

Guidelines and Responsibilities for Longer Walk Leaders

(ACT Walking for Pleasure, August 2023)

Planning

Explore the proposed route, and be aware of shelter, potential access spots and potential hazards. Also be aware of possible short cuts or reasonable turn-around spots if these are required. If the viability of the walk is likely to be weather-dependent, this can be mentioned in the prior advertising.

When exploring a proposed route, consider asking a potential likely new walk leader to accompany you, so you can point out tricks and traps.

Advertising

Around three weeks before the walk, prepare a full description (guidelines below). This will be sent out via Mailchimp to all Members two to three weeks in advance. To date, this advance notice period seems to work for advertising purposes.

Pass the description on to the Vetter of Longer Walks. Having a second, experienced person to check all longer walks is important for meeting our organisational duty of care, and for not compromising our insurance coverage. For experienced longer walk leaders, this vetting will likely be pro forma.

The Vetter of Longer Walks will then pass the description on to the Publicity Officer, to be sent out on Mailchimp.

Any short-notice cancellations can be passed directly to the Publicity Officer. However, unless dangerous, the leader should also travel to the meeting point in case anyone has not received information about the cancellation.

Walk description

The walk description should aim to contain enough detail to enable participants to judge whether they should undertake the walk. It should include:

- date
- time to meet
- place to meet/parking/carpooling
- length of walk (recent feedback suggests no more than 15 Km, though exceptions can be made)
- approximate time it will take
- walk description including a degree of difficulty and Grading (as per WFP guidelines), steepness
- hazards (eg creek crossings, rocky climbs)
- what walkers need to bring (personal first aid and own-use medications, water/drinks, food)
- leader's name and contact details, and an invitation to get in touch with any queries.

Prior to the walk

Prior to the walk, arrange collection of equipment for longer walk leaders. This includes the WFP Personal Locator Beacon and instruction for use, walkie-talkies, sign-on-pad, and tail-ender whistle. These are currently managed by the Vetter of Longer Walks, though may be being held by the previous leader of a longer walk.

Monitor weather conditions in days before and consider whether the walk should proceed (see WFP Guidelines for Managing Walks in Extreme Weather Conditions). Walks may need to be cancelled due to extreme weather, eg heat/cold, storms, fire bans.

As noted, cancellations can be notified directly to the Publicity Officer. However, unless dangerous, the leader should also travel to the meeting point in case anyone has not received information about the cancellation.

On the day of the walk

Arrive in plenty of time – approximately 20 minutes before the scheduled start time. Then:

- ask participants to sign the attendance/disclaimer sheet
- appoint a tail-ender, ensure they have a whistle
- provide any additional information to participants before moving off.

Be aware of the number of participants, and of any new longer walkers. If any new walkers are not yet Members of WFP, let them know that we are happy for them to try us out, but if they want to keep walking with us they should join.

During the walk

Walk at a pace that keeps the group together. Look back regularly and allow those at the rear to catch up. Stop at any points where there is more than one possible route forward. This is vital to ensure walkers do not take a wrong turn.

Ensure adequate drink and rest breaks. Additional breaks may be required if the walk is demanding, walkers are lagging behind or it is very hot.

When a walker is struggling:

- two able walkers should remain with the person for support and monitoring
- First Aid should be applied in the case of hyperthermia or hypothermia, and other conditions as appropriate
- decide whether the individual should turn back, accompanied by the two able walkers, or be evacuated.

In consultation with the tail-ender, ensure everyone returns safely to the start point.

If any issues have arisen, complete an Incident Report Form, and provide a copy to the Vetter of Longer Walks.

Enjoy your walk. Thank you for leading.