



Introduction

This document sets out IMRA's policy with respect to race safety. A hazard identification and risk assessment is also included.

Mountain running attracts runners with a wide range of abilities 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.

Note 'He' is used to represent both genders.

This policy document is in effect from February 2022 and should be reviewed within not more than 2 years.

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 (RD) is also responsible for making sure that the race is as safe as it can be. The RD 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.

Insurance

IMRA holds Public Liability insurance cover. It is open to individual runners to take out their own personal accident insurance.

Race Officials/Marshals

- a) Those involved in the organisation of a race should be experienced and familiar with the sport of mountain running and should be sufficiently competent to take on their specific role for that race. For example,
 - i. Race Director – should have significant experience of mountain running, or have undertaken, for example, Race Director training arranged by IMRA or gained experience by acting as a Shadow Race Director
 - ii. Those marking a course or marshalling 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. Course marshals need to take responsibility for getting themselves into position in good time and be familiar with exactly
 - a. where their marshalling point is
 - b. where they are directing runners
 - iii. First Aiders should have a suitable level of First Aid qualification (for example, REC 1 or higher)

- b) 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 RD at the start/finish area.
- c) Where a junior or short course is provided, a marshal should be in place to manage the turnaround point or the point where the junior/short course splits from the main race route.
- d) 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 or nitrile 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. The form may be in online or hardcopy format.
- b) To enter a race, runners must provide the required details via online entry or 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 (this includes new registrants). The runner's signature on the sheet is his formal indication that he is aware of the general mountain running safety information, his obligations and requirements, and all details pertaining to the specific race. At the time of writing this Safety Statement, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, runners are not asked to sign the sheet personally, but to authorise a race official to mark their entry on the sheet on the runner's behalf.
- c) Junior runners (up to & including M/F18 categories) must be signed on by a parent/guardian at each race in which they run.

Runners' Obligations

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

- a) 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).
- b) Have the necessary skills to cope with any navigational problems they may encounter, whatever the weather.
- c) Have sufficient experience and be in suitable physical condition to compete in a race of the duration and challenge.
- d) 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: sugary drink or food, *e.g.* sweets.
- e) Know what the organiser's 'drop-out' procedures are and comply with them. As a minimum, if retiring from the race, they MUST notify the officials at the finish (and the nearest check-point marshal, if appropriate) before they leave the area.

- f) If they see someone in trouble: HELP, even if it costs them the race.
- g) 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 because of overcrowding.

Junior Runners

IMRA's Competition Rules set out the arrangements which must be followed where under 18s participate in an IMRA race. IMRA's Child Safeguarding Statement outlines IMRA's commitments in that regard.

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 IMRA site (www.imra.ie is the official source of such information) well in advance 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

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

Unmarked Race Routes

- i. 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. The organiser cannot be expected to know a runner's skill level – it is up to the runner to take responsibility for ensuring they have the appropriate skills or run with someone who has.
- ii. Depending on the nature of the race, additional mandatory safety kit may be specified. It is the runner's responsibility to ensure they carry this kit. A kit inspection (random or checking all runners) may be carried out 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) Any active or predicted Met Eireann weather warnings should be taken into consideration:

Warning	Met Eireann explanation	IMRA interpretation
Yellow	Not unusual weather. Localised danger.	Race should proceed unless there are specific local concerns
Orange	Infrequent. Dangerous/disruptive.	RD/committee should strongly consider postponing race, or substituting low risk modified route if appropriate. If race is to go ahead, there should be justifiable reasons why it is deemed safe to do so. Consideration given to runners, volunteers and everyone travelling to and from the race
Red	Rare. Extremely dangerous/destructive.	Race to be postponed

- c) Furthermore, 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. accuweather.com & yr.no which may assist in determining weather conditions.
- d) It is preferable that conclusion is reached by more than one person, but the Race Director's decision is final and runners must comply. **Where possible, the RD should inform/consult the committee of the intention to cancel before issuing the cancellation.**
- e) 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 should, if possible, be communicated to the marshal by phone.
- c) If other manned checkpoints are being used, any marshals who are in contact with the start should also be informed.
- d) If a runner fails to reach a checkpoint his whereabouts must be confirmed as quickly as possible.
- e) Other runners may be able to help establish the whereabouts of a 'missing' runner.
- f) 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.
- g) Equally, if the whereabouts of the runner is not known this must also be circulated as quickly as possible.
- h) 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.
- i) Often, 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.
- j) 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.
- k) If an Incident occurs an Incident Report Form as per Appendix B, must be completed.
- l) When a race has finished
 - a. all runners must be accounted for by the finish marshal.
 - b. all marshals/volunteers who were out on the route must be accounted for by the Race Director

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 RD 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

- a) To address safety requirements, the RD should ensure that the following equipment is available at every race:
 - i. First aid kit in a weatherproof container
 - ii. Mobile phones or two-way radio for start and checkpoint/turnaround marshals
 - iii. Map of the area with race route and access points (for rescue services) marked
 - iv. Compass
 - v. Keys for access (insofar as is possible)
 - vi. Torch (winter or late evening races)
 - vii. Whistle
 - viii. Ice packs

- b) 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:
 - i. Windproof whole-body cover
 - ii. Waterproof gear
 - iii. Map suitable for navigating the course
 - iv. Compass
 - v. Whistle
 - vi. Water
 - vii. Emergency food

Traffic & road safety

- a) It is sometimes necessary for race routes to use or to cross public roads. To ensure the safety of runners, motorists and other members of the public, the following guidelines must be observed:
 - i. Routes requiring running on, or crossing, high speed roads such as national routes must be avoided
 - ii. Where appropriate, the Garda Síochána should be consulted and their approval sought
 - iii. Organisers should keep in mind
 - Volume of traffic – how busy is the road?
 - Number of runners
 - Visibility of runners to road users (*e.g.* blind bends would be a concern)
 - iv. Minimise sections on road where possible
 - v. Marshals in place at road crossings or other key points – at least one but preferably two marshals, wearing hi-vis vests
 - vi. “Caution – runners!” (or similar) corriboard signs in use, large (*e.g.* A2), fluorescent yellow for maximum visibility, typically placed 50 – 100 m back from a crossing or key safety point, to give road users plenty of warning
 - vii. Runners advised, by marshals or signs, which side of the road they must run, stay in single file *etc.*
 - viii. Standard procedure is the marshals hold the runners, not the traffic, until it is safe. Runners are expected to co-operate and may be disqualified for non-compliance

- ix. A Garda escort may be arranged in exceptional circumstances, *e.g.* a large race starting on a road
- b) In some cases, parking along the sides of public roads may be required. RDs must ensure that parking is planned and executed in a manner that does not endanger public safety and minimises disruption. Emergency access must never be blocked. Standard procedure is that parking marshals wearing hi-vis vests are present during runners' arrival times for the race; the marshals ensure parking is carried out as planned and issues avoided.
- c) RDs must be aware that each situation is unique and appropriate measures must be in place.

Hazard Identification & Risk Assessments

- a) As an adventure sport, mountain running inherently involves some unavoidable level of risk. All persons involved in the sport – participants and race organisers alike – accept this. This policy document does not set out to eliminate risk, but rather to ensure that risks are managed and control measures are in place to bring risks to an acceptable level.
- b) A hazard is defined as “that which can result in harm”.
- c) The following hazards requiring risk assessment have been identified:
 - i. Lost runner(s)
 - ii. Injured runner(s)
 - iii. Ill health, including participant taken ill at event
 - iv. Adverse weather
 - v. Road safety
 - vi. Young people
- d) The risk assessments have been conducted by assessing
 - i. The severity of harm likely to occur as a result of the hazard
 - ii. The likelihood of the harm occurring, *given the control measures which are in place*

Severity	
Rating	Meaning
1. Low	Minor injury, e.g. sprains & strains, minor cuts, bruises; recovery time short and impact low
2. Medium	Injury requiring significant recovery time (weeks – months)
3. High	Serious or life-changing injury, death

Likelihood	
Rating	Meaning
1. Low	Unlikely
2. Medium	Somewhat likely
3. High	Likely

- iii. The ratings for severity and likelihood are then multiplied to give a Risk Rating (RR) as follows:

Calculation of Risk Ratings	Likelihood		
	1. Low	2. Medium	3. High

Severity	1. Low	RR = 1. Low risk	RR = 2. Low risk	RR = 3. Low risk
	2. Medium	RR = 2. Low risk	RR = 4. Medium risk	RR = 6. Medium risk
	3. High	RR = 3. Low risk	RR = 6. Medium risk	RR = 9. High risk

iv. The interpretations of the Risk Ratings are –

Risk Rating (RR)	Interpretation
RR = 1 - 3. Low risk	Risk is acceptable provided control measures are in place and adhered to
RR = 4 - 6. Medium risk	Elevated level of risk, but may still be acceptable. Race organisers/committee should be prepared to consider whether additional control measures should be in place for specific events.
RR > 6. High risk	Unacceptable risk. Do not proceed until risk can be brought to acceptable level. Cancel event if necessary.

Risk assessments

1. Lost runner(s)

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Affected	Control measures	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Lost runner	Delay & inconvenience	1	Runner, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many courses fully marked For unmarked courses runners are required to have the necessary navigational skills – runner's responsibility Kit requirements where appropriate (map, compass, GPS tracker option available to organisers of longer races) Emergency response plan in place to aid in locating/recovering missing runner as safely and efficiently as possible 	3	3. Low
Lost runner	Hypothermia	3	Runner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory jacket rule Additional kit requirements at RD discretion for longer races and depending on weather conditions 	1	3. Low
Injury	Injury while lost	2	Runner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Aid Officer at every race, can give assistance once runner located Mountain Rescue services engaged if necessary 	1	2. Low
Need for search	Volunteer(s) get into difficulty	2	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency response plan ensures volunteers not put in unnecessary danger 	1	2. Low

2. Injured runner(s)

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Affected	Control measures	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Injured runner	Serious injury	3	Runner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course routes avoid unnecessary danger, such as crags or deep river crossings, where unacceptable risks of serious harm are present 	1	3. Low

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitors advised of specific hazards at briefing at start of each race First Aid Officer present at every race Runners are expected to help an injured runner, even if it means sacrificing their own race 		
	Lesser injury	2	Runner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	2	4. Medium
Recovery of injured runner	Volunteer(s) get into difficulty	2	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency response plan ensures volunteers not put in unnecessary danger Mountain Rescue services engaged if necessary 	1	2. Low

3. Ill health, including participant taken ill at event

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Affected	Control measures	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Illness	Runner unfit to run gets into difficulty (e.g. exhaustion)	2	Runner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runners are responsible for their own safety and should not participate unless they are fit to do so First Aid Officer present at every race 	1	2. Low
	Serious health event such as cardiac arrest	3	Runner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above AED at all races as part of First Aid gear 	1	3. Low
Recovery of ill participant	Volunteer(s) get into difficulty	2	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency response plan ensures volunteers not put in unnecessary danger Mountain Rescue services engaged if necessary 	1	2. Low

4. Adverse weather

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Affected	Control measures	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Poor visibility	Runner or volunteer lost as a result of thick mist/fog etc	2	Runners, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not expected to be a significant concern for fully marked races Runners & course marshals required to have the necessary navigation skills and equipment (map, compass) for unmarked routes In severe cases, or where additional risks exist (e.g. dangerous crags if runners go off-course), RD has discretion to cancel race or modify route 	2	4. Medium
High winds	Increased risk of falls, hypothermia	2	Runners, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory jacket rule Additional kit requirements at RD discretion Volunteers (especially those out on course) advised to dress appropriately for the conditions Guidelines for Met Eireann weather warnings In severe cases, RD has discretion to cancel race or modify route 	2	4. Medium
Severe cold	Hypothermia, especially in case of injury or badly lost runner	3	Runners, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory jacket rule Additional kit requirements at RD discretion Volunteers (especially those out on course) advised to dress appropriately for the conditions Guidelines for Met Eireann weather warnings 	1	3. Low

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In severe cases, RD has discretion to cancel race or modify route 		
Ice & snow	Reduced grip, increased risk of falls, hypothermia	3	Runners, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory jacket rule Additional kit requirements at RD discretion Volunteers (especially those out on course) advised to dress appropriately for the conditions Guidelines for Met Eireann weather warnings In severe cases, RD has discretion to cancel race or modify route 	1	3. Low
Heavy rain	Swollen rivers, may not be safely crossable, or could become that way during race	3	Runners, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines for Met Eireann weather warnings In severe cases, RD has discretion to cancel race or modify route 	1	3. Low
	Increased risk of hypothermia	3	Runners, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory jacket rule Additional kit requirements at RD discretion Volunteers (especially those out on course) advised to dress appropriately for the conditions 	1	3. Low
Very hot weather	Dehydration, heat stroke, hyponatremia	2	Runners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advised or mandatory carrying of water for longer races in hot conditions In some cases, organisers may be in a position to provide water on-course 	1	2. Low

5. Road safety

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Affected	Control measures	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Runners on or crossing roads	Road traffic accident involving runner	3	Runners, members of public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road safety policy in place – includes safety measures such as marshalling, signage and informing runners of hazards 	1	1. Low
Parking on public roads	Incident involving cars parked for event	2	Members of public, IMRA runners & volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road safety policy requires suitable measures to be taken to minimize risks associated with parking on public roads 	1	2. Low

6. Young people

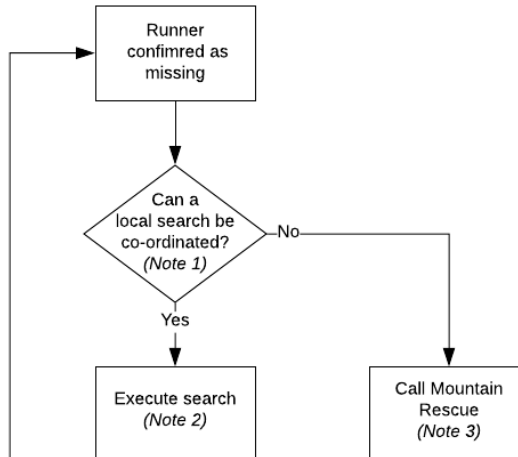
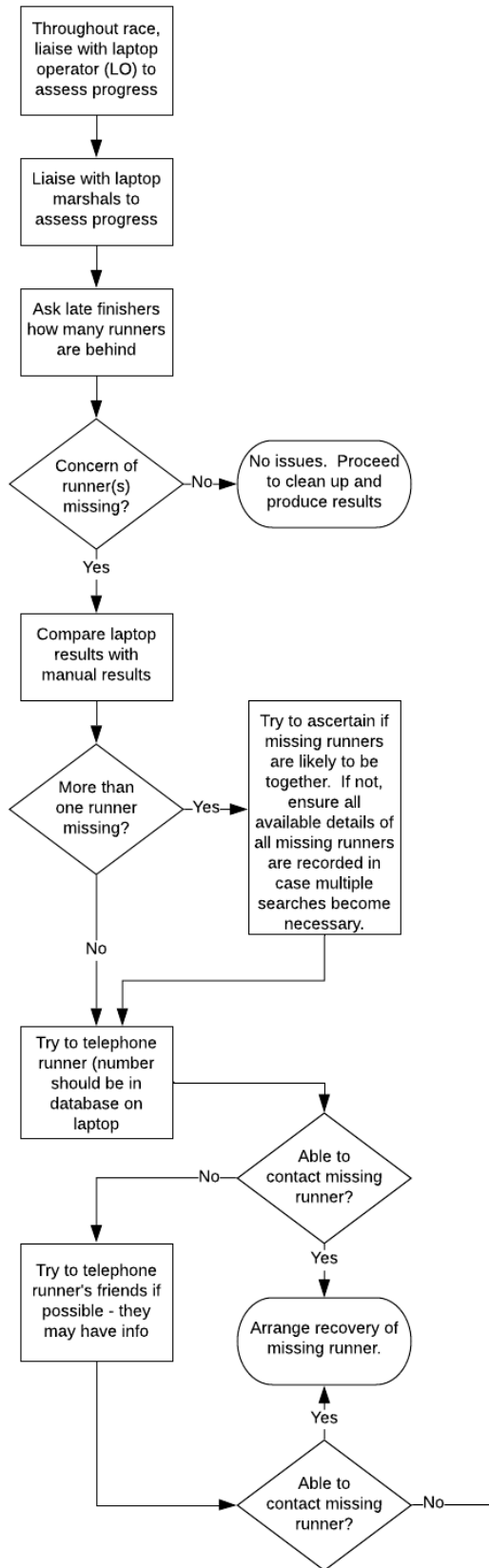
Note – IMRA has detailed safeguarding procedures in place to protect the wellbeing of children and to comply with legislation in that regard. Such procedures are outside the scope of this document, which is purely related to safety.

Hazard	Risk	Severity	Affected	Control measures	Likelihood	Risk Rating
Young people	Young runners racing on courses of unsuitable length/difficulty	2	Young runners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed guidelines in place as to what age groups can run what courses Runners in the Under 18 category and younger are not allowed to run in races on unmarked routes 	1	2. Low
	Young persons becoming lost	1	Young runners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runners in the Under 18 category and younger are not allowed to run in races on unmarked routes Runners under 10 years of age accompanied by a parent/guardian on course 	1	1. Low

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear marshalling and/or signage in place to designate junior route, so that young runners do not inadvertently end up running full course 		
	Injury	2	Young runners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for adult runners (Injured runner(s) risk assessment) • Typically, courses for young runners are not on very rough ground 	2	4. Medium

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

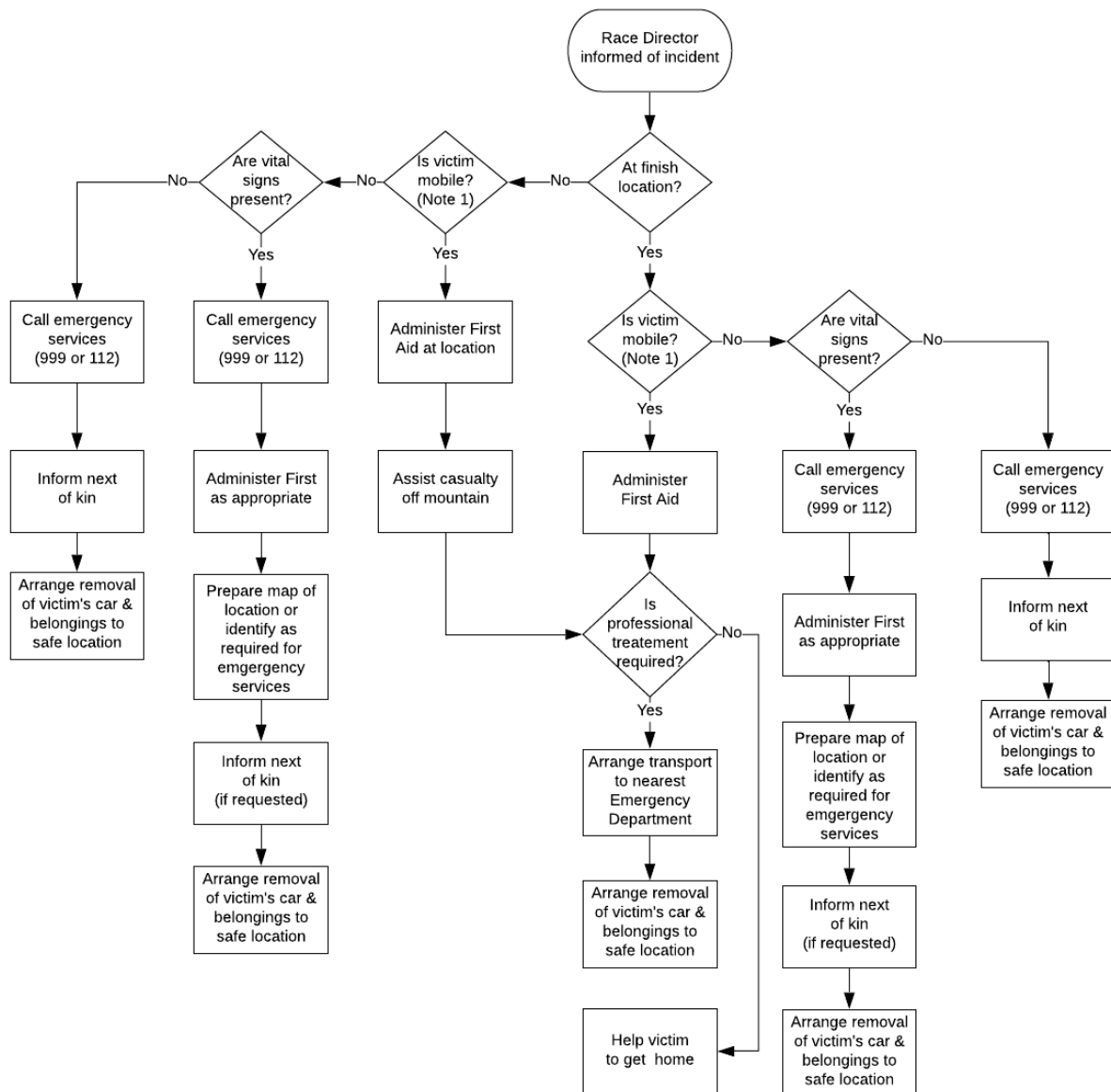
Note 2:
If a local search is coordinated, the following guidelines should be followed:

- 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 and mobile phone to remain in contact with the RD
- 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 try contacting the runner
- 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
 - a mobile phone number for a second contact
 - 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 will then decide on a suitable response.
- Prepare a map indicating the race route and possible location(s) of missing runner
- Write down any details of the runner which may be useful for the Team (age, gender, experience level, any illnesses, injuries etc, what runner was wearing if known)

Injured runner



Note 1:

If a runner is seriously injured in any way (e.g. leg break, suspect spinal injury, serious cut or head injury), Mountain Rescue should be called immediately. Attempting to move a seriously injured person without the necessary expertise and equipment (e.g. stretcher, helicopter) could make a bad situation worse.

Appendix B: Incident Report Form

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:	Time:
Agreed:	Date:	Time:
(Report must be agreed by a second person. Familiar with the details of the accident):		
Review comments:		