

Preparing for Emergencies

Planning in advance and doing a practice walk helps you to prepare for the unexpected as much as you can. Emergencies are rare on walks, but it always pays to be prepared.



Is there a type of emergency that you are worried about?

You can refer to **risk assessments** templates for Urban Walking and Walking in the Countryside for more information about potential risks.



Your notes

top tip

Give some thought before the walk about what you would do in various scenarios at different stages of your walk. Even better, chat through these with other walk leaders - they might think of something you haven't or share their experiences with you - all of which will really help if you do need to deal with an incident.

Whether you are leading an urban walk or a walk in the countryside, there are a few key points to consider before you set off. These will help you lead a safe walk and be prepared should an accident happen.

Planning for these will help you develop more skills, knowledge and confidence in case they do happen. Speaking with other Walk Leaders can help you feel more prepared.

Think about your route

A practice walk can help you to:

- identify any hazards such as uneven ground or busy roads.
- confirm how long the walk should take.
- see if anything has changed since your last walk, especially if it has been a little while since you were last on the walk. Look for things such as obstructions or diversions.
- check your mobile phone coverage along the route.
- plan another route if required.

Note down any risks you identify and think about how you will manage them on your walk.

Check the weather

Be sure to check the weather in advance, including on the morning of your walk. In the mountains or in very hot or cold weather, it's important to think about:

- **Heat and Cold** - sunburn, heat exhaustion and sunstroke can be as dangerous as exposure to the cold.
- **Rainfall** - this might affect paths, streams and rivers. Have an alternative route ready to avoid dangerous water crossings or flooded areas.
- **Daylight hours** - Make a note of what time the sun sets and plan to be back in good time ahead of it.

If you are walking in an urban area, it will be easier to manage extreme weather conditions. If you are planning a walk in the countryside, there are some other extra considerations:

- **Terrain** - the weather can affect conditions underfoot, such as being muddy, boggy or wet.
- **Altitude** - it can be colder in the hills than you expect, and low clouds can reduce visibility. It's important to be avalanche-aware too.

Pack your kit

You may need different kit, depending on the type of walk that you are leading.

Think about the group

Knowing a little about the walkers' ability and levels of fitness can help you make changes during the walk if needed. Some walkers may not want to share this information, but we recommend inviting walkers to chat with you privately before the walk if they would like to.

As well as letting people know ahead of time what to expect and what to bring, it is important to brief the group before setting off too.

Make changes if you need to

During the walk, be aware of your surroundings and the group so that you can make changes if you need to. There may be changes to the weather, a walker struggling with the pace, or an unexpected hazard on the route.

Keep an eye on the group during the walk and bring them together at regular intervals and particularly ahead of any particularly risky points, such as busy road or stream crossings.

Be ready to deal with incidents

Accidents can happen on any walk, and as a Walk Leader, you will need to react and manage the situation. This may involve looking after a casualty, making sure the rest of the group is comfortable, and calling for help.

Share plans for remote walks with someone at home

If you are planning a remote walk, let someone at home know your plans, so they can raise the alarm if you don't return at the expected time.