusion is reached by more than one person but the race organiser's decision is final and runners must comply.
- d) On long races, if hot weather conditions, runners should be advised to carry water and if possible informed about any source of water on the route.

14. 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.
- a) If there is a manned turn around point, the number starting the race must be communicated to the marshal by phone or radio.
- b) If other manned checkpoints are being used, any marshals who are in contact with the start must also be informed.
- c) If a runner fails to reach a checkpoint his/her whereabouts must be confirmed as quickly as possible. Remember, other runners may be able to establish the whereabouts of a 'missing' runner.
- d) If he/she has retired and reported to the finish or an IMRA official then this must be communicated to the marshal at the turn around point and any other contactable marshals on the course, as quickly as possible.
- e) Obviously, if the whereabouts of the runner is not known this must also be communicated as quickly as possible.
- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) If an injury incident occurs during a race the Accident and Emergency Plan as per the flow chart shown in **Appendix B** must be implemented
- i) In an Incident occurs an Incident Report Form as per **Appendix C**, must be completed.
- j) When a race has finished all runners must be accounted for by the finish marshal.

15. Emergency Phone Numbers

- a) For every race the organisers must provide a phone number to runners which can be contacted in the event of an emergency or retirement. (See sec. 5)
- b) The organisers must have available at the start of the race the phone number for the nearest mountain rescue service.

16. Retirement Procedure

- a) If a runner retires it is imperative that he/she 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 organisers may be unnecessarily concerned and put the emergency plan in place.
- b) If a runner strays off the route significantly the onus is on him/her to contact the organisers as quickly as possible on the emergency phone number provided at the start of the race.

17. Equipment

Organisers must have the following equipment at the start every race:

- a) First aid kit in a weatherproof container
- b) Mobile phones or two-way radio for start and checkpoint/turn around marshals
- c) Map of the area
- d) Compass
- e) Torch (winter or late evening races)
- f) Whistle
- g) Crutches and walking sticks
- h) Bivvy bag
- i) Sleeping Bag
- j) Ice packs or cryo packs

- k) Spare set of wet weather gear and warm clothing

Runners must be advised of recommended equipment requirements for long and medium distance 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 must include:

- a) Windproof whole body cover
- b) Waterproof gear
- c) Map and compass suitable for navigating the course
- d) Whistle
- e) Emergency food

RACE INFORMATION

RACE:

DISTANCE:

HEIGHT GAINED:

NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS REQUIRED:

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST:

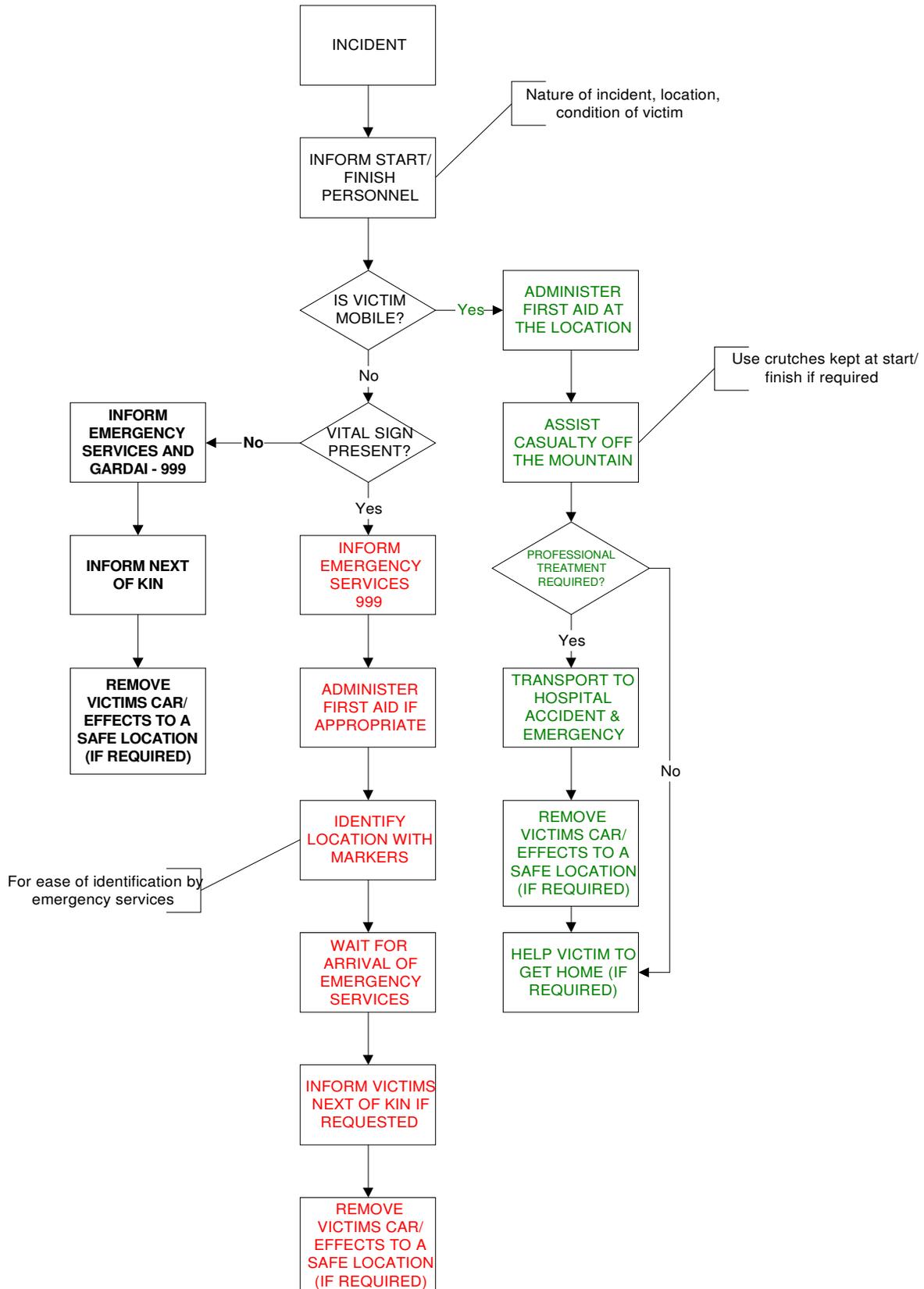
EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER:

General Mountain Running Safety Information and Requirements

Please read the following information and requirements before you take part in this race. Have a safe and enjoyable run!!

- 1. Runners are primarily responsible for their own safety and take part in Mountain Races at their own risk.**
- 2. Runners must be members of the Irish Mountain Running Association (IMRA). Membership forms are available at the race start.**
- 3. Runners must sign an entry list at the start of every race, when they will be issued with a race number.**
- 4. Runners must be aware that Mountain Races are run over rough, uneven terrain and may involve steep ascents and descents.**
- 5. Runners must be aware that descending runners always have the right of way.**
- 6. Runners must be aware that good weather conditions at the start of a race are no guarantee of the conditions later on in the race or at a different point on the race route.**
- 7. In the event of bad or changeable weather conditions runners must carry additional equipment – e.g. rainproof gear, whistle, food, map and compass.**
- 8. Not all race routes will be marked. If the route is not marked, runners may require some navigational skills.**
- 9. All runners must report to the finish marshal whether they complete the full race route or not. If you do not cross the finish line at the end of a race you must confirm that you are safe with the finish marshal or any IMRA official. Do not leave a race location before confirming that you are safe.**
- 10. The organisers reserve the right to refuse an entry in a race to any individual.**

IRISH MOUNTAIN RUNNING ASSOCIATION Accident and Emergency Plan



IRISH MOUNTAIN RUNNING ASSOCIATION

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

(must be completed on the day of the incident)

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:
Agreed:	Date:
<small>(Report must be agreed by a second person. Familiar with the details of the accident)</small>	
Time:	
Time:	
Review Comments:	