

**ST. ANDREWS UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB**  
**SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 20010/11**

**1) National Governing Body Affiliation**

The St Andrews University Mountaineering Club is affiliated to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MC of S).

**2) National Governing Body Insurance Cover**

The club is covered by the British Mountaineering Council's Insurance policy, through the MC of S.

**3) National Governing Body Safety Codes**

The club will accept and follow the codes of practice set down by the Mountaineering Club of Scotland and the British Mountaineering Club. STAUMC will also take into consideration the article "Rules of the Game" published by the British Mountaineering Council (see Appendix 1).

**4) Qualifications/Experience of Leaders**

Members of the committee along with other experienced members constitute the leaders within the club. It must be stressed that the club does not demand any formal qualifications for individuals; as such no club member can be 'led' but rather guided by a more experienced member of the club. Any activity should be undertaken in the spirit of imparting accumulated knowledge (peer to peer) rather than a teaching/learning environment. It is stressed that each member who takes part in any club activity must be able and equipped to assume full responsibility for his or herself, without relying on being 'led' as this can lead to complacency, which can be dangerous. It is recognised that the safety of a novice party may benefit from the presence of more experienced members, and such combinations are to be encouraged. In such situations, **each experienced club member will accompany a maximum of six novice members when walking, and two when climbing.** The experienced members of the club are deemed as such after at least one year of regular hill walking as a member of the club, and two years of regular participation for climbing. In addition, members deemed capable of accompanying novice groups must be determined as such by the committee. At present, the members deemed experienced enough to accompany novice groups under these club rules are:

Jack Barraclough  
Zach Wishart  
Eve Blumson  
Graham Carrington  
Casmira Brazaitis  
Richard Hines  
Olivia Pocock

**Note this list is subject to change throughout the year.**

### **5) Codes of Practice**

It is the aim of the club to promote enjoyment of the mountains and a responsible attitude towards mountaineering. The Club recognises and endorses the British Mountaineering Council Participation Statement:

***“The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.”***

1) Every member attending indoor climbing wall sessions or outdoors meets should be aware that climbing and mountaineering are high risk activities. Experienced members of the club can only give advice to others on a peer to peer basis. The trip leader should endeavour to ensure that each participant is physically competent and safely equipped for the conditions likely to be encountered.

2) Every member of the party must be suitably equipped when participating in outdoor activities a suggested minimum kit list follows:

Spare warm clothing  
Hat and gloves  
Adequate waterproof clothing  
Emergency food  
Personal First Aid kit  
Torch  
Whistle  
Large polythene bivvy bag  
Compass and appropriate map  
(see note 3.3)

In addition when the party is to undertake climbs of any nature (rock, ice or mixed) adequate equipment for the conditions and intended route are taken.

3) In winter conditions all members of a party should consider carrying ice-axes and crampons, and know how to use them. Members of the committee or other experienced members should seek out those unsure of how to use such equipment. The gear officer will be responsible for the lending, and maintenance of club equipment (this is given out on the basis of an unqualified assessment and members seeking professional advice are encouraged to seek advice from UKMTB qualified persons).

4) A log book is to be carried on every club meet and before beginning any activity each member must sign this book, giving his or her full names and a brief description of his or her proposed route. As far as is reasonable, this route should be adhered to. On their return all members must sign in. It is the responsibility of the trip leader to ensure this is done properly. Committee members shall ensure that two experienced people remain sober, one of whom should be a driver, until all groups are off the hill.

5) The club will seek the appropriate insurance from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to cover its active members on weekend meets.

6) The committee shall encourage members to attend Winter Skills and Mountain Safety courses/lectures run by national governing bodies (British and Scottish Mountaineering Councils).

7) Any members responsible for driving hired transportation will have passed the AU Driving test, been given the necessary safety briefings and will adhere to the guidelines placed on the AU website. Any members driving their own transportation for the purpose of club meets will take responsibility for the state of their vehicle and ensuring that they are competent to drive in the conditions likely to be encountered.

## **6) Risk Assessment**

### **1. Weather**

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Thick mist or cloud (high)	Getting lost.	Carry map/compass and practice good navigation.  Fill in meets book.  Be aware of position at all times.  Watch and be aware of weather changes; check forecasts and have an escape route planned.
Rain (high)	1. Wet and cold.  2. Rivers in spate.	1. Good waterproof clothing including gaiters.  2. Check route, practice river crossing.
Snow (high)	1. Cold, wet, hypothermia, frostbite, exhaustion.  2. Increased time to complete route. 3. Snow blindness and sunburn.	1. Aware that rain in valley can mean blizzard on mountaintops.  Have warm clothing, hypothermic blanket or sleeping bag.  Build a basic snow shelter.  2. Careful route planning. 3. Goggles and sunblock.

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Wind (high)	<p>1. Exhaustion, wind-chill, hypothermia.</p> <p>2. Blown over on mountain or fall off ridge.</p>	<p>1. Warm clothing and wind-proofs including hat and gloves.</p> <p>2. Choose appropriate route and be prepared to alter plans</p> <p>When appropriate, link arms with another person and give each other support or consider the use of a rope.</p>
Cold (high)	Hypothermia, frostbite, exhaustion.	Warm clothing, emergency shelter, food and drink.
Electric storm (low)	Lightening strike, burns, shock or death.	<p>Watch and be aware of weather changes; check forecasts.</p> <p>If caught out on the hill, sit on dry rope or rucksack; on a cliff, sit out storm on ledge, avoiding chimneys and wet ropes.</p>
Heat (low)	Sunburn and dehydration, leading to decrease in physical and mental efficiency.	Carry and drink plenty of water; wear a sun hat and sun block.

## 2. Hill walking

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Falling or slipping (medium)	Grazes, bruising, muscular injury, broken bones, shock, knocked unconscious, hypothermia.	<p>Route choice takes into account difficulty of terrain; check surroundings.</p> <p>Observe group members.</p> <p>Wear good boots.</p> <p>Issue ice axes and crampons as needed and demonstrate their use to novice members.</p> <p>Carry appropriate personal first aid equipment.</p>

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Getting lost (medium)	May lead to darkness, hunger, thirst, benightment, exposure, exhaustion or hypothermia.	As due to thick mist, white out, etc check weather report before hand and practice good navigation.
Losing a group member (low)	All the above.	Tell group members to stay together and what action to take place if separated. All group members to be properly equipped.
Hypothermia	See rain, snow and cold.	
Falling rocks (low)	Head injury, knocked over, unconscious.	Be aware of potential dangers.  Wear a helmet where necessary.  Be cautious when below other climbers. Never throw anything; a falling rock should be accompanied by a call of 'below'.
Caught in an avalanche (low)	Suffocation, cold, hypothermia, injury.	Investigate weather and avalanche forecasts. Monitor conditions in the area, testing snow by digging snow pit and examining binding. Keep to ridges where possible in high-risk conditions.  . If someone is caught in an avalanche then note/mark the last place the victim was seen, and initiate a search immediately.
Stuck in a bog (medium)	All the above.	Walk in groups; avoid particularly boggy areas by walking around.
Darkness (medium)	See getting lost.	Carry a head torch.
Losing a rucksack (low)	See getting lost.	Good organisation; be aware of exposed positions; walk in groups.
Water hazard (medium)	Drowning, cold, hypothermia.	Choose appropriate route.

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Attacked by or bitten by birds and animals (low)	Injury.	Carry personal 1 <sup>st</sup> aid kit; avoid nesting sites.
Mugged when walking or hitching (low)	Injury, shock, etc.	Walk in groups.
Hit by car or bike (low)	Injury.	Carry personal 1 <sup>st</sup> aid kit; observe highway code.

### 3. Rock climbing

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Equipment failure (low)	Any injury due to fall.	<p>Use equipment only for the purposes for which it was designed.</p> <p>Ensure sufficient equipment/ experience for route intended.</p> <p>Follow guidelines for care, recommended lifetime and disposal of equipment.</p> <p>Gear officer to keep careful note of equipments history. Always check your own and others gear before and after use.</p>
Falling rocks (medium)	See falling rocks.	
Falling in sea (low)	Drowning.	Ensure climbers stay on rope or well away from cliff edges.
Harness not holding a fall (low)	Any injury due to fall.	<p>Harness should be properly fastened with straps doubled back through buckles. Tie in with a threaded figure of eight knot or bowline, secured with a stopper knot.</p> <p>Always check beginners have tied in and secured their harness properly.</p>
Confusion during climbing calls (medium)	Unexpected fall/ premature removal of belay.	<p>Climbing calls should be agreed upon before starting a climb.</p> <p>Alternatives such as tugging the rope should be agreed.</p>

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Fall due to poor belay (low)	Any injury due to fall.	Belay to secure points. The system should be set to avoid shock loading if one piece of protection should fail.  Running ropes over edge of crags can damage them.
Fall due to poor belay technique (low)	Any injury due to fall.	Use suitable belay method and always keep at least one hand on the dead rope, holding it in the locked off position.  When belaying, position yourself in such a way that you would not be dislodged in the event of a fall.
Fall when abseiling (low)	Any injury due to fall.	Check all knots, anchors and use of abseil devices.  Use a safety rope in a releasable abseil with beginners or have someone ready to lock-off their rope.
Fall and protection not holding (moderate)	Any injury due to fall.	Practice placing gear and learn theory of fall factors, directions of pull, etc.  Ensure gear is appropriate and user is familiar.
Fall near crag when untied (low)	Any injury due to fall.	Take extra care when untied. Keep away from cliff edges.  Always wear suitable footwear and helmet.  Be aware of the terrain and difficulty before continuing (e.g. grass, wet or loose rock). Know and use recommended descent routes before starting.

#### 4. Winter Climbing

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Equipment failure (low)	See above.	
Falling rocks (medium)	See above.	
Harness not holding a fall	See above.	
Confusion during climbing calls	See above.	
Fall due to poor belay	See above.	As above. In addition, when leading through try to place a piece of gear immediately, so as not to shock load the belay in the event of a fall.
Fall due to poor belay technique (low)	See above.	
Fall when abseiling (low)	See above.	
Fall and protection not holding (medium)	See above.	
Fall near crag when untied (low)	See above.	
Caught in an avalanche	See above.	
Hypothermia, frost bite, heat aches	Hands are particularly susceptible.	Wear warm waterproof gloves and warm clothes to maintain core temperature.
Collapse of ice (medium)	Any injury due to fall.	Check condition of the ice before climbing.
Lead fall onto belayer (low)	Could cause injury due to sharp points.	Belayer should carefully watch the climber be prepared to move if necessary, climber maintain communication with the belayer.

### 5. Other

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Tent on fire (low)	Burns, smoke inhalation.	Cook outside, take care with candles.  Pitch tents no closer than 10 meters apart.
Bothy on fire (low)	Burns, smoke inhalation.	Take care when cooking, using gas lighting, candles and open fireplaces.
Hut bothy stove (low)	Burns.	Keep 1 <sup>st</sup> aid kit accessible at all times, do not overfill bothy, do not cook when drunk.
Traffic accident (High)	Injury/death.	Climbers should take care on roads, particularly at night, and should consider

	wearing a head torch.
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### 6. Indoor climbing

Hazard (rate)	Risks	Controls
Falling onto the rope (high)	Any injury due to fall against bricks/holds etc.	Ensure proper belaying techniques, attentive belaying and spotting.  Climbers should be aware of obstructions near their route.
Equipment failure (low)	Any injury due to fall.	Use equipment only for the purposes for which it was designed.  Follow guidelines for care, recommended lifetime and disposal of equipment.  Gear officer to keep careful note of equipments history. Always check your own and others gear before and after use.
Harness not holding a fall (low)	Any injury due to fall.	Harness should be properly fastened with straps doubled back through buckles on harnesses where this is necessary. Tie in with a rethreaded figure of eight knot secured with a stopper knot.  Always check beginners have tied in and secured their harness properly.
Fall due to poor belay technique (medium)	Any injury due to fall.	Use suitable belay method and always keep at least one hand on the dead rope, holding it in the locked off position, maintaining a firm stance.
Fall when bouldering (medium)	Any injury due to fall, plus injury to bystanders.	Always work in conjunction with an able spotter, ensure that you do not boulder above the 'shelves' or near other climbers.
Injury to belayer	Trapped hair/ fingers/ clothing etc.	Ensure proper technique is used.

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Dropped items	Injury to belayers and bystanders	Climbers should not take unnecessary items up the wall.  Belayers and bystanders should stand away from the base of the wall when routes are being set.

## **7. Transport on Club meets**

<b>Hazard (rate)</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Controls</b>
Road Traffic Accident	Any level of injury, including death.	Drivers shall adhere to the highway code, and seatbelts shall be worn.  Any private vehicle used on club meets is the owners responsibility, and the owner is responsible for ensuring that it is in a roadworthy and legal condition.  All drivers shall take note of current AU code of practice for drivers.
Breakdown	Delay, stranding club members.	Drivers of AU transport shall carry out routine checks before departing, drivers of their own vehicles are responsible for their upkeep/recovery.
Lost	Delay, stranding club members.	Drivers should have an idea of how to get to their destination, or alternatively a map!

### **7) Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an accident:

- (a) Members should first ensure their own safety to prevent further accidents.
- (b) If necessary the emergency services should be contacted directly.

(c) The Athletic Union should also be contacted and on return the Safety Officer shall be responsible for filling in the accident report forms.

### **8) First Aid Kits**

Club members shall be responsible for providing their own personal first aid kit (the contents of which will vary depending on conditions etc.), in addition, the club shall bring a 'Lifesystems' Mountain Leader First Aid Kit, which should remain full as per the inventory inside the kit. Items shall be replaced immediately upon use.

### **9) First Aid Qualifications**

List of members with current first aid certificates:

Jack Barraclough  
Annie Lloyd-Evans  
Eve Blumson  
Graham Carrington

### **(10) A List of Certified Coaches and Qualifications**

(none)

### **11) Safety Officer**

James Bowen (jb639)

19 Pipeland Road,  
St Andrews,  
Fife  
KY16 8RW

07791877382

### **12) Equipment Check and Maintenance Procedure**

Gear Officer:

Richard Hines(rh489)

03:04 Dover  
David Russell Appartments  
Buchanan Gardens  
St Andrews  
Fife  
KY16 9LY

07543682573

Club equipment is maintained and checked by the gear officer. The club aims to stick to BMC guidelines with regard to replacement of ropes/metalwork, in accordance with current best practices. The Gear Officer will ensure that an accurate log of any 'incident' involving a piece of club equipment which might affect its future use is logged in the appropriate log book.

### **13) Declaration by the Club Officials**

**I agree to abide by and enforce the St Andrews University Mountaineering Club safety policy at all times the club functions under the auspices of the University of St Andrews Athletic Union.**

President  
(JZach Barraclough)

Secretary  
(Eve Blumson)

Treasurer  
(Graham Carrington)

Safety Officer  
(James Bowen)

Gear Officer  
(Rick Hines)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Use of the AU climbing wall**

- 1) Only members of the St Andrews University Mountaineering Club can use the AU climbing wall and only when supervised by a member of the committee or a person named on the safety policy.
  - 2) There will be no soloing above the lower shelf.
  - 3) Ropes should be taken down and stored away from direct sunlight, when the wall is out of use for a long period of time e.g. during summer vacation. When ropes are taken down, this should be done using a feed rope system, to remove the need for lead ascents.
  - 4) When there is no alternative (for establishing top ropes), a suitably experienced member of the club may lead the easiest route, before establishing a secure method of attachment to the top bar.
  - 5) For the bolt on holds, there should always be an Allen key present in case a hold becomes loose and needs tightening.
  - 6) A log book of the wall is to be used to keep a record of hold condition, which is to be updated monthly.
  - 7) Members should inform a member of the committee if a hold is swivelling or in bad condition.
  - 8) Each month the bolt on holds should be thoroughly checked for looseness, cracking and also brick cracking.
- (Also see relevant sheets/file)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Club Constitution**

1. The society shall be called the St. Andrews University Mountaineering Club, and shall be affiliated to the Athletic Union of St. Andrews University.
2. Its aims shall be:
  - To foster a love of mountains,
  - To provide lectures on mountains and mountaineering,
  - To hold climbing meets both during and out of term at suitable centres, and,
  - To train novice members to look after themselves and others in mountainous country.
3. Membership, with full voting powers, shall be open to all matriculated students and members of staff of the University of St. Andrews.
4. The quorum for a constituted meeting of the club, which must be freely advertised, shall be one quarter of the members of the club including at least one member of committee. Voting at all duly constituted meeting of the club shall be by a simple majority of the members present.
5. The Annual General Meeting of the club shall be held before the end of March each year to elect from amongst its members the committee for the following year. Any

ex-members of the committee shall be eligible for re-election. In the event of a committee member resigning before the AGM, a constituted meeting of the club shall be convened to elect another member to the committee.

6. The elected committee shall include three executive positions: President, Secretary and Treasurer. An additional eight members shall be elected to fill the following positions: Safety Officer, Publicity Officer, Gear Officer, Social Secretary, Log Editor, Wall Officer and Web Officer. At least one member shall be from the first/Bejant year. It shall be in the power of the committee, on a unanimous decision, to co-opt not more than one other member to the committee. Past Presidents, who are still members of the club and are matriculated students of St. Andrews University, shall be ex officio on the committee.
7. It shall be in the power of the Club at a constituted meeting, on a committee proposal, to elect any person who is deemed to have rendered special service to the club, and Honorary Life Member of the Club. Such members shall have no voting rights.
8. There may be an Honorary President and Honorary Vice Presidents, who shall be elected at the AGM.
9. The annual subscription shall be fixed by the committee each year.
10. A member of the committee shall be elected by the committee each year to compile a log of the club's activities; when completed this log shall be put in the Club's library or the library of the University of St. Andrews.
11. Minors attending a vacation meet shall do so only with the full knowledge and consent of their parents or guardian.
12. A reasonable number of non-members of the club, who are not matriculated students of St. Andrews University, shall be admitted to club meets on the invitation of a member of the club committee.
13. Alterations to this constitution may be made only at a constituted meeting of the Club and with at least one week's notice.
14. The club shall conform to regulations for affiliated societies prescribed by the AU. Furthermore, the books of the club shall be kept in a manner set by the AU and shall be submitted to the Athletic Union committee for auditing.

### **Appendix 3**

The following is an extract from a BMC publication intended as a guideline for mountaineers

#### **"Rules of the Game"**

This is a general information sheet designed to answer requests on any rules, regulations or Health and Safety issues that affect mountaineering, hillwalking or climbing. It is however important to remember that part of the attraction of these sports is their very lack of such restrictions. The following excerpts are for student use only, and are in no way intended to be definitive.

### **What is the BMC?**

The British Mountaineering Council is a representative body for climbers, hillwalkers, and mountaineers, working to promote their interests and protect their freedoms.

### **BMC Participation Statement**

The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

### **Ethics in rock climbing**

Whilst there are no rules in climbing a code of ethics has evolved. Some are simple, such as a rock climb cannot be claimed as climbed if a fall or a rest have been taken. Equally, top-roping a route does not count as a valid ascent. Every climber will play by their own personal version of these ethics, some content to claim a climb if for example the hard part was completed before falling off, others not. Obviously this is up to the individual and only becomes of concern if a “new route” (previously unclimbed line up a cliff) is claimed, or if the climbers involved are operating at the top level of the sport, where different styles of ascent are a large factor in success.

The most serious ethics and those that arouse most opinion amongst climbers are when the actual nature of the rock is altered. Chipping the rock for example, to make the climb easier, would permanently scar the rock, destroy the routes style and character, and is certainly regarded as unacceptable. Equally serious but more complex is the issue of bolting climbs. For non-climbers a quick explanation is needed at this point:

Climbing has evolved since 1890's, and during this time pieces of equipment to minimise falls (protection) have been invented. Protection is fitted into cracks etc. in the rock by the leader to hopefully prevent him or her falling too far. The second climber removes this protection as they climb, thus the rock is ascended with no physical effect upon it. However some rock is unsuitable for this style of climbing (natural leading), so bolts are utilised - these are permanent metal fixtures drilled into the rock to provide pieces of protection.

A lot of cliffs in Europe are bolted, but it is less common in Britain. Some steep limestone crags are ideally suited to bolting, and this is generally accepted, and it is common consensus that say gritstone be bolt free. Problems occur at less well defined types of crag, i.e. less steep limestone, with a documented history using only natural protection. Inevitably some people will want bolts placed, whilst others will be opposed

to it. It is important that such disputes are settled in a reasonable manner, since rock is a finite resource. Once a bolt is placed, even if it is later removed, a permanent scar will be left. This can lead to considerable conflict, and in an attempt to rationalise the situation, the BMC adopted the following policy at the BMC Annual General Meeting April 1992:

*"The BMC strongly supports the approach to climbing based on leader placed protection which makes use of natural rock features. The BMC believes that care and concern for the crag and mountain environments is of paramount importance.*

*The BMC accepts that in exceptional circumstances, agreed by the BMC, fixed equipment may be utilised for lower-off or abseil points to avoid environmental damage or maintain access.*

*It is the policy of the BMC that the use of bolts and other drilled equipment is only legitimate on certain agreed quarried crags and agreed sections of certain limestone crags. Lists of agreed locations will be maintained by the local area committees.*

*The BMC is firmly opposed to retrospective bolting (i.e. changing the character of a route by placing fixed equipment where none was previously used). Climbs should only be re-equipped on a basis of common consent established at open forums."*

Definitions The above policy was drawn up using the following definitions:

1. Drilled Equipment: any belay, aid or protection point placed with the aid of a drill (e.g. any bolts, drilled threads, drilled piton placements, etc.).
2. Fixed Equipment: any permanent or semi permanent belay, aid or protection point (such as bolts, pitons, threads, chocks, etc.) placed on the first ascent of a climb.
3. Re-equipping: the replacement of fixed equipment.
4. Retro-bolting: the placement of bolts for belays, aid or protection points on climbs which did not utilise fixed equipment.
5. 'Other' retro-equipping: the permanent or semi permanent placement of bolts, pitons, threads, chocks, etc. after the first ascent of a climb.

### **Ethics in mountaineering**

Mountaineering is a more complex sport than pure rock climbing, but with a single aim - to reach the top, with aid climbing, resting etc. all accepted. Accordingly the biggest crime is to make a false claim of ascent. Although summiting is admittedly the main goal, the style of ascent is becoming increasingly important, in the past mountains were seiged by large scale expeditions, but today this is regarded as environmentally damaging and frequently unnecessary.

The name of the game is lightweight, fast moving, low impact expeditions. Placing excessive fixed gear is considered poor practice. Expeditions should now take

responsibility for the environmental effects of their rubbish, and the BMC are has drawn up detailed environmental guidelines for expeditions.

The UIAA has recently published a code of practice for those commercial companies who organise expeditions to 8000m peaks. This paper suggests an appropriate level of experience for clients and states they should be fully aware of all the risks involved in climbing on these very high mountains. In addition British 8000m operators have formed a self regulatory trade association called IGO8000 which aims to ensure good practice and minimum standards.

### **Competition Climbing Rules**

Climbing competitions range from local bouldering events to world cups, and inevitably some rules and regulations start to apply. All competition climbing events in the UK take place indoors, thus preventing undue environmental damage. At the simplest level the venue will decide on a set of rules and disqualify those who fail to follow them. For international events such as the World Cup, rules are decided by the UIAA Competitions Committee. They decide factors such as competitors viewing times and allocated time to climb a route. A panel of judges watches each international competition to confirm adherence to these rules.

### **Indoor Climbing walls**

Indoor climbing walls have greatly increased in popularity over recent years. Visitors can boulder, lead sport climbs, or top-rope sport climbs at these venues. Indoor climbing centres are not legally comparable to the outdoors and will invariably be places of employment or constitute an undertaking as per section 3 of the Health & Safety at Work act 1974. For climbing walls the HSW act 1974, sections 2, 3, and 6 and Management of HSW regulations 1992 are particularly applicable, plus a host of other regulations. The new European Standard, EN 12572, "Artificial Climbing Structures - Protection points, Stability requirements and Test Methods" is the new standard that all walls should meet.

This does not mean the activity must be risk free, but that risk assessments should be undertaken. These should be goal setting in nature, not prescriptive, and the risks identified reduced "so far as is reasonably practicable". Particular care must be paid to areas such as access to the wall, children, membership, rules, flooring, matting, equipment, training, routesetting, and competition events. Fixtures and fittings on the wall such as lower off points, ropes, and the actual structural elements of the wall are also subject to the appropriate standards.

### **Equipment Regulations**

All equipment produced in Europe must have a CE marking, this ensures that sufficient quality control systems are in place during manufacture, and that the equipment meets any published European CEN standards (these are based on the UIAA equipment standards and detail particular requirements of equipment such as breaking strains). All items falling under the category of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are subject to further regulations. PPE is divided into 3 levels on a scale. Category 1 is equipment such

as gaiters, where failure of the equipment would result merely in discomfort. Manufacturers can self assess their quality control checks for this category. However most mountaineering equipment comes under category 3, where failure could result in a potentially fatal accident. Under category 3, manufacturers are subject to an intensive process of checking and quality control by an independent body. Another aspect of PPE is that the manufacturer must include with the product all relevant information, such as correct usage instructions, care and maintenance information, and expected lifespan.

## **Qualifications**

A qualification is not required to take part in mountaineering, rock climbing or hillwalking at any level. Equally a qualification is not absolutely necessary to teach these pursuits to adults, but is obviously strongly advisable. It is however required to hold the relevant qualification if instructing young people (under 18). The qualifications are as follows:

SPSA (SPA) - Single Pitch Supervisors Award - For single pitch crags, teaching basic climbing and abseiling, but not lead climbing.

Summer Mountain Leader (ML) - Group Leading for summer hillwalking

Winter Mountain Leader (ML) - Group Leading in winter hillwalking conditions

Mountain Instructors Award (MIA) - All aspects of mountaineering in UK including multi pitch climbing in summer conditions.

Mountain Instructors Certificate (MIC) - All aspects of mountaineering in UK including winter climbing.

Guide - Highest qualification, no previous qualifications need be held to apply for this scheme, but an extremely high level of experience and competence in all fields including rock climbing, winter climbing, ski mountaineering, alpine climbing etc.

## **Commercial Activity**

If a centre is running climbing, mountaineering or hillwalking courses as a commercial activity then following criteria must be met:

Licensing - If running a commercial activity involving adventurous pursuits for under 18s then a license from the Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority must be held.

Care and Maintenance of equipment - All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that equipment is safe. In the majority of cases this entails the keeping of accurate logs and regular checks by a person with sufficient experience to make a valid judgement. In most instances this means someone of MIA or MIC level (or equivalent).

Lifespan of equipment - One of the stipulations of the PPE directive is that manufacturers must stipulate criteria for the retirement of their equipment. This is usually done by

stating a lifespan. Although the manufactures figures are not cast in stone, any outdoor centre would have to be able to justify using equipment beyond the stated period.

Health and Safety Executive checks - These are rare, and to ensure that all the necessary systems are in place - i.e. logging, checks, and the required level of experience and knowledge.

### **Club Activities.**

An extensive network of climbing, mountaineering and hillwalking clubs can be found around the UK, to enable both existing participants to find new contacts, and to help introduce newcomers into the sports. Many of these clubs choose to become affiliated to the BMC, this gives them a say at meetings, and provides limited insurance cover for club members. The BMC publication "[Club Guidance Notes](#)" - is recommended reading for anyone involved in running a climbing club.

### **UIAA International Mountain Code**

As a response to the growth of mountaineering the world body for mountaineers, the UIAA, have developed a simple, but very worthwhile code, which the BMC Access and Conservation Committee strongly commend.

1. Observe restrictions and access agreement negotiated by National Mountaineering Federations, and avoid any actions which might endanger access.
2. Do not disturb nesting birds or other wildlife. Help protect flowers and respect sites of geological or other scientific interest.
3. Avoid actions which cause unnecessary erosion (such as taking shortcuts on footpaths) and do not leave unnecessary way marks.
4. Do not disturb livestock or damage crops or trees.
5. Do not leave any rubbish. Keep campsites clean. Avoid all risk of fire.
6. Where toilet facilities are not available, dispose of human waste in a sanitary manner (ie under rocks, soil, sand, or in deep crevasses, away from water supplies, paths or climbs.
7. Do not pollute fresh water supplies. Avoid any unnecessary pollution to the snow pack.
8. Respect established climbing traditions in ethical matters such as the use of chalk, pitons or bolts etc. Avoid indiscriminate or excessive use of fixed equipment.
9. In mountain areas use motorised transport sparingly and park considerately. Make use of public transport if practical.

10. On any excursions to remote or high mountains observe the UIAA Kathmandu Declaration and Ethical Code for Expeditions.

## **Glossary**

**Abseil** - A means of descending down a rope. Used to reach inaccessible places, or to retreat from a climb.

**Aid Climbing** - A style of climbing which is occasionally required. Involves placing protection and using it for upward progress, not simply to minimise a fall.

**BMC** - British Mountaineering Council. The BMC is a representative body for climbers, hillwalkers, and mountaineers, working to promote their interests and protect their freedoms.

**Bolt** - A fixed piece of metal protection. A hole is drilled in the rock, then a bolt fixed in, usually using a special type of resin. They appear as small closed metal rings sticking out of the rocks surface.

**Bouldering** - Performing short, often relatively hard moves close to the ground without a rope being needed. Performed on indoor walls and outside - on boulders!

**CE** - Certification European

**CEN** - Certification European Normalisation.

**Chipping** - Artificially creating a hold by chipping at the rock. Totally unacceptable.

**Competition Climbing** - Indoor climbing in a competitive situation, can be bouldering or sport climbing.

**Ethics** - Informal voluntary code of conduct that has evolved with the sport.

**Gritstone** - A unique sedimentary rock ideally suited to climbing found mainly in Yorkshire and Derbyshire. Gritstone has been climbed on for many years.

**Leader** - The first person to climb (leading). Carries protection, which he or she places in suitable locations and clips the rope through. If the leader fell this protection should minimise their fall. The second then follows the leader.

**Limestone** - Another popular climbing rock. Limestone can get very overhanging and smooth. This smoothness sometimes leads to the placing of bolts for protection.

**Natural Leading** - Leading using natural protection, i.e. carrying a range of equipment designed to fit into cracks etc. in the rock.

**Second** - Not surprisingly the second person to climb, follows the leader up a route, removing the protection where necessary. On a long climb, the leader and the second will

often swap round several times.

Sport Climbing - Climbing using bolts protection.

Top-roping - Minimising risk from a climb for practice purposes by rigging the rope from the top prior to the climb.

UIAA - Union Internationale Associations D'Alpinisme - World Body for Mountaineering, to which the BMC is affiliated.

### **Further Reading**

Club Guidance Notes

Climbing Wall Manual

Technical Booklets on Crampons, Knots, Ropes

Technical Reports on Equipment Investigations

Handbook of Climbing

All of the above are available from the BMC, please contact for further details.

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