Manawatu Tramping & Skiing Club

Guidelines for Trip Leaders

Enjoyment of the outdoors, along with the social and fitness benefits of being part of our club are at the heart of MTSC membership. As a leader of a club trip, you are performing an important and valued role in bringing people together for a trip into the outdoors. However, please remember that this is a club trip and not a private one. As such the leader has a duty of care towards their trip participants. Remember, good planning will go a long way towards eliminating the mishaps that can spoil a great trip. These guidelines are designed to help you to prepare for leading a club trip and have a good time doing so.

1. Before the trip

a. Don't leave planning to the last minute.
b. Research the area and route – ask others who have done the trip, study the Topo 50 map, check the DoC website, guidebooks etc. Do you have a plan B if the weather is unsuitable? What escape routes are available?
c. Have you got all the necessary party equipment? There is a tent fly and PLB in the minibus along with UHF radios. You will also need a first aid kit and navigation aids such as a Topo 50 map on your phone (and paper version as back-up), a compass and possibly GPS. There are also items such as tents that can be borrowed from our gear custodian at no charge. If you are going into the snow, ice axes, crampons etc. are also available to members who have had appropriate training.
d. Remember that even the most experienced members can fall ill or injure themselves. Although you might be planning on staying at a hut there are lots of reasons why you might not get there. You should always be prepared for an unexpected night out with sufficient shelter, food and equipment when venturing into wilderness areas.
e. Do you have sufficient experienced participants for the trip you are planning?
f. Obtain permission to cross private land.
g. Get an up-to-date weather forecast. https://www.metservice.com and https://weather.niwa.co.nz/parks have helpful mountain forecasts. Weather forecast charts up to ten days ahead can be found at https://www.metvuw.com. Hour by hour computer modelling for many locations around New Zealand can be found at https://www.yr.no/en . Wind speeds and gusts are shown visually at https://www.windy.com. You might also consider www.horizons.govt.nz for river level data if you have creeks to cross.
h. Complete a trip preview and send it to the newsletter editor by the second week of the preceding month.
i. Try to go to the club night before your trip so that you can talk about the trip and answer any questions.
j. Organise transport. If possible, allocate participants to vehicles. Consider using the club minibus or car-pooling to reduce our carbon footprint and trip cost as much as possible.

k. Write out an intentions information sheet. As a minimum you will need a list of your trip members, their phone numbers and emergency contact details and where you are going. You should include the road end where your vehicle will be left, its registration number, the proposed route, huts you will be staying at and when you expect to be back. You should email this information to intentions@mtsc.nz and give it to a trusted contact who will be responsible for raising the alarm if you are not back by a designated time. Please note that the club will not take any action unless you are reported overdue by your trusted contact. Make sure that your trusted contact is given the phone number for the club's overdue trips contact persons as published on the website. If they are unable to contact the club's contact persons for any reason, they should dial 111 and ask for Police Search and Rescue. Any activation of a club PLB will be picked up by the Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Wellington who will contact our SAR representatives who can then access the information that you emailed to intentions@mtsc.nz.

2. Talking to potential trip participants

It is important that you are happy that your trip is suitable for the participants as nobody wants to be completely out of their depth or likely to put others in danger. Unless you know your trip members and their ability you will need to talk to them about:

a. Their fitness level. What sort of trips have they done and how often do they get out tramping? What length of day are they comfortable with?
b. Their experience level. Are they used to travel on or off track? Can they navigate confidently?
c. Any medical conditions that may cause a problem.
d. Clothing and equipment required for the trip. Refer them to the gear list on the club website and go over any special requirements for this trip.
e. The type of terrain that you expect to encounter, length of day and any overnight arrangements. Hut tickets required.
f. Food and drink arrangements for the trip.
g. The meeting place, leaving time, estimated cost of the trip, how long it is likely to drive to the road end and what time you expect to be back.
h. Make sure that the participant's partner, next of kin, flatmate etc has details of who to contact (on the trips section of our website) if the trip is overdue.

3. At the meeting point

a. Greet and introduce any newcomers to the group.
b. Check that party members have the correct gear, especially newcomers. If you feel that the person's clothing and equipment are inadequate for the trip and weather conditions, the committee will support you in leaving them behind.
c. Check that all drivers know where they are going. It is a good idea to swap cell phone numbers in case someone gets separated on the way to the road end.

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4. At the road end

Your aim is to make all participants feel that they are part of a team. Good communication is therefore essential so that everyone has a clear understanding of what is required. Bear in mind the following guidelines:

a. Outline the route or any route options if there is more than one group (a paper map is useful here) so that everyone knows where they are going and what to expect in terms of times, type of terrain, fitness level required, etc.
b. Give a safety briefing that outlines any specific concerns.
c. Set a time to be back at the road-end.
d. Appoint a leader and tail-end Charlie. If there are multiple groups, each will need to have a leader and tail-end Charlie. It is recommended that sub-groups are a minimum of 4 and maximum of 12.
e. Issue radios to each sub-group and do a radio check before leaving.
f. Ensure that any medical issues are communicated to the group leader.
g. Stress the importance of keeping together and looking after each other.

5. During the trip

a. Make sure that each group is led by an experienced member.
b. The group leader does not have to be at the front. In fact, they will probably have a better idea where everybody is and how they are going from somewhere in the middle.
c. Remind people that it is best to look after the person behind them. In that way they won't move too far ahead of the main group, and no-one will get left behind.
d. Ask people to stop at decision points, re-group and do a head count. This will avoid any uncertainty as to which way the group went.
e. Move at the speed of the slowest member and when you have a stop to re-group make sure that everyone gets a short break rather than moving off as soon as the slowest person catches up. Wait if anyone needs to stop to adjust boots, go to the toilet etc.
f. Take a special interest in newcomers and people who seem to be struggling a bit. Buddy them up with somebody or engage them in conversation. Taking their mind off the exertion of walking or being at the front of a group can have a great effect.
g. Fill in hut logbooks as they are invaluable to SAR if you are reported overdue.
h. Club trips are a great opportunity to pass on knowledge about tramping and the outdoors such as navigation, river crossing, safety equipment, use of mapping apps. etc.

6. After the trip

a. Check that everyone has returned safely and that they have transport back.

b. Collect in any club gear, turn off radios and put them on charge in the van.
c. Collect and distribute any money.
d. Check that all vehicles will start and are able to move before leaving the road end.
e. Inform your trusted contact that you are back safely.
f. If there was an accident or incident during the trip download and complete the Accident Report Form from the website and email it to chief.guide@mtsc.nz
g. Write a trip report and if possible, send a photo to newsletter@mtsc.nz People really like to read about club trips in the newsletter.

Please see the accompanying Trip Leader Checklist for a summary of these guidelines.