

# Know your sport: Event Safety

*Orienteering is sometimes described as an 'adventure sport'. As such, participants may be exposed to some dangers. All participants need to be aware of these and take necessary precautions. Also officials need to consider these and minimise the risk. Here we consider the issue of safety from the perspective of both the orienteer and the official.*

## As a competitor....

So you want to go orienteering, perhaps in a wild part of the country. You see an event is being held near you, perhaps on moorland in February, and decide to give it a try. But what should you consider?

- 1) First, of course is the correct choice of clothing. It might be cold, icy and even snowing. Even if the morning starts bright, conditions might change. So you need to be prepared with appropriate warm clothing and suitable wind/rain protection which takes into account that you might get lost or suffer a twisted ankle meaning a longer outing than anticipated. Where the organisers are aware of a significant risk due to the weather, you may be required to wear a hooded waterproof - it can be useful to always have one in your kit bag for these situations.
- 2) Read the event details which will highlight particular safety issues which you might not be aware of. An example of the points which you might read is shown on the right.
- 3) At the event, follow any instructions given by the officials. These will be for your own safety and for all those taking part. For example, follow the designated route to the start. This may not be the shortest route but may avoid leaving the car park field via a slippery and muddy entrance with cars coming and going.
- 4) Out in the competition area, be aware of other competitors and any dangerous activity. Be prepared to help if someone is in difficulty and need of assistance to get back due to an injury. The Rules actually state that "competitors are required to give help to an injured competitor, even if this means giving up their own race."
- 5) When navigating, take into account your own personal strengths and weaknesses. The direct route may be short but does it involve descending a slippery crag or crossing a deep stream?
- 6) On completion of your course (or if you retire), always report to the download or otherwise make sure the event officials know that you have returned. Failure to do this could result in the organisers sending out search parties and potentially putting more people at risk.

### Example Safety Advice for Competitors:

- The competition area is mainly open and exposed. Please ensure you have a whistle and gaiters with you on event day. They may become compulsory depending on the weather conditions.
- Ticks are present in the New Forest – please check yourself after your run.
- Emit will be used to check competitors into and out of the forest. **You must report to Download even if retiring.**
- Competitors travelling alone are encouraged to leave their car keys at Enquiries.
- Competitors take part in this event at their own risk and are responsible for their own safety.



The start at Day 1 at the Lakes 5 event in 2018. This was a cold wet day on exposed moorland. The organisers specified that everyone should wear a waterproof jacket.

Orienteering is an adventure sport but, with a little thought, it can be enjoyed by all.

## As an event official....

So you want to stage an orienteering event - perhaps take on the role of an organiser or planner. But what should you consider?

The starting point must be the official rules of orienteering. This may seem rather bureaucratic but, if the event is going to be covered by the national insurance scheme, then it has to comply with the rules. And right near the beginning you will find this:

### Rules of Orienteering: Rule 1.1.6

Before acting in the capacity of Controller, Organiser or Planner, officials must have the mandatory safety training prescribed within the British Orienteering Event Safety & Welfare Workshop.

Safety does not happen by chance but by a careful consideration of all the factors involved in staging an event. This must take into account the risks. A **risk** is combination of a **hazard** and the **probability** of it occurring. A heavy snowstorm during an event is a hazard and may expose competitors to potential hypothermia. The probability of this happening in June in Berkshire is very low and means that the risk is minimal and can be ignored. However, the hazard of being hit by falling branches during a heavy thunderstorm may need to be considered.

Organisers, planners and the independent controllers are expected to reflect on all potential risks and to consider what action is needed to (a) minimise the risk, and (b) consider in advance what action to take if the problem does arise. An official 'Risk Assessment' form has to be completed prior to the event.



Officials need to take into account all age groups. Here a younger competitor can be seen at a control. Behind her there is an area of rocks edging a lake. Does this present a risk for juniors? The officials will have considered this in advance before agreeing the location.

Appendix E: Event safety

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This Appendix is to be read in conjunction with the current British Orienteering Rules of Orienteering.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The British Orienteering Rules of Orienteering cover event safety and set out the key areas of responsibility for event officials. This appendix provides additional guidance on how to comply with those rules.

1.1.2 Event officials should also refer to Appendix A: Event systems and Appendix B: Course planning, use by Organisers.

1.1.3 The Event Officials Handbook on the British Orienteering website contains standard forms and plans for competition area & courses.

1.1.4 Safety includes safety and risk management throughout the duration of the event.

1.1.5 Orienteering hazards

1.2 Responsibility

1.2.1 The responsibility

1.2.2 It might be noted that they write any essential medical details on their race number or carry an information sheet with them.

1.2.3 The Organiser has overall responsibility for ensuring that the arrangements for the event are in place.

1.2.4 Competitors

Risk Assessment for Orienteering

Risk assessments are concerned with identifying the hazards (i.e. things which might go wrong or cause an accident/injury), evaluating the likelihood of a particular event occurring (i.e. level of risk) and putting measures in place needed to reduce or eliminate the risk.

|                                                        |                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name of Club / satellite club name / after school club | Position of person completing this form (coach, organiser etc) |
| Name of person completing this form                    | Date for season / event / activity                             |
| Venue for session / event / activity                   | Name of person in charge of session / event / activity         |
| Risk assessment signed                                 | Risk assessment dated                                          |
| Risk assessment checked by (name, position and date)   | Print name & position (coach mentor, controller etc):          |
|                                                        | Sign and date:                                                 |

Emergency Information

|                                                 |                                    |                          |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Emergency access point (for emergency vehicles) | Post code / grid reference:        | Place from which signed: |
| Nearest A&E hospital:                           | Name and Post code:                | Map available (where):   |
| Working telephone:                              | Landline or if mobile (if mobile): |                          |
| First Aid cover                                 | Name of first aid cover:           |                          |

The official Rules of Orienteering contain, as Appendix E, more details of the requirements for Event Safety

The first page of the standard 'Risk Assessment' form provided by British Orienteering