

Gwent Mountaineering Club

Mountain Safety Guidance Notes

Introduction

The Gwent Mountaineering Club endorses the British Mountaineering Council's participation statement:

"The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death.

Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement."

The following notes have been compiled for the benefit of club members. In addition to these notes, reference should be made to relevant books, videos/dvds, and web pages.

Careful preparation can make all the difference to the success of an outing whether it is a short afternoon stroll or an extended expedition into the mountains. The amount of time spent in planning should be related to the nature and duration of the trip but the principle remains the same: The more thought and care you put into your planning, the more likely you are to enjoy a successful experience.

Safety precautions

Good navigation and route planning is paramount to ensure safety within the hills. Leave details of your intended route and proposed time of return before setting out.

Carry an Emergency Identification Card in an accessible location, such as top pocket of your rucksack. This card should give your name and emergency contact details e.g., for next of kin.

Weather

Changes in weather conditions can produce serious problems for the mountaineer. Check the weather before leaving. Remember that the weather in the mountains often differs from that over low country. The main enemy is wind, rain and cold; a deadly combination unless the mountaineer is adequately prepared. Act before the weather dictates its own terms.

Equipment for Mountaineering

Good sound equipment is one of the essentials for mountain safety. Turn to experienced members for detailed help in choosing the best equipment to suit your needs. Good equipment suppliers will genuinely attempt to supply the correct equipment for your needs.

Footwear

Members are advised to wear suitable footwear on the hills that are comfortable to walk in and yet sufficiently robust to offer the support and protection that is required.

Clothing

It is recommended that a layering system of clothing is adopted; which should be sufficient to keep the body temperature within a range of a few degrees to ensure the efficient functioning of the body. According to the weather conditions, insulation may need to be varied by putting on or removing one or more layers of clothing.

Suggested layering system:

- Base layer next to the skin (wicks away moisture from the skin)
- Mid layer (insulation layer - may be more than one layer)
- Outer shell layer (windproof/waterproof - usually breathable)

Additional Clothing:

- Gloves/Mittens
- Headgear - Sun Hat and/or Warm Hat and/or Balaclava
- Gaiters

What to carry

The main thing is to carry as little as possible, however, some things are essential.

- Map and compass, whistle, phone, watch, basic first aid kit, survival bag, spare laces, torch/head torch, sunglasses, emergency food.
- Additional winter equipment - ice axe, crampons, goggles.

It is recommended to carry some form of identification.

Rock climbing safety

The wearing of a climbing helmets is a personal choice but strongly advisable especially when standing at the foot of climbs.

It is recommended that all climbers should make use of a prusik loop as a method of self-protection when abseiling and anyone of limited experience of abseiling should in addition use a safety line.

The decision to lead climb is a personal choice, however, advice should be sought from experienced climbers before undertaking this aspect of mountaineering.

It is the responsibility of the lead climber to ensure that his/her second is competent at belaying.