

# Mountain Rescue Fact Sheet: 1

## How the Call Out System Works

- Mountain rescue teams are called out through the police, via the 999 system. Anyone believing themselves to be in need of assistance from a mountain or cave rescue is advised to dial 999 in the first instance, then ask for 'Police' and then either 'Mountain Rescue' or 'Cave Rescue'.

- Their call will then be routed to the police control room in the area of the incident. Depending on the information given, it may also be routed to another emergency service such as the ambulance service or air ambulance. It is key to the rapid evacuation and recovery of any casualties that the caller provides as much information as possible about the accident, and the location and nature of the terrain.

- This is best provided in the form of a 'CHALET' report.

**C – Casualties** – number, names (and, if possible, age); type of injuries, for example, lower leg, head injury, collapse, drowning etc.

**H – Hazards** to the rescuers – for example, strong winds, avalanche, rock fall, dangerous animals.

**A – Access** – the name of mountain area and description of the terrain. It may be appropriate to describe the approach and any distinguishing features such as an orange survival bag. Information on the weather conditions at the incident site is useful, particularly if you are in cloud or mist.

**L – Location of the incident** – a grid reference and a description is ideal. Don't forget to give the map sheet number and please say if the grid reference is from a GPS device.

**E – Equipment at the scene** – for example, torches, other mobile phones, group shelters, medical personnel.

**T – Type of incident** – mountain, aircraft, train, etc. Be prepared to give a brief description of the time and apparent cause of the incident.

- The team nearest to the incident will then be contacted and team members alerted via page or mobile phone by their team leader. A 'spot pick up', such as an injured walker on the hill, may be undertaken by a small 'hasty' group of just sufficient members to locate and treat the casualty before rapid transfer to a helicopter. Others may require more team members to carry the stretcher over difficult terrain for a longer period of time, before a helicopter or land ambulance can take over. Sometimes, team members will transfer the casualty direct to hospital in their team vehicle.

- A search for a missing person requires more planning and personnel. The police search managers will work with the team leader and informants to gather as much detail as possible to create an informed search strategy. Frequently, the team leader will merely advise possible search strategy before team members are called – which may be sufficient to resolve the situation. In other cases, team leaders may be able to guide a 'lost' person down from the hill, over the phone, without a full team call out.

- Mountain rescue teams often work with search dogs and handlers from the Search and Rescue Dog Association. Handlers are fully trained mountain rescue team members who undertake further training with their dogs. They are especially useful in bad weather and at night, when the chances of a team member finding a casualty, other than close to a path, may be severely reduced unless the missing person can attract attention.

- Once a casualty is located, the first team members on scene will assess the situation and safety of everyone involved, take a history and carry out a head to toe examination, noting injuries and vital signs before giving appropriate first aid treatment and pain relief. Meanwhile, other team members will assemble the necessary equipment to stretcher the casualty in warmth and comfort to the ambulance, and liaise with the emergency services or RAF SAR to evacuate them from the hill as quickly as possible. If a prolonged stretcher carry is required, team members will work in relays to literally spread the load, meanwhile continuing to monitor the casualty's condition and wellbeing.