

Risk Management Guidelines

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Risk Management Guidelines

Activities in the natural environment undertaken by the UBMBC such as bushwalking and canyoning inherently expose participants to hazards with the consequent risk of incidents and/or accidents occurring.

UBMBC recognises the importance of Risk Management Guidelines for informing members of safety considerations when participating in outdoor activities. Risk management involves thinking about what could happen if someone is exposed to a hazard and how likely it is to happen. You should always aim to eliminate risks. If you can't, you must minimise risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

It is impossible to remove risks in these types of activities. These guidelines encourage members and leaders to be aware of risks and to assess potential hazards with the goal of reducing the risk of incidents.

The aim is to assist members in understanding risk and risk reduction in context to club activities and to understand:

- How risk is managed in the context of the club
- What are the responsibilities of participants in respect to risk
- Discuss some key behaviours that help reduce risk
- Discuss some of the more common risks and some of the actions that can be taken to minimise them

Outdoor Activities

The club expects that activity leaders and participants will take responsibility for their own welfare and safety whilst acknowledging there is risk of injury inherent in outdoor activities. All participants and leaders should also seek to conduct activities in a way that has regard to the safety of others.

This document covers all outdoor activities run by the club. In various examples there may be references to bushwalking or canyoning but the principles apply to any outdoor activity conducted by the club.

Club Organisation

- Coordination of club activities is overseen by the club's Committee and subcommittees (Canyoning Subcommittee and Risk Management Subcommittee).
- Club trips are put on by club leaders, who are approved by the club committee. Expectations for leaders is documented in *Guidelines for Leaders and Guidelines for Canyon Leaders*.
- Members can participate in club trips if they meet the criteria for the particular trip, if there are places available and at the leader's discretion. The expectations for members

and visitors who participate in club trips is outlined in Guidelines for Walkers and Guidelines for Canyoners

Activities Offered by the Club

The club offers bushwalking, day walks, multi-day walks, camping, canyoning, abseiling and cycling trips and may offer other activities relevant to the clubs objectives.

In addition the club offers training days, practice days, organises first-aid courses for members etc.

Club leaders organise trips and these are advertised on the clubs web page.

The leader will provide details of the trip including the activities grading and outline any special considerations or needs, for example if long swims are encountered, or any special equipment is needed. Participants are also encouraged to make use of other sources of information where available to learn about the proposed trip.

Those interested in joining an activity should take into account the grading of the activity and any additional information provided and be confident they have the appropriate experience, fitness and skills to undertake it. In the case of canyoning trips members will be graded and will only be accepted based on their grading (see *Guidance for canyon activity grading*). Whether a member is accepted on a trip is wholly at the discretion of the leader.

Conditions can dynamically change and trip leaders will also seek to keep participants informed of changing risks and hazards either during trip planning or on the day.

Acknowledgement of Risk

1. Members MUST accept an *Acknowledgement of Risks and Obligations* when they join the club and when they renew membership. As part of this acknowledgement they need to agree that they have read and understood the document as well as this Guideline.
2. Members who join canyon trips additionally MUST agree to a *Canyoning Waiver* before joining the program and update this acknowledgement annually on membership renewal.
3. Visitors are required to sign a Temporary Members form.

Members who have not agreed to the above will not be able to join club trips. Additionally for people to participate in canyoning trips they must satisfy the criteria required by the club to join the canyoning program and have agreed to the *Canyoning Waiver*.

The Nature of Risk in the Club Context

1. UBMBC aims to minimise risk to members by identifying certain hazards, assessing ongoing risks, suggesting risk mitigations, and reviewing activity procedures.
2. Participants must acknowledge that activities in the bush involve risks.
3. Participants should take responsibility for their own welfare and safety.
4. Participants should self-assess their own suitability for the particular activity.
5. All participants and leaders should seek to conduct activities in a way that has regard to the safety of others.
6. Leaders should consider participant skills and fitness to participate in the activity.

Skills, Knowledge and Responsibilities

1. Leaders should have appropriate skills and knowledge for their activity and be able to make assessments relating to hazards. Leaders should consider appropriate actions to minimise risks. No leader is expected to identify every hazard.
2. Leaders should enquire about group members who have useful skills or knowledge (e.g. first aid, navigation, local knowledge of the area).
3. Leaders specify any equipment required for an activity (e.g. helmets, wetsuit, tent, thermals, ropes, tapes).
4. Leaders should be familiar with emergency procedures.
5. New members are encouraged to attend grade 2 or 3 walks when they join the Club.
6. All participants should be aware of typical risks associated with the activity, either from online resources, the trip program or the leader.
7. Navigational tools (e.g. paper map, compass, GPS, mobile phone) should be taken on activities, including appropriate backup.
8. Groups should carry a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) and ideally a satellite communications device (e.g. InReach, Spot - these provide emergency messaging).
 - a. Note: The Club has PLBs for members to borrow.
9. Members carry their own first aid kit, with suggested contents outlined on the Club website, as well as any essential medication they require, e.g. Epipen or allergy medication.
10. Members must carry emergency contact details.
11. During trip planning the Leader will advise of any trip specific equipment required.
12. Equipment for bushwalking is detailed on the Club website FAQ What do I need for bushwalking?
13. For many trips there are additional details available on sites such as Ropewiki, OzUltimate and Dingo Gap and participants should make themselves aware of them.
14. Visitors are required to complete a Temporary Member Form.
15. A guardian or close relative up to, and including, 2nd degree relatives (i.e. siblings, uncles, and aunt) will accompany a junior (under 18 years).

Important Risk Mitigation Practices

Experience and Practice

One of the main factors in reducing risk is the parties' experience. Experience is built with time in the bush but the club puts on activities to help build knowledge:

1. The Club provides navigation experience/practice days.
2. Regular abseil experience/practice days enable members to learn and refresh their skills and safety procedures.
3. Members are encouraged to gain First Aid qualifications.

Communication

There are a number of factors which make communication difficult or verbal communication unreliable, to name a few:

- **Distance & Noise** - In some settings it is not possible to accurately communicate verbally, e.g. when groups get split or in canyons with waterfalls.
- **Technical jargon** - Meaning of words to club members unfamiliar with equipment or procedures may not be obvious or understood.
- **Language barriers** - For non-native English speakers understanding what is said may not be clear.
- **Emergency** - During an incident someone may not respond as you expect to verbal or via other communications. Stress can also add to the likelihood of miscommunications.

It is important to agree on and use those agreed channels of communication for a trip -

Depending on the situation and the methods of communication could be:

- Whistle blasts
- Hand signals
- Direct verbal communication
- UHF radios

Make sure everyone on the trip knows what methods are being used and what the conventions are for those methods.

Incident Reporting

Incidents should be reported to the club secretary using the [UBMBC Incident Management Process](#). Incidents will be reviewed by the Risk Subcommittee and changes to existing practices taken where applicable.

Following incident reviews action may be taken to reduce the risk of recurring incidents, e.g. training, updates to guidelines, first aid courses.

The club encourages a culture of reporting all incidents including near misses as they help build up an understanding of potential risks and hazards and the development of appropriate mitigations. It also encourages a culture of openness that in itself helps reduce risk.

Review Process

The Club's Risk Management Guidelines should be reviewed at least annually for ongoing relevance and effectiveness. This review will be carried out by the Risk Subcommittee.

Examples of Risks and Responses

The risks and responses outlined below provide examples of the types of issues that may arise in the bush and are applicable to club trips. They are not intended to be exhaustive. Conditions on outdoor activities are highly dynamic and it is impossible to foresee all possible risks.

The structure of the matrix is to identify a broad category of risk (e.g. Bushfires) and then more specific risks (e.g, Being caught in a fire) followed by suggestions to help mitigate this risk.

The first matrix (green headings) deals with issues that may impact any activity in the bush including creek walks. The second matrix (pink headings) covers **additional** risks specific to technical canyons, therefore those doing technical canyons should be aware of risks covered in both matrices.

Bush Activities including Creek Walks

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses (Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)
Bushfire	Being caught in fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check 'Hazards Near Me' app & RFS Hazard Reduction fire schedule - cancel activity if there is a bushfire burning or scheduled in close proximity to walking route Cancel/postpone activity if bushfire danger rating reaches the maximum level (catastrophic) and reconsider plans if fire danger rating reaches second-highest level (extreme) If smoke is sighted or smelt during the walk, enact an emergency management plan, such as: contact authorities if possible and take their advice, otherwise shelter at a suitable protected site or evacuate the area, as appropriate
	Smoke inhalation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If necessary wear damp woollen or cotton clothing as a mask over your nose and mouth
Cliff Edges	Fall from heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief participants adequately on cliff-side safety Take care at edges, and when possible connect to a safety line Helmets could reduce risk of injury

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses (Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)
Cold/ Exposure to Cold Water	Hypothermia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise cold water exposure when feeling very cold Check on participant condition Use first aid emergency blanket, emergency shelter, Thermos of hot water and/or means to heat water Keep moving to keep warm where it is safe to do so. Wear appropriate clothing, participants to have rain jackets Wear appropriate gear (wetsuits) and clothing (thermals, windproof jackets, wool/neoprene socks, beanies) as required
	Wet emergency gear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of dry bag to keep emergency gear dry
Fatigue	Exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take breaks Adapt pace Consume high energy food and drink before exit walk
Jumps, slides	Water immersion or injury during	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise assessment and negotiation of water-levels. Be prepared to abort the trip if deemed unsafe Consider changed conditions of river systems after prolonged/significant rain or forecasts during the trip Provide advice on how to manage/avoid obstacles and slippery surfaces Assess participant swimming ability and physical condition for planned route Take sufficient breaks based on participant condition and progress Participants to stay within sight or communication distance of each other Use flotation for activities involving sustained swimming, especially in cold water
	Heavy load	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share weight according to ability among participants Pack to be fitted correctly and use proper lifting techniques Keep pack weight as light as possible
	Impact injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit the height of jumps Brief participants on safe jumping technique Brief participants on safe landing zone Offer alternative to jump, e.g. downclimb with spotting, abseil or lower Assess landing zone from the water for submerged hazards before jumps

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses (Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)
	Impacting objects on/below water surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access landing zone from the water for submerged hazards before jumps
Rockfall	Head trauma, serious Injury or Slipping due to unstable/loose rock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helmets reduce risks from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> falling objects from above slipping on rocks in creeks Brief participants on how to avoid dislodging a loose rock Remove obstacles if possible, e.g. loose rock close to cliff edge, move rock away from edge Brief participants on rock fall 'calls' and how to avoid dislodging a loose rock Brief participants on where to walk/wait on slopes/cliffs to minimise impact from dislodged objects from above Assess area before proceeding with participants
Slippery surfaces	Slips, trips and falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief participants on safely traversing terrain and negotiating obstacles Provide good briefing and mentoring on negotiating obstacles Use traverse lines where possible Spot participants on difficult sections Teach 'test twice, step once' principle Wear appropriate footwear
Sun/Heat	Dehydration / Heat stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate regarding personal comfort levels Carry/get adequate amounts of drinking water, water filter and/or cache water on exit trail for return walk Stock electrolytes in your first aid kit Stay hydrated - even in cold conditions Drink sufficient water with electrolytes Seek shelter out of sun and apply first aid Wear sunscreen and appropriate clothing Plan ahead for drinking water options for the planned route Carry water filter and/or cache water on exit trail for return walk
Thunderstorms/ Severe Rain	Flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe weather leading up to activity, do not proceed in flood-prone area in heavy rain Have an evacuation plan in place in regard to expected weather Consider if an evacuation route may be required, having regard to unexpected weather

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses (Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)
	Lightning strike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not proceed if thunderstorms. Consider if thunderstorms are likely to affect the safe running of a trip and whether appropriate shelter may be available if they eventuate, are imminent, or seek shelter if already underway
Trail obscured (e.g. by dense vegetation)	Becoming lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry both paper map and compass and electronic navigational aids to assist with route finding Prepare route map before activity (see Activity Plan) Carry emergency communication equipment (Communicator Device or PLB)
	Participants becoming separated from group and become lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remain in visual contact with your group. Where possible seek to do this visually but also call out, use whistle, remain where you are if you become separated unless there is a route clear (on map or navigation device) Use whistle or shout/call out for help Often check everyone is present If in dense vegetation appoint a tail/sweeper and issue them a whistle and/or UHF radio
Unstable surfaces	Strains and sprains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct briefings on terrain and where necessary how to manage obstacles Use appropriate footwear and safety equipment (bandages stabilising) As obstacles emerge, communicate within the group
	Slips, trips and falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief participants on safely traversing terrain Consider using traverse lines Consider 'spotting' participants on difficult sections Teach 'test twice, step once' principle Wear appropriate footwear
Water hazards e.g. strainers, water aeration, submerged rocks, debris, foot traps, quicksand	Foot entrapment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief participants on safety swimming techniques to avoid foot entrapment Consider advice on best options Consider use of floatation Make use of safety line/throw rope to secure or pull entrapped team member in strainer or aerated water Stay calm, use whistle, call out

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses (Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)
	Water immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not enter the river system when prolonged rain over past days or 'significant' rains forecast during trip, due to saturated water table and flash flood risk Stay calm, use whistle, call out Consider advice on best options through hazard Assess duration of swimming activity relative to participants physical condition Take breaks from swimming Monitor water levels and expected precipitation Use flotation for activities involving sustained swimming, especially in cold water, such as air-filled drybags in your backpack •
	Debris in waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider advice on best options through hazard Determine safest route, over, under or around Stay out of waterways in the event of extreme precipitation Going over may be safer than under, consider options
Wildlife encounters	Large mammals (kangaroos, pigs, deer, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay calm, move slowly away, seek shelter on higher ground or climb a tree if necessary
	Venomous bites/stings (snakes, spiders, ants, wasps, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend First Aid and Snake Bite training before you need it Carry a first aid kit which includes snake bandages (elasticated) After a bite do not move around, call out and use whistle to call for help Apply snake bite bandage if assistance is not imminent If allergic to bee or other insect stings carry a prescribed Epipen
Wind	High winds causing trees to drop branches or fall over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not proceed under large trees in extreme winds Seek shelter or seek safe route if winds prevail

Canyoning Trips

The following are applicable specifically to technical canyoning and rope-work.

For those doing technical canyons all the above risks under bush activities also apply.

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses
(Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)		
Abseiler losing control	Fall from heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use self-belay prusik • Top belay abseiler • Bottom belay abseiler
Abseiler not balanced	Inversion during abseil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If risk of inversion is high, suspend pack from harness or zipline/throw them to bottom of pitch (into water) • Discuss options with group • Use an extended rappel device to reduce risk of inversion
Anchors not appropriate	Anchors failing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check condition and attachment of all bolts, fixed ropes, slings, maillon's, and natural anchors before use • Back up or replace anchor components as required, be safety focused
Attachment points failing	Fall from heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform abseil safety checks, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ carabiners locked ◦ descender attached correctly ◦ knots are properly tied ◦ harness fitted correctly
Harness not secured	Abseiling falling out of harness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform abseil safety checks, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ harness fitted correctly ◦ harness buckles done up correctly ◦ No loose/baggy clothing under harness
Loose items jamming in descender	Getting stuck on abseil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform abseil safety checks, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ tie up loose hair ◦ tucking in clothing and straps ◦ packing away other loose items • Use top belay to enable quick lift of participant to free descender • Use releasable abseil system to lower stuck abseiler

Risk	Specific Risks	Potential Responses (Eliminate, Substitute, Isolate, Minimise)
Ropes do not reach bottom	Abseiling off end of rope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight ropes on bottom before abseiling starts • If bottom is not visible (e.g. due to vegetation), consider options; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ tie large knot in end of rope 0.5m from the end of the rope ◦ use top belay system ◦ self belay for first abseiler • Rig releasable abseil rope • Prepare good communication between top and abseiler. This is especially critical where it will be hard to hear each other • Follow protocol for CB Radios or Voice calls • Follow protocol for whistle signals
Ropes or sling damage/ fatigue	Failure of abseil rope or belay system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check ropes and slings for damage before and after activities • Clean, dry and store ropes and slings according to manufacturer's instructions, and away from sunlight and chemicals • Replace ropes and slings at or before scheduled service life
	Rope being cut by sharp edges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rig ropes away from sharp edge when possible • Use rope protection • Avoid abseil line that will result in pendulum swinging of abseiler • Change rub point after every 2-4 abseilers by releasing some rope

Glossary

Guidelines	A Guideline implies advice or a recommendation but is not a hard and fast rule. Note: The term guidance is not used in this document which is often used to provide advice on how to interpret rules or laws.
Must	Defines a requirement or obligation that is considered to be necessary or compulsory. In only a few cases is this used in this document.
Should	Suggests advice or a recommendation; it conveys actions that are thought to be in the individuals and parties best interests. Most advice in this document is of this nature.