

## IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

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from articles by Keith Maxwell, President BWRS (*The Bushwalker* Volume 32, Issue 2, Autumn 2006)

An incident on a recent medium grade walk proved to be a blessing in disguise. Mobile phones do not work in most of our bushwalking areas, and anyway, whom do we ring? And was it necessary to request help? A Special Committee Meeting was called to discuss two issues which arose, and it was decided that:

Walkers with a “*Pre-existing Condition*” as defined in the Insurance Policy held by the Club (see below) are **not** covered by that insurance. Therefore they should:

- Carry relevant information in writing which will assist with their first aid.
- Be able to explain what assistance they need and medications carried.
- In addition, they may be requested to contact the Leader of any walk, even an Easy Grade (eg, on a beach), to be sure that the majority of the route is accessible by a 2WD vehicle.
- Have **Ambulance Insurance**: check that your Private Health Insurance Fund covers interstate ambulance assistance. If you're not in a Private Health Insurance Fund, call the Ambulance Service of NSW on (02) 4822 1382 for advice on ambulance insurance.

**ALL CLUB MEMBERS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO HAVE AMBULANCE INSURANCE AS A ROAD AMBULANCE CALLOUT COSTS \$222 PLUS \$2.01 PER KM. AN AIR AMBULANCE COULD COST THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.**

**WHAT TO DO** in the event of a person becoming too ill or being injured and unable to walk out. The Leader should be prepared to assist with, or delegate First Aid, then, if removal by car is not possible or practical, there are three options:

- Use the mobile phone, if necessary from a nearby high point.
- **Dial (02) 4472 0099 for Batemans Bay Police Station, (or 000 for the Police** if not in our area) and be able to give a six figure Grid Reference with Map Name and number, and latitude and longitude if a helicopter is required. The police can call an ambulance if required.
- If the mobile phone does not work, two people walk out to the cars and go to where there is a phone. Be sure you can give an accurate location for the patient, and name those remaining with the patient. (This is the reason for a minimum of four people on any Club walk.)
- Use an EPIRB, which only gives a distress signal of the location, and it may take several hours for enough satellite passes to give an accurate fix for rescue services. We do not at present require carrying an EPIRB.

**THE GROUP IS OVERDUE** – so what do you at home do if the party has not returned on time?

Firstly, the Leader of walks in remote areas should have already let someone know that they will inform them when they get back, and do so when the group has returned.

Secondly, if the home contact person has not been contacted when expected, a couple of cautions to allow extra time to “geographically de-embarrass”. How long should the person at home allow?

1. DAY WALKS: Allow up to lunchtime on the following day.
2. TWO-DAY WALKS: Allow up to nightfall on the following day.

Experience by the BWRS (Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad) is that most groups walk out in that time. In the meantime, if the group is overdue on a walk, the **home contact person may contact BWRS phone 13 22 22 and quote pager number 627 7321**. Be brief with your message, eg, “*Contact Bob on 44xxx xxx re overdue trip in Budawangs.*” Your concern allows preplanning in case a search is required and can be comforting to you. Of course, ring again if the group returns, but if not, ring again and BWRS will contact the most appropriate Police on your behalf.

**Conclusion:** Our Leaders are already well prepared, several having done a First Aid Course and Bush Navigation Course. We require Leaders to carry a GPS and map and compass, and know their bush navigation; and we require all members to carry a First Aid Kit. However, the incident I referred to earlier indicates that Leaders should also:

- **MEDICAL EMERGENCY: Carry a mobile phone with charged batteries. Know that you phone Police on (02) 4472 0099 (or 000) for help in case of accident or illness on a walk. The Police can call an ambulance.**
- **OVERDUE PARTY: Notify someone before going on the walk and upon your return. Make sure they have the BWRS phone number and pager number and how to leave a message if you are not back when expected.**

**Note:** The Club's Principles and Rules document has been issued to each member and covers in detail several of the points raised above. If you require another copy, please contact the Secretary or download the document from our website at [www.baybushwalkers.org.au](http://www.baybushwalkers.org.au)

**“PRE-EXISTING CONDITION** means:

1. In respect of injury a condition with which the Insured Person was aware of (whether diagnosed or not) or has sought treatment prior to the Insured Travel covered under this Policy.
2. In respect of Sickness:
  - a) a condition or side effect with which the Insured Person was aware of (whether diagnosed or not) or has sought treatment prior to the Insured Travel covered under this Policy. If any form of cancer is a Pre-Existing Condition, then there is no cover for cancer or cancer-related conditions.
  - b) a condition caused by a Pre-Existing Condition.

Any medical condition that you have suffered from or been treated for, irrespective of whether a complete recovery has occurred is still treated as a Pre-Existing Condition.

END